

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received **OCT 12 1983**  
date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic Mt. Vernon Commercial District

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number Main St. from Church to Richmond Sts not for publication

city, town Mt. Vernon vicinity of

state Kentucky code 021 county Rockcastle code

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>NA</u> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<u>NA</u> 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 type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Multiple Ownership

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Rockcastle County Courthouse

street & number Main Street

city, town Mt. Vernon state Kentucky

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date March, 1983  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Kentucky Heritage Council

city, town Frankfort state Kentucky

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

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

The Mt. Vernon Commercial District consists of one block of Main Street, from Richmond Street to Church Street, and one block of Church Street, from Main Street to U.S. Highway 150. The district comprises the core of the town's late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial architecture.

With a population of 2,334, Mt. Vernon is the largest town and seat of government for Rockcastle County in the southeastern central portion of the Commonwealth. The county is predominately rural with over ninety percent of the land in croplands, forests and pastures. The northeast and southeast areas of the county are characterized by rough and hilly terrain intersected by numerous streams as Brush, Copper, Rentfro's, Roundstove, and Skagg's Creeks, and Dix and Rockcastle Rivers. The best agricultural land is located in the western portion of the county. Approximately forty percent of the land is suitable for agriculture while fifty-eight percent is in timber, primarily white oak, chestnut, hickory, poplar, walnut and sycamore. Twenty-nine miles to the north is Richmond, a small city of 22,000 and fifty-four miles to the north is Lexington, the major metropolitan area in the Bluegrass Region of the Commonwealth. Twenty-four miles to the southeast is London, a large town of 4,000.

The district is bounded on the north by varied commercial development, on the south and west by a mixed residential and commercial area, and on the east by the courthouse square.

Although ranging from ca. 1890 to 1932, the greatest percentage of the buildings were constructed during the first two decades of the twentieth century, and are primarily two-story brick structures. Of the twenty-six buildings included within the district boundaries, four are considered non-contributing structures. Non-contributing buildings are Young's Drug Store, Montgomery Ward, Bank of Mt. Vernon, Mt. Vernon Post Office and Agnes Beauty Shop, all of which are located on the north side of Main Street. A vacant lot on the west side of McGee's Department Store on the south side of Main Street is the only intrusion within the district boundaries.

The north side of Main Street is comprised primarily of two-story brick buildings constructed from ca. 1890 to 1924 and includes one of two oldest structures within the district (Photos 1 & 2). Displaying storefronts of eight, seven, four and three bays, the buildings are characterized by common bond brickwork pierced by straight-headed windows enhanced by limestone lintels and sills, and corbelled cornices. Four of the structures retain their original stamped galvanized steel interior ceilings. The Cox Brothers Building at the eastern end of the block is an excellent representation of the commercial structures on the north side of Main Street (Photos 3 & 4). Constructed ca. 1908, the two-story brick building executed in common bond brickwork is eight bays wide and retains the original cast-iron storefront manufactured by George L. Mesker and Company of Evansville, Indiana. Straight-headed paired windows of one/one pane flanked by single windows of one/one pane, all of which are enhanced by limestone lintels and sills, puncture the upper level of the facade and a corbelled cornice completes the building. The first floor interior retains the original pressed galvanized steel ceiling. Situated at the end of the block is the former Rockcastle Hotel, an impressive building constructed in 1913 (Photos 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9). Located at the corner

# 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 type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		

**Specific dates** ca. 1890-1932

**Builder/Architect**

**Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)**

The Mt. Vernon Commercial District is significant for its historical association with the commercial development of the town, as well as the development of Mt. Vernon as the major commercial and cultural center in Rockcastle County. Representing the core of the business section of Mt. Vernon, the commercial district comprises a noteworthy concentration of well-preserved late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial architecture. This unique collection of buildings produces a streetscape which evokes an ambience that is clearly distinct from the rest of Mt. Vernon. As such, the commercial district is among the best examples of its type in the south central region of Kentucky.

Rockcastle County was established in 1810 as the fifty-second county in Kentucky from parts of Knox, Lincoln, Madison, and Pulaski Counties. The first excursion by white men into Rockcastle County occurred in 1769 when Daniel Boone, John Findlay, John Stewart, Joseph Holder, James Mooney, and William Cool from the Yadkin River Valley in North Carolina made their first exploration of the Kentucky Territory. Twenty-one years later the first settlement area in the county was established at Spout's Spring situated off Spring Street not far from the Courthouse Square. Robert Langford was one of the first settlers in the Mt. Vernon area, and he erected a dwelling near the town site. A few years later his son, Stephan Langford, built a tavern which exists today. Langford's Station was recorded in an early map of Kentucky drawn by Elihu Barker in 1794. Mt. Vernon was incorporated on February 3, 1818, by an act of the Kentucky General Assembly.

Ca.1792 John Baker discovered the "Big Cave" or "Great Saltpeter Cave" eight miles northeast of Mt. Vernon, and five years later the first mining of saltpeter occurred in the county. The manufacturing of nitre began in 1802 and continued during the War of 1812, employing sixty or seventy men. The production of nitre ceased after the War of 1812, but was revived in 1847 with sporadic manufacturing until the end of the Civil War.

In 1850 coal was discovered at Pine Hill approximately five and one-half miles southeast of Mt. Vernon. The discovery and production of coal provided the first impetus for the growth of Mt. Vernon. Coal was exported by ox-carts to surrounding communities such as Crab Orchard and Stanford in Lincoln County and Stanford in Garrard County. A two-story brick hotel later known as the Joplin House was established by M. J. Miller in Mt. Vernon.

In 1869 the Lebanon branch of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad was constructed to Mt. Vernon, which for two years was the temporary terminus of the railroad. Two years later the L & N reached Livingston, approximately ten miles southeast of Mt. Vernon. For the next twenty-five years Livingston was the terminus of the L & N Railroad.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 5

Quadrangle name Mt. Vernon

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A	1 6	7 3 5 7 6 0	4 1 3 7 1 6 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	1 6	7 3 5 6 8 0	4 1 3 7 0 8 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	1 6	7 3 5 5 8 0	4 1 3 7 1 4 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

D	1 6	7 3 5 6 0 0	4 1 3 7 2 6 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

E			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

F			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

G			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

H			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

### 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 William G. Johnson, Senior Historian

organization Kentucky Heritage Council date September 15, 1983

street & number 9th Fl., Capital Plaza Tower telephone 502/564-7005

city or town Frankfort state Kentucky

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Mary Conroy Appel

title State Historic Preservation Officer date September 24, 1983

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register  
Entered in the National Register date 11/10/83

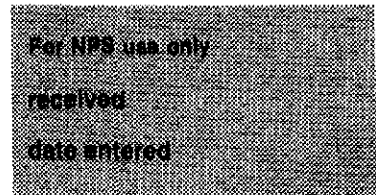
J. Alvord Byers  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
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Mt. Vernon Commercial District  
Continuation sheet Rockcastle County, Kentucky Item number 4 Page 2

All Addresses are Mt. Vernon unless noted. Stores on Main Street do not have street numbers.

Owners

Property

Mr. J. C. Cox  
Church & Main Street  
Mt. Vernon, Kentucky

C. C. Cox Hardware & The Gallery  
Main Street

Mr. Danny Ford  
Post Office Box 143  
Mt. Vernon, Kentucky

Mt. Vernon Bargin Store  
Main Street

Mrs. Molly Bryant  
Box 246  
Mt. Vernon, Kentucky

Bryant Brothers Appliances  
Main Street

Mr. Douglas Oliver  
c/o Oliver Insurance Agency  
Berea, Kentucky  
and  
Mr. Charles Saylor  
Saylor Plumbing Company  
Berea, Kentucky

Ruby's Diner

Mr. James Anderkin, Jr.  
c/o Mt. Vernon Signal  
Mt. Vernon, Kentucky

John's Trading Post  
Main Street

Mr. James Anderkin, Jr.  
c/o Mt. Vernon Signal  
Mt. Vernon, Kentucky

Daniel Boone Development Office  
(Old Rockcastle Hotel)  
Main Street

Mr. Clarence Carter  
Mt. Vernon, Kentucky

Dollar General Store  
Main Street

Mr. Andrew K. York  
Post Office Box 597  
Mt. Vernon, Kentucky

Family Denistry  
Main Street

Mr. Estill E. McBee  
Box 416  
Mt. Vernon, Kentucky

McBee Department Store  
Main Street

Charles E. Shivel, David Shivel  
Box 707  
Mt. Vernon, Kentucky

Young Designs  
Main Street  
Shivel's Army Store  
Main Street

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Mt. Vernon Commercial District

Continuation sheet Rockcastle County, Kentucky Item number 4 Page 3

Arletta Norton  
Box 366  
Mt. Vernon, Kentucky

Norton Insurance Agency  
Main Street

Mr. Jesse Cummings  
Mt. Vernon

Mt. Vernon Restaurant:  
Cummins Grocery (Old Mt. Vernon Hotel)

Mr. Bill Moore  
Box 643, Mt. Vernon

Moore Recreation  
Main Street

Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Menting  
2673 Fleet Road  
Winter Park, Florida 32792

Woodstock Furniture  
Main Street

Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Menting

Anglin Building  
Main Street

Mrs. Gertrude Hilton  
Box 68  
Mt. Vernon, Kentucky

Hiatt's Five & Ten

Mr. James W. Lambert  
Mt. Vernon

James W. Lambert  
Attorney at Law  
Church Street

Mr. Bill Bailey  
Mt. Vernon, Kentucky

Bill Bailey Insurance  
Church Street

Dr. G. H. Griffith  
Mt. Vernon

Young's Drug Store  
Main Street

Bank of Mt. Vernon

Montgomery Ward  
Main Street

Bank of Mt. Vernon

Bank of Mt. Vernon  
Main Street

John Rowe Estate  
c/o Lois Rowe  
Mt. Vernon

Mt. Vernon Post Office & Agnes'  
Beauty Shop  
Main Street

Estill McBee  
Box 416  
Mt. Vernon, Kentucky

Vacant lot on southside of Main Street

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Mt. Vernon Commercial District

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of Main and Richmond Streets, this outstanding structure presents a two-story facade on Main Street and a three-story facade on Richmond and Spring Streets. The original entrance was on Richmond Street, and across the road was the Louisville and Nashville Railroad Passenger Depot which, unfortunately, was demolished ca.1971. The Main Street and Richmond Street facades are both six bays wide, and are embellished with rough-faced limestone. Rectangular windows of one/one pane with limestone lintels and sills pierce the upper levels, and rusticated limestone quoins accentuate the structure. Limestone beltcourses delineate the upper levels, and limestone corbelled cornices complete the hotel.

The most impressive building on the north side of Main Street is a two-story brick structure executed in the Romanesque style (photo 10 & 11). Constructed ca.1890 to house a dry goods business, this unique building is four-bays wide with a rusticated limestone storefront. Semi-circular windows of one/one pane accented by two-course semi-circular arches with limestone keystones pierce the upper level of the facade. The large semi-circular facade bay with two-course semi-circular arch with limestone keystone is accentuated by pilasters with limestone quoins. A corbelled cornice with four rectangular cast-iron ventilators below complete the structure.

Non-contributing buildings on the north side of Main Street are Young's Drug Store, Montgomery Ward, Bank of Mt. Vernon, Agnes Beauty Shop & Mt.Vernon Post Office. The single-story brick buildings were constructed ca.1960-1971, and are situated between the Bryant Brothers Building and the Romanesque style structure at the eastern end of the block.

A densely built row of one and two-story brick and concrete buildings constructed ca. 1890 to 1952 comprise the south side of Main Street (photo 12). A vacant lot on the west side of McBee's Department Store is the only intrusion on the block.

Most of the buildings are three bays wide with common bond brickwork, pierced by straight-headed windows and completed by corbelled cornices. The McGee Department Store building is a good representation of the commercial structures on the south side of Main Street (photo 13). Constructed ca.1910, the two-story brick structure is three-bays wide with a center entrance. Straight-headed windows of one/one pane with limestone lintels and sills puncture the upper level, and a corbelled cornice completes the structure. The first floor interior retains the original stamped steel ceiling.

The former People's Bank of Mt. Vernon building, situated at the eastern end of the block, is the most architecturally significant structure on the south side of Main Street (photo 14 & 15). Constructed ca.1890, the impressive two-story Romanesque style building of brick construction displays a three-bay facade which incorporates a major element of the style, the use of semi-circular arches for window and door openings. The storefront is accentuated by a rusticated limestone facing, while the upper level is pierced by semi-circular windows embellished with limestone hood molds. A corbelled cornice completes the structure.

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Completing the block are the Fish Buildings, two unique buildings of concrete construction situated at the eastern corner of the south side of Main Street (photo 16). The two-story buildings were constructed in the first decade of the twentieth century, and were the first concrete structures built of the relatively new building material in Mt. Vernon and Rockcastle County. Both structures feature three bay facades, and retain the original cast-iron storefronts manufactured by George L. Mesker and Company of Evansville, Indiana (photo 17). Straight-headed windows of one/one pane puncture the second floor of the buildings.

One and two-story buildings of brick and concrete construction situated on the west side of Church Street comprise the final area of the Mt. Vernon Commercial District (photo 18). Opposite the Rockcastle County Courthouse and Courthouse Square, the buildings were constructed in the last decade of the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth century. The two-story Lambert Building displays a four-bay facade with pilasters delineating the bays, and long and narrow rectangular windows of one/one pane piercing the upper level. A single-story building of brick construction three bays wide, and a corbelled cornice accented by pilaster strips completes the block.

The boundaries have been determined so as to encompass all of Mt. Vernon's late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings which comprise a historic entity and an architectural unity.

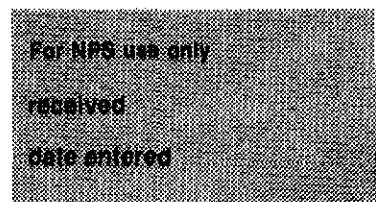


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The construction of the railroad in 1869 was the major impact for Mt. Vernon in the post Civil War period. The new mode of transportation was a significant stimulus to the growth and prosperity of the town. Yet, Mt. Vernon did not experience the full impact of rail transportation until the turn of the twentieth century when the L & N began construction of a rail line to Knoxville. In 1900 the population of Mt. Vernon was 400. Six years later the population of the town had doubled as a result of the on-going construction of the L & N line to Knoxville.

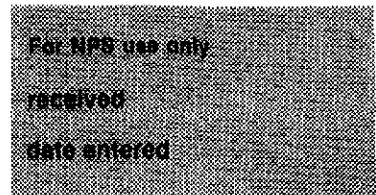
The economic stimulus of rail transportation is evident by the commercial buildings which were constructed ca. 1890 to 1932 in Mt. Vernon. Buildings such as the two-story Romanesque style structure on the south side of Main which was originally constructed to house a dry goods establishment, and the former Peoples' Bank of Mt. Vernon Building, a two-story Romanesque style structure on the north side of Main Street reflect the new prosperity of the town as a result of the railroad. The Cox Brothers Building on the south side of Main Street, and the Fish Buildings on the north side of Main Street were constructed in the first decade of the twentieth century, and in keeping with the vernacular styles of the day, both buildings were embellished with cast-iron storefronts manufactured by George L. Mesker and Company of Evansville, Indiana. The McBee Department Store Building on the north side of Main Street provides an excellent representation of commercial architecture in vogue in the first decade of the twentieth century. Construction of the Mt. Vernon Hotel, a significant architectural resource in the commercial area and the town, in 1913 also reflects the economic impact of rail transportation

In conclusion, the Mt. Vernon Commercial District is an excellent and unique collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings which possess significant architectural and historical importance.

The historic sites survey of Mt. Vernon in Rockcastle County was conducted in March 1983 by William G. Johnson, Senior Historian. The survey is part of a ten-year project of the Kentucky Heritage Council to survey the state's architectural, historical, and archaeological resources on a county-by-county basis. In addition, the Mt. Vernon survey and subsequent Mt. Vernon Commercial District nomination was initiated in preparation of the Mt. Vernon Downtown Revitalization Plan, a project being undertaken by the Mt. Vernon Local Development Corporation and the City of Mt. Vernon to provide stimulus for economic development in Mt. Vernon and the revitalization of the commercial core.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The Mt. Vernon Commercial District comprises two city blocks and covers an area of five acres. The district is bounded by the rear property lines of buildings on the north side of Main Street on the north; the Cox Brothers Building Lot and Church Street on the east; the rear property lines of buildings on the south side of Main Street on the south; and the Dollar General Store Building lot and Richmond Street on the west.

Beginning at a point on the east side of Richmond Street proceed 600 feet in a south-eastward direction along the rear property lines of buildings on the north side of Main Street; thence 150 feet in a southwestward direction along the east side of the Cox Brothers Building lot; thence 150 feet in a northwestward direction along the north side of Main Street; thence 170 feet in a southwestward direction along the west side of Church Street; thence 85 feet in a northwestward direction along the Bailey Building lot; thence 180 feet in a northeastward direction along the rear property lines of buildings on Church Street; thence 250 feet in a northwestward direction along the rear property lines of buildings on the south side of Main Street; thence 160 feet in a northeastward direction along the Dollar General Store Building lot; thence 70 feet in a northwestward direction along the south side of Main Street; thence 200 feet in a northeastward direction along the east side of Richmond Street to the point of origin.