

PH0688088

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
NOV 20 1978  
RECEIVED  
DATE ENTERED DEC 29 1978

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

American Association, Limited, Office Building

AND/OR COMMON

American Association Building

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

2215 Cumberland Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Middlesboro

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

5

STATE

Kentucky

VICINITY OF

CODE

021

COUNTY

Bell

CODE

013

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

**ACCESSIBLE**

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Cumberland Gap Corporation, a subsidiary of The American Association, Limited

STREET & NUMBER

2215 Cumberland Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Middlesboro

STATE

Kentucky

VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Bell County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

pineville

STATE

Kentucky

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky (Supplement)

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN

Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

# 7 DESCRIPTION

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

---

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Facing northward, the American Association Building is located on the south side of Cumberland Avenue in downtown Middlesboro, Kentucky, within four blocks of the city hall. Middlesboro, with a population of 12,000, is situated in the extreme southeastern section of Bell County near the Cumberland Gap in southeastern Kentucky and serves as the principle business center for the county.

Constructed ca. 1890, the American Association Building is a 2½-story, brick structure reflecting the influence of the Richardsonian Romanesque style. The gabled, northern facade contains three windows in the peak which are united by connecting stone lintels. Two, transomed doors pierce the stone facade of the first floor. A single, round arch opening gives access from the street to the three-bay, brick arcade along the western side of the building. Stone quoins visually strengthen the northwest corner of the arcade and each brick arch reveals a rusticated keystone .

The steep slope of the western gable contains a shed-roofed dormer and two half-hipped dormers. The projecting two-bay section with stone facing on the west side also contains a half-hipped dormer. A circular stone tower with conical roof rises from the roofline where the two sections join. Windows on the first floor have transoms and heavy stone lintels. A stone belt course encircles the building. Rows of fish scale shingles give variety to the large roof areas. Three corbelled, brick chimneys rise from the various planes of the roofline.

A single-story, gabled unit is appended to the rear of the building. The entrance to this wing is contained in the pedimented gable on the western facade.

Currently used for office space, the building is maintained in good condition.

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PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

ca. 1890

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Colonel George H. Waring

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The American Association Building, located in the downtown commercial district of Middlesboro, is important historically because of its ties with the establishment of the town. Its founder, Alexander Arthur, a Canadian, obtained British backing to form the American Association, Limited, that was to finance mining operations in southeast Kentucky and northeast Tennessee and the construction of Middlesboro, which was to serve as headquarters for these activities. The 2½-story, brick structure was built as offices for the American Association, Limited. In addition, the ca. 1890 building attains architectural significance in representing the widespread influence of the Richardsonian Romanesque style.

Middlesboro is situated at the extreme southeast end of Kentucky, at the gateway to the historic Cumberland Gap, entry route through the Appalachians for thousands of settlers heading west in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Bell County, formed from portions of Knox and Harlan Counties, was established in 1867. Although Pineville, the county seat of the new county, had been settled quite some time before 1867, railroads did not enter this area until the last years of the decade following 1880; therefore, intensive industrialization did not occur until then.<sup>1</sup>

The extraction of coal and lumber significantly increased after that time. By 1890, Bell County's economic potentials had stirred interest even in Great Britain. This was primarily due to the enterprise of an engineer from Canada named Alexander Alan Arthur.

Alexander Arthur came to Bell County, Kentucky in 1886.<sup>2</sup> Of Scottish descent, and a distant cousin of President Chester Alan Arthur (1881-1885), he was hunting for minerals. In the hills beyond Cumberland Gap in Bell County he found what he believed to be substantial enough deposits of coal and iron to justify the development of a new industrial center which could rival Pittsburg and Birmingham.

As the result of his grandiose plans, Arthur returned to England, formed the American Association, Limited, secured financial backing and returned to Kentucky where he purchased thousands of acres of land and laid out the new city which he intended to become the heart of a new empire. He called it Middlesborough after the great manufacturing city of the same name in England. As the result of his initiatives, a small army of construction

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# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

(continued)

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one-half acre.

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 7	2 5 6 9 2 0	4 0 5 4 4 6 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Calvin P. Jones, Senior Historian ; Charlotte Schneider, Architectural Historian; G.M.

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Kentucky Heritage Commission

September 1978

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

104 Bridge Street

(502) 564-3741

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Frankfort

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

*Edward W. Yelton*

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 11-6-78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

*G. M. Smith*

DATE 12/29/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

*John H. Gilmore*

DATE 12/29/78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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American Association, Limited, Office Building

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

workers built the town and the giant iron furnaces which would be needed, hundreds of miners began to extract coal, and railroad workers commenced the construction of lines toward Knoxville and spurs up the hollows to the new mines. As this took place, his new city did not grow, rather, it was created. By the end of the first year of activities there, it had a population of 15,000; by the end of the second year this had increased to 17,000.

The boom town which Arthur had created was known to the English investors as the "Magic City of the Mountains." Arthur laid out streets with names from England, e. g., Dorchester, Sallsbury, and Doncaster. He built a business district and a plush residential area for his executives.<sup>3</sup> He built a hotel whose magnificence was exceeded only by those in New York and established the second golf course in the United States. His new city was the first in Kentucky to have complete electrical service and possessed a reservoir that could supply water to a population of 150,000 persons.

Unfortunately, beginning in 1890, Arthur's luck changed for the worse. He first had a bad fire in the business district. He hurried to England to secure more financing and replaced the frame buildings with new ones of brick and stone. When the Baring Brothers Bank in England failed, it resulted in deep and desperate trouble for the American Association. At the same time that financial backing ended, so did the iron ore, which Arthur had seriously overestimated.

In a matter of weeks, Alexander Arthur's dream of a new industrial center at Middlesborough (now Middlesboro) came to a precipitate end. The railroad lines were soon covered by high grasses, the iron furnaces were shut down, and many mines were closed. Many stores ended their operations and the population fell to 4,200. Although Arthur never gave up the hope that his dream could be restored, it gradually died. His attempts to secure new investors in New York were also to no avail. In his will he asked that he should be buried at his dream city and in 1912 this was done. His body was placed on a hillside overlooking the city of his dreams and the tombstone is still plainly visible there.<sup>4</sup>

Among the many buildings constructed in Middlesboro, and even in Harrogate, Tennessee,<sup>5</sup> as the result of Arthur's actions, was the new building which housed the offices of the American Association, Limited.<sup>6</sup> Located on Cumberland Avenue and Canal, this building constructed ca. 1890 to house the firm which actually gave Middlesboro its start

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

American Association, Limited, Office Building  
**CONTINUATION SHEET** ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

through investments, is still standing today and is still in use.<sup>7</sup> Its construction evidently was completed by 1891. The Consultant Engineer and Architect for the total project of the American Association, Limited, was Colonel George H. Waring of New York City. The overall massive feeling of the structure with its stone trim, sloping roof and circular tower, and the robust, round arch arcade reflects the strong impact of the work of the late nineteenth American architect Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886). The choice of the straight-forward, solid Richardsonian style was most appropriate as a means of emphasizing the progressive goals of this industrial enterprise.

The cost of the building is not known but it is apparent that by October 1890, the American Association, Limited, had a capital stock of \$2,000,000 involved in all of its enterprises in Middlesborough,<sup>9</sup> and it has been estimated that English promoters spent a total of at least \$60,000,000 in the complete venture prior to the end of the year 1892.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the failure of the American Association's project to develop a lasting industrialized center at Middlesboro, its venture did change the way of life in the Bell County area for all time to come.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Fuson, Henry Harvey. History of Bell County, Kentucky. New York: Hobson Book Press, 1947, p. 362.

<sup>2</sup>Pearce, John Ed. "Bell County: A Kentucky test of endurance and a tale of two towns," The Courier-Journal Magazine (Sunday, May 14, 1978), p. 12, also see Fuson, op. cit., p. 371.

<sup>3</sup>"Souvenir of Middlesborough, October, 1890." Louisville, Kentucky: Courier Journal Job Printing Co., 1890 (?), 16 pp., see Fuson, op. cit., p. 371.

<sup>4</sup>Pearce, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

<sup>5</sup>Johnson, Walt, News Editor. "Davis Home in Harrogate Dates to '85, Was Built for American Assoc Doctor," Middlesboro Daily News (Friday, July 2, 1976), p. H-4.

<sup>6</sup>See Photo 1.

<sup>7</sup>See Photo 2.

<sup>8</sup>Morgans, Brian H. "Cumberland Gap--Its History and Romance." (No place of publication given; no name of publisher given, no date of publication given), p. 1.

<sup>9</sup>"Souvenir" final page.

<sup>10</sup>Morgans, loc. cit.

<sup>11</sup>Pearce, op. cit., p. 13.

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

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC

American Association, Limited, Office Building

AND/OR COMMON

American Association Building

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

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NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Middlesboro

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

5

STATE

Kentucky

VICINITY OF

CODE

021

COUNTY

Bell

CODE

013

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

### CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

### OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

### STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

### PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Cumberland Gap Corporation, a subsidiary of The American Association, Limited

STREET & NUMBER

2215 Cumberland Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Middlesboro

STATE

Kentucky

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Bell County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

pineville

STATE

Kentucky

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

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DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN

Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input 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 DATE _____
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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

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# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
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SPECIFIC DATES

ca. 1890

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Colonel George H. Waring

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

(continued)

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one-half acre.

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 7	2 5 6 9 2 0	4 0 5 4 4 6 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Calvin P. Jones, Senior Historian ; Charlotte Schneider, Architectural Historian; G.M.

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Kentucky Heritage Commission

September 1978

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

104 Bridge Street

(502) 564-3741

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*Edward W. Yelton*

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

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*G. M. Smith*

DATE

12/29/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

*John H. Gilmore*

DATE

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KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Among the many buildings constructed in Middlesboro, and even in Harrogate, Tennessee,<sup>5</sup> as the result of Arthur's actions, was the new building which housed the offices of the American Association, Limited.<sup>6</sup> Located on Cumberland Avenue and Canal, this building constructed ca. 1890 to house the firm which actually gave Middlesboro its start

(continued)



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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American Association, Limited, Office Building

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