NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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STRUCTURE	X BOTH	_WORK IN PROGRESS	EDUCATIONAL	PRIVATE RESIDENCE
SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	ENTERTAINMENT	RELIGIOUS
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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Elizabethtown Courthouse Square and Commercial District consists of a two block area bounded on the north by the alley paralleling Dixie Avenue, on the east by Quince Alley, on the south by Strawberry Alley, and on the west by Mulberry Street. Essentially, the district is composed of the square itself and the block of West Dixie immediately west of the courthouse. This area contains the only collection of nineteenth and twentieth century buildings comprising the historic core of the city. The district achieves its character from the cohesiveness of the two and three-story brick buildings displaying either Italianate or Revival style qualities.

Of the 40 buildings contained within the district, 38 are considered to be contributing elements by virtue of their period design and/or their scale in relation to adjacent structures. Although a significant number of the buildings have undergone facade alterations, the degree of modification varies, generally being confined to the first floor facade. In most instances, it would appear that the alterations are either removable or amendable in some manner.

Located on the southeast corner of Mulberry Street and West Dixie, the S.J. Poston House is the only structure of residential character remaining in the district. Originally completed in 1836, the building was damaged in the 1869 fire and rebuilt by S.J. Poston. Although altered, the overall massing and proportions of the original structure have been retained. The building now serves as a funeral home.

However, the majority of the buildings within the district were built in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Almost all are two or three-story brick structures and are of brick bearing wall construction. Fairly representative examples include those structures found along the north side of West Dixie between Mulberry and the alley which display segmentally arched windows and a dentilled or bracketed cornice. Among the finer examples, the Gilded Age Building reveals on the east wall both round headed openings and windows surmounted by elaborate cast iron hood molds. Brick corbelling delineates each bay. The first floor of the main facade has been completely covered by a plastic sign which could be removed, while the second floor is basically unaltered except for the removal of the hood molds. The Bank of Elizabethtown building is another of the better preserved Italianate structures. Wrapping around the corner of West Dixie and the public square, the bank retains cast iron hood molds and a bracketed cornice.

Undoubtedly the most outstanding structure is the L-shaped George Rihn Building erected in 1888. Facing both West Dixie and the public square due to its shape, this elaborately detailed stone building retains much of its cast iron first floor facades. A slender column separates the two central bays on the second story level which are paired under a pediment. The upper portion of the facade is rusticated while the stone around the window area is smooth-faced, broken only by recessed panels and foliated carvings. The cornice displays brackets interspersed with medallions and is capped by a broken segmental arch.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW __PREHISTORIC __ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC __COMMUNITY PLANNING __LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE __RELIGION __1400-1499 __ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC __CONSERVATION __LAW __SCIENCE __1500-1599 __AGRICULTURE __ECONOMICS __LITERATURE __SCULPTURE __1600-1699 **X**ARCHITECTURE __EDUCATION __MILITARY __SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN __1700-1799 ---ART __ENGINEERING __MUSIC __THEATER X1800-1899 _XCOMMERCE . __EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT __PHILOSOPHY __TRANSPORTATION X 1900-__COMMUNICATIONS __INDUSTRY __POLITICS/GOVERNMENT __OTHER (SPECIFY) __INVENTION

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Elizabethtown Courthouse Square and Commercial District comprises the historic core of present-day Elizabethtown, Kentucky. Within this area, the earliest public and private buildings were erected at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and as the century progressed and Elizabethtown grew, this section became the commercial nucleus of the community. This is evident by the surviving concentration of late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings. Only within the last fifty years has the business activity of Elizabethtown begun to spread outward from this center, consuming what were formerly residential areas. Today, although the courthouse square and commercial district has undergone numerous changes, the greatest changes have occurred beyond the downtown; thus, its physical plan as well as the design, scale, and density of the older buildings clearly distinguish this area from the more recent development and provide a tangible link with Elizabethtown's commercial and civic foundations.

Elizabethtown, the seat of government for Hardin County, was established in 1797 on a thirty-acre tract of land belonging to Colonel Andrew Hynes, one of three early settlers in the area known as Severns Valley, named for explorer John Severns. The town is situated in the east-central portion of the county south of the ridge known as Muldraugh's Hill. Severns Valley Creek, a branch of the Nolin River, runs through the town. The earliest settlements in the valley consisted of three log forts established in 1779-80 by Captain Thomas Helm, Samuel Haycraft, Sr., and Colonel Andrew Hynes. It was on a portion of Colonel Hynes' land that the city of Elizabethtown, named in honor of Colonel Hynes' wife Elizabeth, was established. The thirty-acre parcel was divided into fifty-one lots with streets and alleys marked off. All lots consisted of a half acre except those on the public square which were one-quarter of an acre. Almost ten years passed from the town's founding before all the lots were sold.

The earliest structures were of log; however, by 1816, these buildings were gradually being replaced by brick and frame structures. Major Benjamin Helm built the first brick residence in 1803 on the north side of the public square. The first log courthouse, constructed in 1795 in the west corner of the public square, was replaced in 1806 by a brick structure built by James Perciful. Richard May began construction of a brick house on the southeast corner of Main Cross Street (West Dixie Avenue) and Mulberry which was subsequently completed by Benjamin Tobin in 1836 (now the S.J. Poston House). Major James Crutcher erected a brick residence in the west angle of the public square and a tavern on the south side of Main Cross Street during the early years of the nineteenth century. Within the first decade of Elizabethtown's founding, several taverns, various businesses, and a school were in operation.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

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10 GEOGRAPHICAL DA	TA	ALREA	T NÔT VERIFII			
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Elizabethtown Courthouse Square & Commercial District

CONTINUATION SHEET	ITEM NUMBER 4 PAGE 2
List of Owners	
Mr. Marvin Strickler	Harold Huddleston
109 N. Mulberry	David Van Zant
Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701	109 W. Poplar
,,,,,,,,,	Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701
Mr. Jon Rickert	
122 N. Main	Mr. Paul Lewis
Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701	Route #2
,,,,,,,,,,	Cecilia, Kentucky 42724
Mr. James Taylor	
822 Sunrise	Inman, Pirtle, & Curneal
Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701	#3 Marion Court
Extraordino mi, Relibratiny 12701	Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701
Mrs. J.V. Floyd	·
103 N. Mulberry	Mr. Fraisur Reesor
Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701	Box 52
HIIZabetheown, Renedery 42701	Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701
Rolla M. Dyer	•
Mary E. Niceley	Mrs. Alma McFarland
Box 276	223 W. Dixie
Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701	Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701
Elizabethtown, Rentucky 42701	
Pusey Estate	S.P. Adams
c/o First Hardin National Bank	c/o Brooks Adams
227 W. Dixie	110 E. Brown
Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701	Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701
and a second sec	·
City of Elizabethtown	Hardin Realty Company
111 W. Dixie	P.O. Box 38
Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701	Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701
,	
Mary & Martha McNamara	V. Smith Yates
115 South Mantle	Martha Knorr
Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701	303 High Street
,,,	Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701
Mr. Keenus Preston	
39 Public Square	Mary Bryan Estate
Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701	c/o First Hardin National Bank
,	227 W. Dixie
Estelle Clark	
Jame Crome	Mr. Horace Bird
33 Public Square	238 Helm
Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701	Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701

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Elizabethtown Courthouse Square & Commercial District

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List of Owners (cont.)

Mr. William Shinkle 621 Cherrywood Drive Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701

Shapiro Corporation 528 W. Main Street Louisville, Kentucky 40202

Allen Realty Company 427 Beech Street Scottsville, Kentucky 42164

Elizabethtown Community Development Corporation P.O. Box 648 Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701

First Hardin National Bank 102 W. Dixie Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701

Leon & Mary Lou Smith Box 43 Route #8 Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701

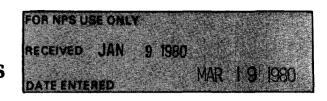
Mrs. Emma Waldeck P.O. Box 506 Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701

Shirley Belt Katherine Leachman 213 N. Mulberry Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701

American Red Cross Lincoln Trail ADD Unit 124 W. Dixie Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701

Mr. John Donnelly 204 Hillcrest Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701 Mrs. H.B. Alvey Mrs. Elizabeth Pate 134 W. Dixie Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701

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Elizabethtown Courthouse Square & Commercial District Hardin County, Kentucky

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Turn-of-the-century styles are represented in the Stewart Opera House and No. 109 East Dixie (Western Auto building). Constructed in 1907, the Stewart Opera House is a three-story, six-bay, brick building revealing a dentilled cornice with pedimented projections at the corners and in the center. The theatre was located on the second floor and is currently being rehabilitated for use as offices. No. 109 East Dixie is a well maintained two-story brick structure retaining the original cast iron street level facade. A stone stringcourse delineates the second floor, the stone lintels are rusticated, and a brick corbel capped by a dentilled cornice completes the facade,

Revival style buildings include the First Hardin National Bank on the corner of West Dixie and the public square and the Taylor Hotel on the south side of West Dixie. Completed in 1923, the First Hardin National Bank is a two-story brick structure with pilaster strips dividing the bays. Floral medallions set in diamond-shaped panels within patterned brickwork separate the first and second stories. Above the lowered cornice extends a brick parapet. The three-story Taylor Hotel, built in 1930, contains two round arch openings with semi-circular fanlights. The east entrance is sheltered by an awning. Windows are straight-headed with stone sills and above the narrow cornice band the brick parapet is highlighted by stone panels.

Built in 1933 in the Georgian Revival style, the Hardin County Courthouse is the focal point of the district. The three-story brick central section has a slightly projecting pavillion containing the entrance which is sheltered by a shallow portico and a Palladian window treatment on the second level. Brick quoins accentuate the corners and an enclosed balustrade encircles the roofline. Recessed wings with similar ornamentation flank the main block. This courthouse replaced the 1873 structure which had been damaged by fire in 1932.

Intrusions include the Dollar General Store and the Mall Building both of which are located in the southwest angle of the public square. The Dollar General Store is a one-story, concrete building which abuts the Mall, a two-story, stuccoed structure with plastic and aluminum trim.

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Elizabethtown Courthouse Square & Commercial District Hardin County, Kentucky

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Elizabethtown continued to grow steadily until the outbreak of the Civil War. The Louisville and Nashville Turnpike was completed during the 1830's and ran through Elizabethtown along Main Cross Street and through the public square. The present-day Dixie Highway (U.S.31W) follows much the same route as the old turn-pike. Elizabethtown was a natural stopping point for travelers, and in 1830, Samuel Beale Thomas of Elizabethtown and others began a stagecoach operation along the Louisville and Nashville Turnpike, making daily runs and stopping for meals at the Eagle House tavern off the public square. The stagecoach line remained a

With the outbreak of the Civil War, expansion and new construction in Elizabethtown came to a halt. On December 27, 1862, General John Hunt Morgan advanced upon Elizabethtown where Lieutenant Colonel Harry S. Smith's Union forces, numbering about 650, were garrisoned. Morgan's troops, stationed on Cemetery Hill east of town, opened fire on Elizabethtown damaging several businesses and some residences before the Union forces surrendered. The Confederates later burned the depot before moving on

thriving enterprise until the completion of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad in 1859. By 1861, both sides of Main Cross Street from Mulberry to the public square were

lined with brick buildings housing stores, taverns, and shops, as was the public square with the exception of two frame structures. However, the area east of the square to Valley Creek experienced little commercial development in this period. 1

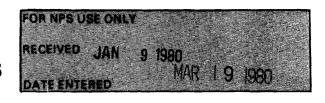
Elizabethtown experienced a resurgence of growth after the war. Samuel Haycraft states in his History of Elizabethtown that "as soon as peace was made a new era began...and in two years time more improvements were made than had been done in twenty years before." In 1869," many alterations were made on both sides of Main Cross Street from Mulberry Street to the public square, making the most compact and beautiful part of town. Those houses were occupied by dry goods merchants, shoe merchants, druggists, saddlers, coffee houses, confectioneries and family groceries all put up and completed and the rubbish in the streets removed. The street was the pride of the town, giving evidence of enterprise and thrift." This boom was stunted on August 7, 1869, when Elizabethtown experienced the first of several disastrous fires which were to plague the business sector. The first issue of the Elizabethtown News, published on August 12, was devoted entirely to the fire which began north of Main Cross Street and spread southward consuming both the north and south sides of Main Cross from Mulberry Street to the public square. The city had no fire fighting equipment and had to combat the flames by means of a bucket brigade. The loss was estimated between \$100,000 and \$150,000.

1Daniel E. McClure, Jr., <u>Two Centuries in Elizabethtown and Hardin County</u>, <u>Kentucky</u> (Elizabethtown: Hardin County Historical Society, 1979), p. 235.

²Samuel Haycraft, A History of Elizabethtown, Kentucky (Elizabethtown: Hardin County Historical Society, 1960), pp. 84-85.

³Ibid., p. 86.

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Elizabethtown Courthouse Square and Commercial District Hardin County, Kentucky

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Elizabethtown did not acquire a water works or an efficient means of fire fighting until the late 1890s. In the meantime, three more fires subsequently destroyed large portions of the business area. The three-story May Hotel on east Main Cross, described as the handsomest building in town, burned in 1883, and in 1887, a fire started on the site of the present-day City Hall and burned eastward on Main Cross around the corner of the public square, consuming the entire northwest corner of the square. The third major fire destroyed the southeast corner of the public square in 1893.

As a rule, however, the merchants rebuilt after each fire or a new business located on the site. However, Elizabethtown remained essentially an agriculturally oriented community at the turn of the century. In 1882, H.A. Sommers, editor of the Elizabethtown News, commented that Elizabethtown resembled most southern towns of that period, there being no sidewalks except in the business section and no streetlights, but an abundance of hogs roamed the streets which remained unimproved except for Main Cross, the old Louisville and Nashville Turnpike. Citizen demands finally brought about road improvements in 1892, new brick sidewalks in the business district in 1893, and the beginning of a public water works system in 1895. In 1899, a contract was let for a twenty-year franchise to furnish the city with arc lights.

By 1910, the general physical character of the courthouse square and commercial district was fairly well established. No major development took place in the area during the teens and twenties. However, the Joplin Hotel was built between 1921 and 1923 on the south side of the square replacing the Showers House which burned in 1918, and the First Hardin National Bank completed construction of its new building on the southwest corner of the square in 1923. In 1930, the Taylor Hotel was erected on the south side of West Dixie. One of Elizabethtown's first major manufacturing enterprises was begun in 1920 when Luke B. Schmidt of Louisville purchased the former Ford garage on North Mulberry and established the first Coca-Cola bottling plant in town. The firm outgrew this facility and built a new plant on South Main in the 1930s.

Elizabethtown experienced its second major period of growth in the late 1930s and early 1940s with the establishment and rapid expansion of Fort Knox in northern Hardin County. The Elizabethtown area underwent a substantial increase in both economic development and in housing during the late '30s. World War II brought about additional housing demands. Elizabethtown's population has spiraled steadily since the 1940s, and commercial development

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has kept pace with this growth. However, this commercial boom has taken place on the outskirts of town, creating numerous suburban shopping centers to the north, northwest, and northeast of Elizabethtown. The area southwest of the downtown consists of large manufacturing plants which were introduced in the 1940s and 1950s. Part of the post-war development can be attributed to Elizabethtown's location. US 31 W, which followed the old Louisville and Nashville Turnpike of the nineteenth century, was completed in the 1920s and served as the major artery linking Louisville, Fort Knox, Elizabethtown, and Nashville. Interstate 65 is now the main north-south transportation line and intersects the Bluegrass and Western Kentucky Parkways at Elizabethtown. Thus, its location has made Elizabethtown a prime center for commercial and manufacturing developments.

The result has been the removal of the primary commercial activity from the downtown to the outlying areas along or near the freeways. Whereas, up until about 1930 the Courthouse Square and Commercial District was surrounded by residential areas, the areas immediately east, south, and west of the proposed district have been entirely consumed by the expanding commercial development. Although these areas are now commercial in use, their physical make-up is clearly distinct from that of the nineteenth century core. Most of the buildings post date 1930 with the majority of much more recent construction. Consequently, they contrast sharply with the scale and design of those buildingscomprising the district. Furthermore, in some instances the streets have been widened, and parking lots dot these areas thereby destroying the sense of continuity and cohesiveness found within the district.

A renewed concern for the future of the downtown has recently developed, and within the past year, the downtown merchants have organized in a concerted effort to revitalize the area in order to compete successfully with the suburban commercial establishments. A consulting firm has been hired to draw up plans for the downtown redevelopment, and several merchants have expressed interest in the restoration and rehabilitation of their buildings.

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Elizabethtown Courthouse Square and Commercial District Hardin County, Kentucky

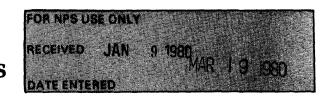
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- Additional information supplied by Mrs. Reba Mae Terry, Hardin County Representative for Kentucky Heritage Commission and member of Hardin County Historical Society.

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Elizabethtown Courthouse Square & Commercial District Hardin County, Kentucky

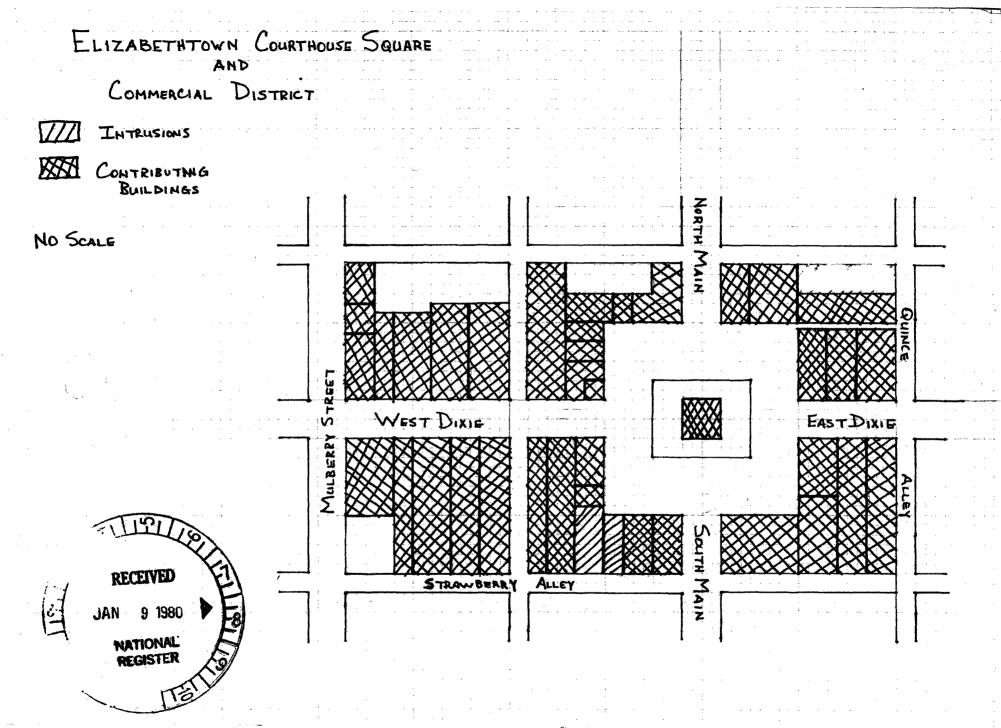
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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the area being nominated begin at the southwest corner of Quince Alley and the alley paralleling Dixie to the north, south along the west side of Quince approximately 500' to the northwest corner of Quince and Strawberry Alley, west along the north side of Strawberry Alley approximately 800' to the northeast corner of Strawberry and Mulberry approximately 500' to the southeast corner of Mulberry and the alley paralleling Dixie to the north, east along the south side of said alley approximately 800' to the point of origin.



Elizabethtown Courthouse Square and Commercial District, Hardin County, Kentucky Charlotte Schneider No Scale