

MULTIPLE NOMINATION HISTORIC DISTRICT SUMMARY FORM

MRA/THEMATIC NOMINATION TITLE: Historic Resources of Hardin County - Partial Inventory

AUG 26 1988

HISTORIC DISTRICT NAME: Bethlehem Academy Historic District

OWNER OF PROPERTY: Edith Ray

(On Continuation Sheets list all properties by address which are included within the district and provide the names and addresses of their owners.)

DESCRIPTION:

Condition: excellent, good, fair; deteriorated, ruins, unexposed; Check one: unaltered, altered; Check one: original site, moved date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

(Use Continuation Sheets)

SIGNIFICANCE

Period: 1800-1899; Areas of Significance: archeology-historic, architecture, art, commerce, communications; Check and justify below: education, engineering, exploration/settlement, industry, invention; landscape architecture, law, literature, military, music, philosophy, politics government; religion, science, sculpture, social/humanitarian, theater, transportation, other (specify)

Specific dates ca. 1825-1848; Builder/Architect John Helm/Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

(Use Continuation Sheets)

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreeage of nominated property Approx. 3.1 acres; Quadrangle name Cecilia; Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

Table with UTM Zone, Easting, and Northing coordinates for points A through H.

Verbal boundary description and justification

(Use Continuation Sheets)

DISTRICT MAPS ATTACHED:

- 1. District Boundary Map Showing Contributing & Noncontributing Properties.
2. District Map Showing Location & Direction of Numbered Photographs.

## Bethlehem Academy Historic District

### Description

The Bethlehem Academy Historic District contains four buildings and one site which are significant in the educational history of Hardin County. The district was the site of the Bethlehem Academy, an important girl's school of the 19th and 20th centuries. Although much of the original complex has been demolished or remodeled, the district retains its character and association as an early educational complex.

The district is located in a rural farming area west of Elizabethtown, Kentucky. To the south, east and west of the buildings are large cultivated fields and pastures. The northern boundary of the district is defined by KY 1357 and a modern rail fence. The original building on the site was the John L. Helm House constructed ca. 1825 (HD-19). This two-story brick structure is of Flemish bond construction with a large two-story Greek Revival portico on the main facade. This portico was probably added to the house ca. 1848 during additions to the building. The portico is of frame with square Doric columns on the second story. The first story columns are ca. 1910 hollow core concrete block additions. The portico has a gable roof and dentil molding. The main entrance on the first story displays a modern frame door with reworked sidelights and transom. On the second story the entrance is original with a frame door, sidelights and transom.

The Helm House was constructed of Flemish bond brick and originally displayed nine-over-six sash windows. These were deteriorated, removed in 1981 and replaced with new six-over-six wood sash. At the roofline is a hipped and jerkinhead roof with a new standing seam metal surface. At the roofline is also a ca. 1848 square bell tower and pyramidal roof steeple. At the rear of the house is a new one-story porch. The interior of the building has lost much of its historic detailing but an original staircase does exist on the first and second stories. This staircase was built ca. 1825 but the railing and newel posts were added ca. 1900. Much of the original floors are also intact.

The attached west ca. 1848 wing is a six bay, brick structure with a metal standing seam gable roof. Windows are also six-over-six replacement sash and the two doors on the main facade have both original and added detailing. At the rear of this wing is an added two-story porch and staircase.

The second building in the complex is the ca. 1848 Priest's House (HD-343). This two-story brick building is a five bay central passage plan design. On the main facade is a small gable roof porch added ca. 1920 with large brackets. Windows are one-over-one replacement with new shutters. The house has a gable roof with a metal standing seam surface and exterior end brick chimneys. At the rear of the house vinyl siding has been added as well as a small one-story porch with ca. 1920 cast concrete columns and dentils. This added siding covers exterior frame and does not extend to cover the original brick on this facade. The combination of brick and frame weatherboard on this facade is unusual. The building was originally attached to the Helm House via a two-story wing which was demolished in the recent remodeling.

The third and fourth buildings in the complex are a ca. 1848 cookhouse (HD-344) and smokehouse (HD-345). The cookhouse is a small five bay brick structure with

a gable metal standing seam roof. One window on the main facade has been bricked in while the others display six-over-six sash windows added in 1981. On the north wall a large multi-light picture window has been added. A frame doorway area has been remodeled with a new door and metal siding added. On the east side of the building is a large brick chimney. The building has small single light basement windows, a raised gable parapet on the north facade and a stone foundation.

The smokehouse is a one-story three bay, common bond brick structure constructed ca. 1890. The building has six-over-six sash and single light windows. On the main facade are two modern doors. The building has a flat roof of metal standing seam. The district also includes ruins of a ca. 1848 brick washhouse (HD-346) which is a contributing site. This site consists of a stone foundation and ruins of early 20th century machinery. No other buildings or sites are historically associated with the Bethlehem Academy complex.

#### Statement of Significance:

The Bethlehem Academy Historic District contains a grouping of four buildings and one site which are significant in the educational history of Hardin County. The district has been nominated under criterion A as one of the few examples of a 19th century educational institution in Hardin County. The academy was a well known girl's school before closing in 1959. The buildings then sat vacant for over twenty years and were in a dilapidated condition when purchased and remodeled by the present owner. The complex represents an important part of Hardin County's educational history.

The oldest building in the district is the two-story Federal style John L. Helm House built ca. 1825. Helm was the son of George Helm, one of the earliest pioneers in Hardin County, and he constructed this house as his residence in the mid-1820s. During this time Helm was an attorney serving as a clerk for Hardin County and as Meade County Attorney. In 1826, Helm was elected to the state legislature and was reelected in 1828 and 1830. As Helm's political and business fortunes improved he met and wed Lucinda Hardin in 1830 and made plans for a larger and grander residence. In December of 1830, Helm sold this house and 580 acres to Reverend Charles J. Cecil and the Sisters of Loretto. Helm then went on to build Helm Place (NR 1976) and eventually became Governor of Kentucky in 1850 and 1867.

The Sisterhood of Loretto, a Catholic order, was founded in 1812 to devote itself to the teaching of children. A school was established in Breckinridge County in 1820 and in 1830 the Hardin home was purchased and a school opened at this location. Mother Agnes Hart and six nuns arrived at the house in December of 1830 and opened a school to provide education for young girls. The academy became well known for the quality of its education and it soon attracted students from across the state. By the mid-1840s the school had outgrown the Helm mansion and new quarters were necessary.

The Sisters added two large Federal style wings to the house ca. 1848. These were two-story brick structures built with simple detailing. A cookhouse for the students was also constructed along with a brick smokehouse. The Sisters then had facilities for 75 boarding students and 25 day students. The land surrounding the buildings was farmed by the Sisters who grew wheat, flax and vegetables to help support the school. In addition to being used by the students

one of the buildings housed Priests from the nearby St. John Baptist Church.

The Bethlehem Academy became one of the best known girls schools in Kentucky teaching both elementary and high school grades. The school was fully accredited and many different types of classes were taught. For fifty years a station of the U.S. Weather Bureau operated here. The school thrived throughout the 19th and early 20th century celebrating its 100th year in 1930. This event was marked by a large centennial celebration with hundreds of graduates attending the services.

The school continued to operate until a declining number of students forced it to close in 1959. After 1959, the buildings were vacant and used for storage of hay and farm equipment. The buildings became quite deteriorated and were in poor condition when they were sold to Mrs. Edith Ray. Mrs. Ray felt that several sections of the complex were unsound and demolished two sections of the wings and a rear frame ca. 1900 addition. The Helm House, Priest's House, Cookhouse and Smokehouse were then restored.

The restoration of the Bethlehem Academy complex was completed in the early 1980s. The Helm House and attached ca. 1848 wing have all new six-over-six sash windows and shutters and some features at the main entrance were added. The majority of the remainder of the exterior details on the main facade are original or were added during mid-19th century alterations. At the rear of the two buildings new porch areas have been added. The interior of both buildings have been substantially remodeled, however, original staircases remain. The Priest's House has replacement one-over-one sash windows, a ca. 1920 gable roof porch on the main facade and altered porch area at the rear. The cookhouse and smokehouse have also been remodeled but display their basic form and plan.

Due to the remodeling of the early 1980s the buildings do not retain integrity to be nominated under criterion C. Although the alterations have been extensive the buildings still display their original plan, materials and form. The primary significance of the district is through its importance in the educational history of the county and as being a significant 19th century school complex in the state. The district contains four contributing buildings and one contributing site.

#### Verbal Boundary Description and Justification:

The boundary for the Bethlehem Academy Historic District is shown as the dotted line on accompanying Hardin County Tax Map 123, lot 10. The boundary is drawn to include all properties historically associated with the complex and to exclude modern farm buildings to the west, south, and east. On the north the complex is bounded by KY 1357. The boundary includes four contributing buildings and one contributing site.

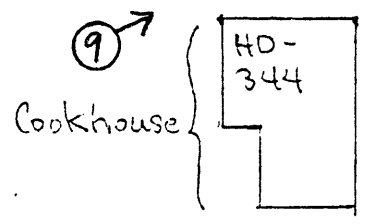
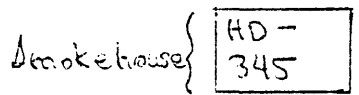
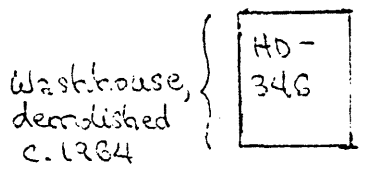
8.

X

Nun's cemetery, removed

10

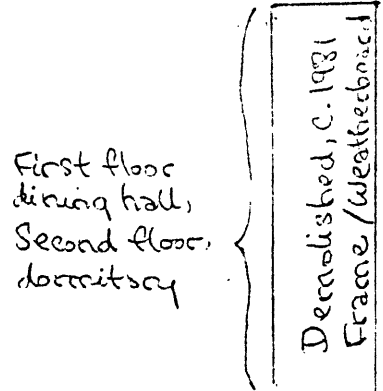
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Bethlehem Academy Historic District Photo Key showing location and direction of photographs.

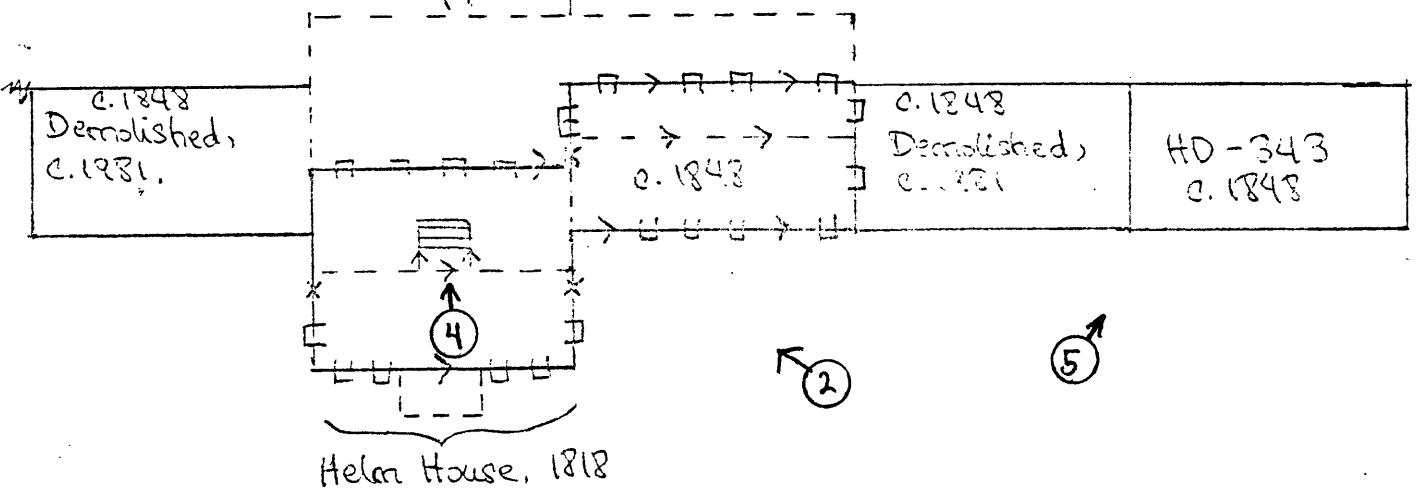
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8 ↖



7 ↙

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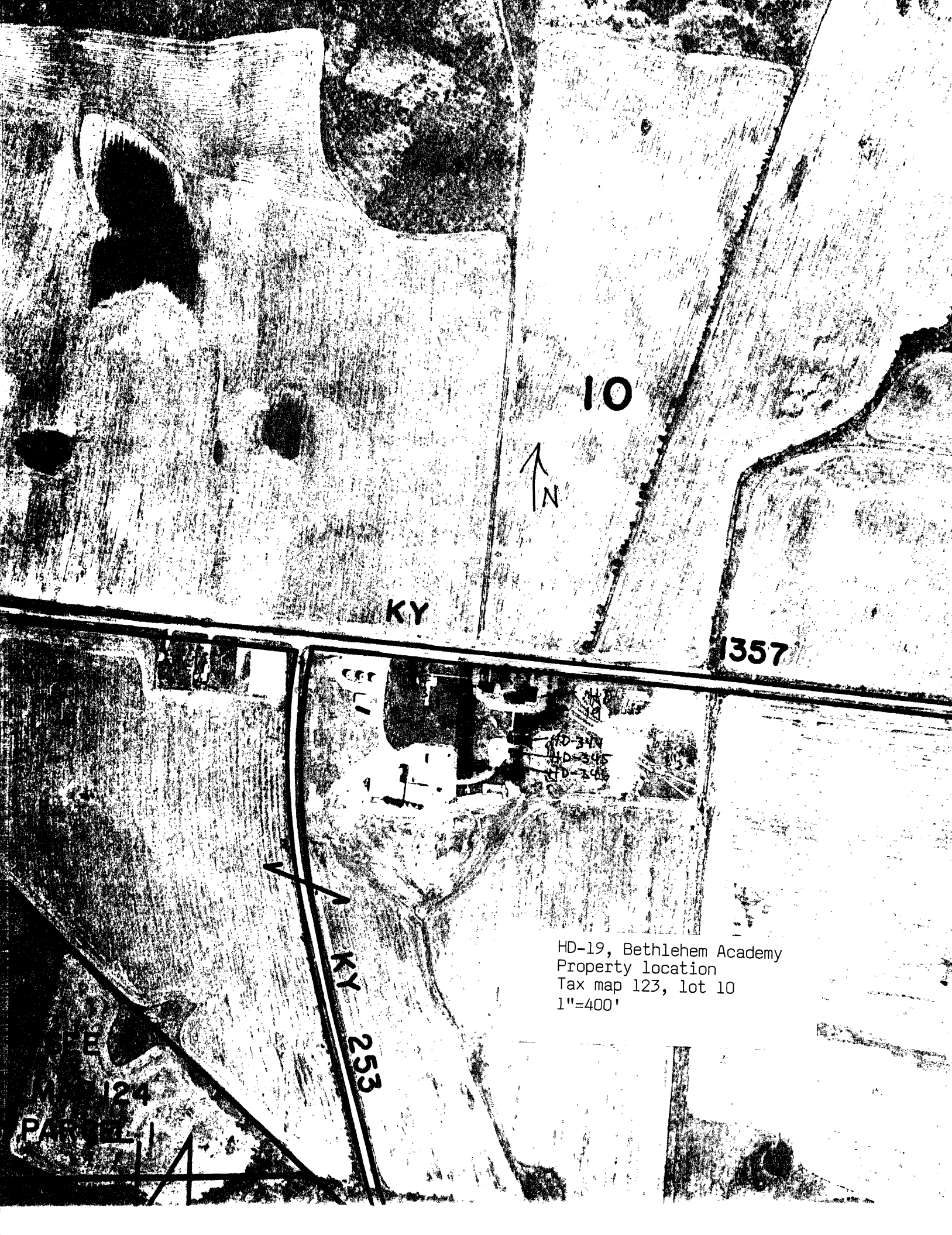
Ky. 1357

Approximately 742 acres

3 ↗

1 ↗

Ky. 1357



10



KY

1357

124

HD-344  
HD-345  
HD-346

KY

253

HD-19, Bethlehem Academy  
Property location  
Tax map 123, lot 10  
1"=400'

124

PARCEL 1