

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

~~PHD 36477~~ PH0359483

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 28 1976

DATE ENTERED NOV 7 1976

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
Poplar Hill (John William Kimbrough House)

AND/OR COMMON
Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Route #4 E of Cynthiana KY 82/86

CITY, TOWN
Cynthiana *vic.*

STATE
Kentucky

VICINITY OF
06

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
06

CODE
021

COUNTY
Harrison

CODE
097

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input 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 type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input 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
Mrs. Tracy Farmer

STREET & NUMBER
Route 4

CITY, TOWN
Cynthiana

VICINITY OF

STATE
Kentucky

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Harrison County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Cynthiana

STATE
Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky (Supplement)

DATE
1975

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN
Frankfort

STATE
Kentucky

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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

Poplar Hill, located one mile southeast of Cynthiana, is situated on a rise overlooking the Millersburg Pike, a road lined with large and fine farm residences. The house is a three-bay, two-story brick structure with a one-story ell that extends southwest off the main block (see photo 4). Double interior brick chimneys with corbelled tops are located at the east and west ends of the house. A single chimney between small lookout windows is found in the south wall of the ell (which has a small modern addition at the rear). The bricks are laid in Flemish bond in the front and common bond in the back and sides, over a fairly rough stone basement foundation.

The main entrance, which is centered in the facade, has a transom and four-pane sidelights. A one-bay, one-story porch, supported by square paired posts, frames the front door. Trim in delicate linear trefoil designs links the paired columns on each side, with shallow arches outlined over the central and side openings. The deep entablature on the porch has carefully-spaced paired brackets, while the narrow cornice on the facade and running up into the end gables consists of curved modillions. The porch was originally crowned by an interesting balustrade with oblong openings between paneled posts aligned with those below, as shown in photo 3. The windows have six-over-six panes with plain stone sills and lintels. The shutters also shown in the circa 1890 photograph are probably original, since the lintels extend beyond the openings.

The house is based on the two-room deep central-hall plan. Between the east double parlors is a curvaceous arch within a frame of multiple moldings (photo 5). Obviously meant to be seen in outline, the arch has quadrant curves in the corners resting on baroque corbels, with segmental curves at the top flanking an upside-down beehive pendant and connected to the corner curves with s-curves.

The double parlor is the most enriched, with a handsome cornice of three-dimensional swirling foliage between deep bands of plain molding (photo 6). There are at least two lavish plaster chandelier medallions. One has rather abstract leaf forms raying out from the central hook toward four full-blown roses, ringed beyond an interval with clusters of grapes between leaves (photo 5). The other has alternating pointed segments of grapes on twisted stems and morning-glory vines, radiating from a mound with other types of flowers (photo 6). These and other interior features are remarkably intact.

There is a brick outbuilding to the southwest of the house and several fairly old barns on the property. A wide brick walk laid in the herringbone pattern leads to the front entrance (photo 2).

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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	—EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	—SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
—1700-1799	—ART	—ENGINEERING	—MUSIC	—THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	—COMMERCE	—EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	—PHILOSOPHY	—TRANSPORTATION
—1900-	—COMMUNICATIONS	—INDUSTRY	—POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	—OTHER (SPECIFY)
		—INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1848

BUILDER/ARCHITECT John W. Kimbrough

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Poplar Hill was constructed in 1848 by John William Kimbrough, a farmer and trader. It is located southeast of Cynthiana, the county seat of Harrison County (see the National Register nomination form for the Harrison County Courthouse, approved December 6, 1974), on the road that leads through Millersburg to Paris in Bourbon County. The house was later the residence of John McKee, another prominent local farmer. Poplar Hill, one of the finest houses remaining in the Cynthiana area, was also the focal point of a Civil War skirmish on June 12, 1864, between the Confederate command of General John Hunt Morgan and the Union troops of General Burbridge. The engagement ended in heavy losses and defeat for the Confederate forces and marked the end of Morgan's notorious raids in Kentucky. The relatively plain exterior of the house conceals an interior with lavish Italianate plasterwork and other decorative trim.

History

John W. Kimbrough, for whom the house was built, was born in Harrison County in 1822. He was raised in the county and attended local schools, and was brought up in farming, which occupation he practiced the remainder of his life. He also engaged in lucrative trading. In 1847, he married Eliza Victor, a native of nearby Nicholas County. A year later he began construction of the brick house that is located east of Cynthiana on the Millersburg Pike¹.

Between June 1 and June 12, 1864, the much romanticized Confederate general, John Hunt Morgan, made a final series of raids in Kentucky which culminated on June 12 in the battle in Cynthiana, near Poplar Hill. Striking against Union forces at Mount Sterling, Lexington, and Cynthiana, Morgan planned to divert General Burbridge's troops in Eastern Kentucky from advancing on the Confederate saline-works and lead mines in southwestern Virginia.

¹There is some confusion about the construction date of the house and its original owner's occupation. It is believed that the builders were Kimbrough, Carpenter & Carpenter. Whether the first name to J. W. Kimbrough is not clear. He has sometimes been called a carpenter himself, but that appears to be a result of the co-builders' names. A strikingly similar house in Cynthiana on the same road, known as the Peck house, is thought to have been built in 1857-58, perhaps a more likely date for the Kimbrough house as well. Behind a mantel in the Peck house was recently found an inscription, "Joe B. Carpenter I. H. Newman set this mantel January 7, 1858."

(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Harrison, Lowell H. The Civil War in Kentucky. Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1975.

Mosgrove, George Dallas. Kentucky Cavaliers in Dixie. Jackson, Tennessee: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1957.

(continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 5 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	6	7	3	7	9	8	0	4	2	5	1	6	3	0
ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

B

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING					

C

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING					

D

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING					

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

Dixon A. Barr, Dean, College of Education; Mary Cronan, Historian; WEL

ORGANIZATION

Eastern Kentucky University/Kentucky Heritage Commission

DATE

June 10, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

/104 Bridge Street

TELEPHONE

(502) 564-3471

CITY OR TOWN

Richmond

/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

Eldred W. Melton

TITLE State Historic Preservation Office

DATE 6/22/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Acting

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 11/9/76

ATTEST:

DATE 11/2/76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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Poplar Hill

CONTINUATION SHEET

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By moving rapidly, Morgan and his men captured Union garrisons and large stores of supplies in Mount Sterling and Lexington, south of Cynthiana. Eleven days after entering the State, Morgan reached Cynthiana where, after a fierce battle during which much of the town was burned, he captured a large Union force. By this time General Burbridge had learned of Morgan's activities and had reversed his troops and was marching toward Cynthiana.

After the skirmish on the 11th, Morgan's men were exhausted and were very low on ammunition. As a result of their victory, they also had a large number of Union prisoners to guard. With the rapid approach of General Burbridge's troops, Morgan's advisors urged him to withdraw, since the men were in no condition to give battle. Morgan decided against it, believing that his men, after a night's rest, would be able to defeat the Union forces.

Early in the morning of the 12th General Burbridge attacked Morgan's men while they were at breakfast. The fighting began one mile east of Cynthiana on the Millersburg Pike, where Poplar Hill is located. In Mosgrove's book Kentucky Cavaliers in Dixie (1957), the positions of Morgan's troops are described:

Giltner's brigade was placed in position on the Paris Turnpike, near the Kimbrough Mansion, on an elevation which commanded a view of the road several hundred yards in our front; the Fourth Kentucky was immediately on our left of the road, facing toward Paris; Major Holiday's battalion was on the opposite side toward Kimbrough's house, on the right hand side of the road (p. 159).

According to tradition the one-story rear ell of the Kimbrough house also served as a hospital after the battle. There are said to be holes in the brick on the south side of the house.

The Union troops outnumbered the Confederates two-to-one and Morgan's men were soon out of ammunition. Many Confederate soldiers were killed in the battle or during their retreat through Cynthiana and across the Licking River. Morgan, continued his withdrawal through Flemingsburg and West Liberty, Kentucky (see the National Register form for the Morgan County Courthouse), to Abington, Virginia.

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Poplar Hill

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Although Morgan was successful in diverting the Union troops from their attack on the Confederate works in Virginia, he suffered a large number of casualties. Morgan himself was killed a few months later in Greenville, Tennessee.

In 1875, Kimbrough sold the house to John McKee. McKee was born in Bourbon County in February 1804. He attended the local schools and upon completion of his education began practicing farming. In 1827 he married Eliza Wilson, a native of Fayette County. Several years after the death of his first wife in 1839, McKee married Nancy Thorn. After having lived on one farm for over forty-three years, McKee moved to the house and 108 acres of land known as Poplar Hill in 1875.

At the death of John McKee the house was left to his son, James McKee, who continued operation of the farm. Born in 1836, James McKee attended the county schools until he attended Farmer's College, near Cincinnati, Ohio. Upon graduation he returned to Nicholas County where he practiced farming, specializing in the breeding and raising of sheep and mules.

Architecture

The house is one of the finest and most prominently situated among a series of farm residences that line the road that links Paris, in the heart of the Bluegrass region, and Cynthiana, which is also rich as an agricultural center with additional links to Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky (see the National Register form on Monticello, the T.J. Megibben house in Cynthiana, listed December 31, 1974). The farm houses, many of them rather resembling villas, have a distinctive character, often lavish in trim, but with an underlying stylistic conservatism.

Poplar Hill, for instance, which is very similar to another house in Cynthiana, the Peck house, is essentially a large three-bay brick house of early 19th-century type, with a finely-laid Flemish-bond facade on a stone foundation. The modillioned cornice could be Georgian, except that it extends around the corners and the relatively low gable-ends. The handsome front porch, which appears to be original, has an almost Grecian heaviness in the paired square pillars and deep entablature, but these are relieved by the delicate, rhythmic linear patterns of the spandrels, paired brackets, and (originally) the balustrade above, all of which seem mid-19th-century Italianate in character. Similarly, the plasterwork seems still an extension of Greek Revival precedents, but with a plastic, almost Baroque mid-Victorian quality in the clusters of naturalistic grapes and morning-glories linked by slightly more stylized foliage. A silhouetted arch of rhythmic but broken curves sustains the transitional feeling of the interior which, like the outside of the house, combines simplicity with well-chosen ornament resulting in overall harmony.

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Poplar Hill

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

Official Records of the War of the Rebellion. Washington D.C.: Government
Printing Press, 1888.

Perrin, W.H., ed. History of Bourbon, Scott, Harrison, and Nicholas Counties.
Chicago: F.O. Battey & Co., 1882.