

KENTUCKY HISTORIC RESOURCES  
Individual Inventory FormResource # JF-690  
Jefferson County

1. Name of Resource: Merriwether House

2. Original Owner: Harry Hall Merriwether

3. Other Names: None

4. Prehistoric Site  Building  Object  
Historic Site  Structure  Other

5. Location: 6421 Upper River Road  
Harrods Creek, Kentucky

6. Owner's Name: Mr. & Mrs. William Kellar [ P ]

7. Owner's Address: 6421 Upper River Road, Box 74  
Harrods Creek, Kentucky 40027

8. Evaluation: National Register Potential [ N ]

9. Recognition & Date: N/A  
Nat.Landmark  Local Landmark   
Nat.Register  HABS/HAER   
Highway Marker  KY Inventory   
KY Landmark Certificate

10. N.R.Status & Date: N/A

11. N.R.Group:  
District Name: [ ]  
Mult.Resource Area: Jefferson County [ ]  
Thematic Name: [ ]

12. Historical Theme:  
Primary: Ethnic Heritage-Black [ 13B ]  
Secondary: Exploration/Settlement [ 140 ]  
Other: [ ]

13. Statement of Significance:  
A well-preserved illustration of the settlement by blacks in the rural community of Harrods Creek in the last quarter of the 19th century. Built by a black--Harry Hall Merriwether--in about 1898, the house and its site on the banks of the creek reflect the use of the land by these small-scale farmers and laborers. [ A ]

14. History:

Freed blacks must have certainly begun independent life in Harrods Creek following the end of the Civil War. The Harrods Creek community--a crossroads village founded in the early part of the 19th century--offered commerce to the farmers of the Jefferson County--Oldham County vicinity. Economic opportunity for blacks in such a setting would have included independent and tenant farming, harvesting cane, laboring on the creek or its shores and so on.

Continued on Attached Sheet

15. Source of historical information and/or contact person: See Attached Sheet

16. Date:  
Original Building 1875-1899 [ 5 ]  
Addition 1950-1974 [ 2 ]

17. Style:  
Stick/Eastlake [ 44 ]  
Modern Vernacular [ 7V ]

18. Architect/Builder: Unknown

19. No. of Stories: Two [ 2.0 ]

20. Original Floor Plan: Asymmetrical/Picturesque [ AP ]

21. Single Pile  Double Pile  N.A.  X

22. Roof Form & Material: Original  
Hipped-Asbestos Sh. Not Original  X

23. Structural Material: Wood Frame-Sawn [ W ]

24. Exterior Material: Plain Siding With Fancy Trim [ W ]

25. Foundation Material: Brick [ B ]

26. Major Alterations: None  
Moved/Rebuilt Other   
Additions Porch Partially Filled In,

27. Special Features: Picturesque Porch and Windows

28. Outbuildings: None [ 0 ]

29. Original Function: Single Dwelling [ 01A ]

30. Present Use: Single Dwelling [ 01A ]

31. Condition: Good [ G ]

32. Endangered: Yes   
No  X

33. Attach Photos:  
Roll: Photo Nos: No. of Slides:

34. Prepared by: Douglas Stern

35. Organization: Jefferson Co. Hist. Pres. & Archives

36. Date: May 1, 1986

37. New Survey  X Resurvey

KENTUCKY HISTORIC RESOURCES  
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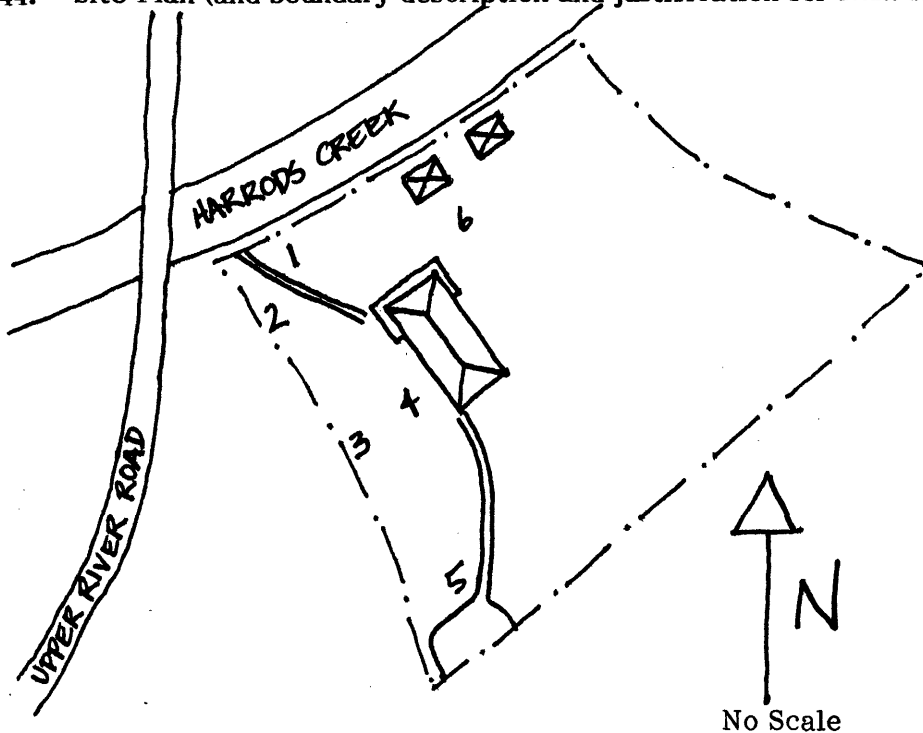
38. UTM Point of Primary Building: Zone Easting Northing 39. G.I.S. Mod. [ ]  
 Quadrant: Jeffersonville 16 619690 4242900 40. Coordi.Accuracy [ ]

41. UTM Points of Boundary (for N. R. eligible sites only):

|          |          |
|----------|----------|
| A. ----- | D. ----- |
| B. ----- | E. ----- |
| C. ----- | F. ----- |

42. Total Acreage in Present Property: 1.5 43. Acreage included in proposed N.R. boundary: 1.5

44. Site Plan (and boundary description and justification for N.R. sites):



The 1½ acre site represents the total historic landholding of Harry Hall Merriwether, builder of the ca. 1898 dwelling on the site. In addition to improved docks and "river cottages," several historic landforms survive, including the terrace on which the house was constructed, a number of mature trees and open or wooded land used for gardening or grazing.

All of Lot 104, Block 6, County District 1.

The nominated area includes one contributing building (the house) and two non-contributing buildings (the ca. 1950 "river cottages").

45. Description and House Plan:

A relatively simple two-story, wood-frame dwelling of rectangular massing oriented perpendicularly to Harrods Creek. Elaborate arched and balustraded porch of one story survives intact on the front and one side; filled in for additional living space on the third side. Hipped roof clad in large asbestos shingles and topped by a broad dormer above the facade. Asymmetrical fenestration includes round and diamond-shaped openings on the elevation facing the approach from the town. The house overlooks Harrods Creek from a high, man-made terrace. Several mature trees survive on the one and one-half acre tract. The plan features a front parlor and dining room bordered by a side stairhall. Mantles and other millwork are intact.

**United States Department of the Interior  
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Inventory—Nomination Form**

Merriwether House (JF690)

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**Statement of Significance (Continued)**

The Merriwether House property is composed of a single dwelling which contributes and two non-contributing dwellings. This property serves as a remarkably intact example of black settlement in Jefferson County. Other post-Civil War black communities exhibit little, if any, built evidence of their 19th century heritage. The Merriwether House, in its third generation of ownership by that family, remains as a tangible example of black independence in Jefferson County.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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Merriwether House (Site #JF-690)

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**History (Continued)**

The Merriwether family acquired its land near the mouth of Harrods Creek on the Ohio river beginning in about 1890. The Allison family (JF563) had begun to liquidate its substantial landholdings in the 1880s. Harry Merriwether--whose brother Isaac had already established a place below the creek on a small tract--bought an acre and one-half from the Allison heirs in 1891 and in 1898 sold the land to his grandson, Harry hall Merriwether for \$40.00.

It was most likely then that the house was erected, judging from its architectural style and the recollections of a living descendent. A substantial terrace was engineered on the steep banks of the creek to provide a level building site on the small property. In spite of the limited amount of land connected with the house, the Merriwether family engaged in small-scale agriculture, raising and slaughtering hogs at free-range behind the house, tending a large garden, and the like.

The broad curve of Harrods Creek and proximity to the Ohio River made the site attractive to boaters and vacationers in the early 20th century. The Merriwethers responded by building and managing a small number of docks and cottages along the creek frontage of their property northeast of the house. This minor commercial endeavor enabled the bulk of the property to remain in agriculture while providing additional needed income for the family.

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**15. Source of Historical Information and/or Contact Person:**

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Louisville Courier-Journal, 23 March 1986.

Interview by Hunt Helm and Douglas Stern with Mr. and Mrs. William Kellar, Harrods Creek, 7 March 1986.

Jefferson County Deed and Will Books.

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National Park Service**

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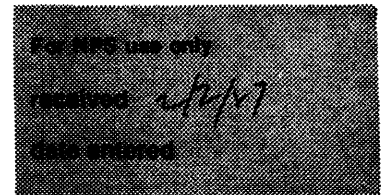
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Settlements by Blacks in Jefferson County

Addendum to the Statement of Significance for the Jefferson County Multiple Resource Area

At the turn of the 20th century black communities could be found in some half dozen locations in Jefferson County. Most of the settlements were developed by freed blacks at the conclusion of the Civil War. These settlements are particularly important because they served to challenge the norm--the mass migration of blacks into Louisville. While this urban migration continued for more than a half-century, a virtually undocumented rural movement was fostered in small settlements and on farmsteads.

In 1910 blacks outside the city of Louisville numbered about 61,000, accounting for 59% of the total black population of Jefferson County. This was a decrease from 90% in 1860--just prior to the Civil War. The migration into Louisville and northward, in general, continued well into the 1930s. At the time Depression virtually eliminated farming by blacks in Jefferson County. Small black communities--some of which will be described below--became the home-sites for the majority of the county's black residents.

One of the county's earliest black communities began prior to the Civil War along the Newburgh Turnpike in the southeastern section of the county. Situated on forty acres at the present-day intersection of Petersburg and Indian Trail Roads, Henry and Eliza Tevis--"free persons of color"--established their farm. Today this site is marked by a century-old black cemetery (Site #JF-139). Following the Civil War, freed slaves from the Hikes farms (Site #JF-681) immediately south and east of the Tevis property began a small rural community which came to be known as Petersburg.

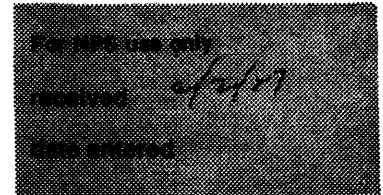
The eastern part of Jefferson County included an exclusive rail commuter suburb and tourist haven--Anchorage. (See, for example, Site #JF-662, amended.) After 1865 many of the freed slaves continued to work as domestic help for their former masters. Two black settlements were located nearby. To the east of Anchorage, across the railroad tracks which formed the southern and eastern bounds of the city, was Berrytown. A second settlement south of Anchorage was Griffytown (originally spelled Griffeytown) (Site #JF-441). This community was begun by a freed man named Dan Griffith who had purchased an early log cabin and relocated it to a site on Old Harrods Creek Road.

Northwest of Berrytown and Griffytown, near the Ohio River, was Harrods Creek. This area was settled in the early 19th century but became a site of a freed black community in the 1880s and 1890s (Site #JF-690). The route of Harrods Creek provided access inland to the river, as well as an upriver harbor for the Ohio. Nearby interurban routes retained a convenient link with urban Louisville.

These three black settlements--Newburg/Petersburg, Berrytown/Griffytown, and Harrods Creek--continued as black communities, many of whose occupants are descendants of the original settlers. Several other small black settlements have either been absorbed by the city of Louisville or no longer retain their historical significance as black communities; for example, Orell in southwest Jefferson County; Little Lakeland, a neighborhood now in west Louisville; and the Payne Street area near Crescent Hill in east Louisville.

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National Park Service**

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