

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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JAN 16 1980

**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

Burks' Distillery (Maker's Mark Distillery)

AND/OR COMMON

Maker's Mark Distillery

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Ca. 3 mi. east of Loretto off Ky. 49 and Ky. 52. NOT FOR PUBLICATION 2

CITY, TOWN

Loretto

 VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky

CODE

21

COUNTY

Marion

CODE

155

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input 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 type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

(Bill Samuels, Jr., President)

Maker's Mark Distillery, Inc.

STREET &amp; NUMBER

P.O. Box 21374, Standiford Station

CITY, TOWN

Louisville

VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the County Clerk, Marion County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Lebanon

STATE

Kentucky

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Survey of Historic Sites in Ky.: National Register of Historic Places

DATE

1974; 1974

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

(665)

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Kentucky Heritage Commission; National Register of Historic Places

CITY, TOWN

Frankfort; Washington

STATE  
Ky.; D.C.

# 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 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

Burks' Distillery is situated near the heart of Kentucky's "bourbon belt" nestled in a small valley, appropriately called "Happy Hollow," at the junction of Hardin's Creek and a narrow meandering stream or "branch," where it continues to manufacture bourbon whiskey by the same painstaking methods utilized in the late 19th and early 20th century. In addition to edifices directly associated with whiskey manufacture, the site includes several nonindustrial structures which contribute to a visual understanding of life on a typical distillery farm in Kentucky at the turn of the century.

When Charles Burks began distilling operations here around 1805 he probably utilized a portion of his grist mill as his distillery or else constructed a small attachment to it for that purpose. By the 1830's it is highly likely that the mill had been enlarged and other buildings erected to house the large amount of equipment Burks and his sons were utilizing in their distilling operations. After their deaths in 1831-32 the distillery apparently was gradually phased out despite the efforts of Sarah and Nancy Burks to keep it in operation. The grist mill, however, remained in operation, and it probably used the old distilling structures to a limited extent for a number of years.

Burks' Distillery as it appears today dates largely from the late 1880's when George R. Burks reopened it. At that time he enlarged and rebuilt the old distillery grist mill for his still house, and he probably added or refurbished a number of other buildings nearby as well. An 1889 lien filed in the Marion County Courthouse indicates the existence then of the following present-day structures: Still House; Boiler Shop; Warehouse A; Office (at that time a barrel shed); Quart House; Distiller's House; and the Toll Gate House. Toward the end of the century Burks erected Warehouse D, and in 1902 he built a house for himself on a knoll overlooking the distillery.

Apparently no further expansion of the complex occurred until around 1935 when Frank Bickett and his associates refurbished the plant prior to reopening it after the hiatus of Prohibition. At that time, a bottling house, a small warehouse, and a cistern room were added, and the Still House and Boiler Shop enlarged somewhat. Since T. William Samuels took over the complex in the early 1950's, the only addition to the core area of the plant has been a small wing to the rear of the bottling house. Samuels and his family are determined to maintain the turn-of-the-century appearance of the complex, and plant expansion has been kept away from the most historic area and is completely unobtrusive.

(continued)

672

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<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 Site: 1805-present BUILDER/ARCHITECT George R. Burks  
 Buildings: 1889-present

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

For over 150 years the words "Kentucky" and "bourbon whiskey" have been synonymous in the public mind. Burks' Distillery, whose origins extend back to 1805, is not only the oldest Kentucky distillery site still in use but the last extant operating example of the distillery farms that helped make bourbon, according to historian Gerald Carson, "the distinctive spirit of our country."<sup>1</sup> "Bourbon whiskey, for all the parochialism its name might imply," says distilling industry historian Henry G. Crowgey, "is most of all a distinctive national product, unique to its native land," a fact recognized by the U.S. Congress on May 4, 1964, in Senate Concurrent Resolution 19.<sup>2</sup>

Burks' also represents the evolution of bourbon from a relatively crude beverage closely identified with the frontier into a quality distillate recognized and readily accepted all over the world. When Charles Burks began distilling operations on the site in 1805 he made liquor from whatever grain or fruit was available, and his product probably differed little from that produced elsewhere. Within a few years, however, Burks, like most distillers in this section of Kentucky, began making whiskey from a mixture of corn and smaller grains and installed more sophisticated equipment for its manufacture. Although whiskey produced in the vicinity of Burks' was called "bourbon" by the early 1820's, it "was not bourbon as defined today," says Carson, "since it lacked the bouquet and reddish color as well as the smoothness produced by proper aging in charred oak cooperage."<sup>3</sup> By the time George R. Burks, the founder's great-grandson, refurbished the distillery in 1889, in response to increased national demand for bourbon, these deficiencies had been overcome.

(continued)

<sup>1</sup>Gerald Carson, "Bourbon: Amber Waves of Grain--100 Proof," American Heritage, XXV (February 1974), 60.

<sup>2</sup>Henry G. Crowgey, Kentucky Bourbon: The Early Years of Whiskeymaking (Lexington, 1971), xi.

<sup>3</sup>Carson, "Bourbon," 63.

666

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See continuation sheet.)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

2 1.6 6452.00 4116.717.1.0

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY ca. 36 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 1.6 6456.2.0 4116.719.1.0  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B 1.6 6457.6.0 4116.718.8.0  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C 1.6 6457.5.0 4116.715.6.0

D 1.6 6452.2.0 4116.715.0.0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See last page of 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

Ralph J. Christian, Historian, Historic Landmarks Project

ORGANIZATION

DATE

American Association for State and Local History September 1978

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

1400 Eighth Avenue South

615/242-5583

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Nashville,

Tennessee 37203

## 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

TITLE

DATE

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED JAN 16 1980

CONTINUATION SHEET Maker's Mark ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE one

Still House. This southward-facing, two-story edifice is of wood frame construction and is sheathed in brown-painted metal. The structure rests on the same limestone block foundations that supported the 1805 grist mill distillery, and its full basement and a substantial portion of the first floor area clearly predate the remodeling completed in 1889. Windows are generally of the six-over-six wood sash variety and are set in rectangular surrounds. Red-painted wood shutters that grace the windows are of more recent origin. The building is capped with a gable roof covered with seamed tin and painted a darker shade of brown than the walls. The only major exterior alteration since 1889 has been the addition of a five-story tower at the east end to house the continuous still put into use here in 1937. Like the older portion, it is of frame construction, clad in metal, and capped with a gable roof.

Inside, the building houses a 20-barrel-per-day capacity distillery that is Kentucky's, and one of the Nation's, smallest legal distilling operations. Much of the interior woodwork is of 19th-century vintage. Particularly noteworthy in this regard are hand-hewn beams, joists, and hardwood floors in the basement and first-floor areas which probably date back to 1805. Although most of the distilling equipment is relatively modern, there are some old items here as well. The basement contains a Gardner steam pump, believed to be 100 years old, and now utilized only as a standby power source. In the first floor area are two copper Tail Boxes into which the whiskey flows as it comes off the still. These decorated boxes, made by hand in the 1840's, are sealed with Bureau of Internal Revenue locks which can be opened only by the resident government gauger. The building is in excellent condition and is well-maintained.

Warehouse A. This southward-facing, two-story structure is situated near the branch and faces Burks' Spring Road. It dates back to 1889, if not earlier, and is the oldest whiskey storage building in the distillery complex. The metal-clad edifice is of wood frame construction, features projecting entrance towers at its north and south ends, and is capped with a low-pitched gable roof. Windows on the north and south ends are generally of the eight-over-eight wood sash variety, set in rectangular surrounds, and heavily barred. On the east and west side the only windows are at the second story level, where they are set in long narrow slits. Originally the warehouse had a shed-roofed porch on its south end, but this feature was removed **some** years ago. (673)

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

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CONTINUATION SHEET Maker's Mark ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE two

Inside, barrels containing aging whiskey are lined up in "dunnage rails" at various levels which are reached by wood plank aisles. Unlike whiskey warehouses constructed in recent years, this one features a central aisle with an outer row of barrels abutting the walls. The overall condition of the structure is very good, and it is well-maintained.

Warehouse D. This building, situated approximately 100 feet north of Warehouse A, is virtually identical to it in almost every respect. Erected sometime between 1889 and 1900, it features the same wood frame construction, brown-painted metal sheathing, projecting entrance towers at its north and south ends, and barred and narrow slitted windows as Warehouse A. It is also capped with a low pitched gable roof. Unlike Warehouse A, however, Warehouse D still has its shed-roofed porch. Located on the south end, the porch has been enclosed in recent years for other purposes, but it remains readily recognizable.

Inside, this warehouse follows a floor plan similar to that of Warehouse A with its barrels lined up in dunnage rails reached by plank aisles. Like the earlier structure, it appears to be in very good condition, and is well-maintained.

Boiler House. Located approximately 50 feet northeast of the Still House, this two-story high structure houses the equipment that supplies steam for the distilling process. Like so many distillery buildings, this one is of wood frame construction; is sheathed in dark-brown-painted metal; and is capped with a gable roof covered with seamed tin. The roof is pierced near its apex by two silver-painted metal smokestacks. George R. Burks erected this structure sometime before 1889, and in the late 1930's it was enlarged somewhat to accommodate the bigger boilers installed after Repeal. Presently it appears to be in good condition and is well-maintained.

Office. Since this 1 1/2-story edifice, situated approximately 50 feet south of the Still House, was erected around 1889, it has served in whole or part as an office for the distillery. Originally part of it was utilized as a rectifying room, and at a later date, a portion was used for the construction of white oak barrels for aging bourbon whiskey. In recent years, however, the entire building has served as an office facility.

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

JAN 16 1980

CONTINUATION SHEET Maker's Mark ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE three

The structure consists of a rectangular shaped main block and a one-story, projecting, shed-roofed wing attached to the rear (west) facade. The edifice is of wood frame construction; is sheathed in brown-painted wooden clapboards; and is capped with an asphalt shingle covered gable roof. Windows are of the six-over-six wood sash variety and are set in rectangular surrounds that are graced with red-painted wooden shutters of relatively recent vintage.

Inside, the edifice has been extensively altered over the years. Presently it houses offices, a large conference room, and a printing shop where the company produces the labels for its bottles. The building is in excellent condition and is well-maintained.

Distiller's House. This seven-room frame edifice, situated approximately 120 feet west of Warehouse A, was constructed around 1889 to provide housing for the head distiller and his family. The structure consists of a two-story, rectangular-shaped main block, a smaller two-story wing attached on the west facade; and a one-story addition which projects from the north facade of the wing. The house is of wood frame construction; is sheathed in red-painted wooden clapboards; and is capped with a wood shingle covered gable roof. A single rectangular-shaped red brick chimney with corbeled cap pierces the roof of the main block at its apex. Windows are generally of the six-over-six wood sash variety, are set in cream-painted rectangular surrounds, and feature wooden shutters in the same color.

For several years Maker's Mark Distillery has been carefully restoring both the exterior and interior of this house. At present it is utilized as a reception center for visitors wishing to tour the distillery premises, and it contains exhibits of whiskeymaking memorabilia. It is in excellent condition and is well-maintained.

Quart House. This small one-story edifice, located approximately 60 feet south of Warehouse A, is probably the last standing distillery retail store in Kentucky and one of the few extant ones in the Nation. Prior to Prohibition, many distillers in Kentucky and other States prepaid the taxes on barrels of whiskey for retail sale on the premises. Distillery visitors

(continued)

675

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED	July 6 1980
DATE ENTERED	

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

CONTINUATION SHEET Maker's Mark ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE four

and people from the surrounding area would bring their jugs, quart jars, or other containers to a building such as this one where they probably purchased whiskey at bargain prices.

This building, which rests on unmortared limestone block foundations, is of wood frame construction; is sheathed in white-painted wooden clapboards with brown trim; and is capped with a wood shingle-covered gable roof. A single inside end chimney with corbeled cap pierces the roofline near the west end of the structure. Windows are of the six-over-six wood sash variety, are set in brown-trimmed rectangular surrounds, and feature brown-painted wooden shutters. The entrance on the east end is marked by a small shed roof porch supported by carved wooden posts. Inside, the edifice appears to have changed little since its erection before 1889. Presently it contains furnishings, ledgers, and bottles which appear to date from the early 1900's. The building is in excellent condition and well-maintained.

Toll House. This tall, somewhat narrow edifice is located approximately 300 feet southwest of the distillery's core area. Originally it served as the residence for a toll gate keeper whom the Burks family employed to collect tolls on the road they constructed through the distillery property. In later years distillery employees probably lived here as well. The house consists of a two-story, square-shaped main block and a one-story attached wing. The edifice is of wood frame construction; is sheathed in blue-painted wooden clapboards with white trim; and is capped with a wood shingle covered gable roof. A single red brick inside end chimney pierces the roof at its apex. Windows, which are probably of the six-over-six wood sash variety, are set in rectangular surrounds and covered with red-painted wooden shutters. The front (southeast) entrance is marked by a shed roofed porch supported by carved wooden posts.

Like most of the older buildings in the complex, this house has been undergoing restoration in recent years. A toll gate with a stone-weighted balance, similar to those in use in the 19th century, has been reconstructed and is controlled by a rope from the front porch. The house appears to be in very good condition and is well-maintained.

(continued)

676

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

JAN 16 1980

CONTINUATION SHEET Maker's Mark ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE five

Burks House. George R. Burks erected this 2 1/2-story northward-facing dwelling, which rests on a knoll overlooking the distillery complex, in 1902, shortly after the M. H. Chamberlain Company's lease on the facility expired. This irregularly shaped late victorian edifice is of wood frame construction; is sheathed in wood clapboards; and is capped with a steeply pitched gabled roof covered with seamed tin. Probably the most notable exterior feature is a one-story hipped roof veranda with decorative railings and carved support posts. It wraps around the front (north) facade and a portion of the east end. Windows on the first two floors are generally of the one-over-one wood sash variety and are set in rectangular surrounds featuring architrave trim. Palladian windows are utilized on the upper half story.

Inside, the house seems to have undergone little major alteration over the years. The Samuels family has restored it, and presently they use it as a special meeting place for company business functions. The only major alteration has been the addition of a small, unobtrusive one-story meeting room at the rear. The house appears to be in excellent condition and is well-maintained.

Other Structures. Included within the boundary of the historic district are several buildings of relatively more recent vintage. They do not contribute to the district's national significance, but neither do they detract significantly from its late 19th and early 20th century appearance. These buildings include the 1930's barrel house constructed of brown-painted concrete blocks and situated approximately 50 feet east of Warehouse D; the metal clad bottling house erected around 1937 and located approximately 50 feet west of the Still House; the metal-clad cistern room which is also a 1930's addition and situated approximately 30 feet west of the office; three barns and a silo of uncertain vintage located on the south side of Burks Spring Road in close proximity to the Burks House; and a white frame tenant house located on the north side of Burks Spring Road approximately 650 feet west of the Toll House.

(continued)

677

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

JAN 16 1980

CONTINUATION SHEET Maker's Mark ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE six

Boundary Justification. The boundary of the inventoried property contains approximately 36 of the 193 acres that comprise the distillery complex. Except for the "other structures" noted above, the boundary includes only the most historically significant distillery complex buildings.

Boundary Description. As indicated in red on the accompanying maps [(1) U.S.G.S. 7.5' Series, Ky., Saint Catherine Quad., 1953; (2) Curtis Ochs--AASLH Sketch Map, 1953; revised 1978] and quoted in part from the deed to the property, a line beginning at "a R. R. spike in the center line of the Burks Spring Road corner Nalley in Red Fenwick's line; thence N 88 E 272.25 feet to a stake between road and branch where a double thorn once stood; thence N 77 1/2 E 1179.5 feet to a walnut on hill corner Ryan; N 76 E 288.76 feet to an iron marker; N 4 E 371.25 feet to a cedar post; N 17 E 57.75 feet to a R. R. spike in south east edge road; N 36 E 189.75 feet to a nail in a large elm tree; N 1 E 346.5 feet to a cross mark on Bed Rock in Hardin's Creek corner Chas. Bernard Ryan and Joseph Albert Johnson; thence down Hardin's Creek with Johnson's lines as follows: S 81 W 107.25 feet, N. 40 W 198.0 feet," to a hackberry between two elms; thence, southwestward approximately 1,740 feet to a cedar stake; "thence S 43/4 W 684.75 feet" to the point of beginning.

678

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	
DATE ENTERED	JAN 16 1980

CONTINUATION SHEET Maker's Mark ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE one

Finally, Burks' Distillery commemorates Kentucky's long time dominance of the Nation's \$40 billion distilling industry. From humble beginnings in the last decades of the 18th century, distilling increased so rapidly, according to distinguished historian Thomas D. Clark, that "by the opening of the nineteenth century Kentucky whiskey had become a prime commodity in the growing western trade down the rivers."<sup>4</sup> By 1810 Kentucky's 2,000 distilleries had begun to challenge Pennsylvania for industry primacy, and in the 1840's they surged past that State to take a lead which they have seldom relinquished. Presently, "more than two-thirds of all American whiskey," says historian Steven A. Channing, "is manufactured in Kentucky."<sup>5</sup>

Burks' Distillery is situated near the heart of Kentucky's "bourbon belt" nestled in a small valley, appropriately called "Happy Hollow," at the junction of Hardin's Creek and a narrow meandering stream or "branch," where it still makes bourbon whiskey by the same painstaking methods utilized in the late 19th and early 20th century. In addition to important industrial structures like the Still House, Warehouses A and D, the Boiler House, and the Office, the complex includes the Distiller's House, a Quart House, a Toll House, and the Burks House, all of which date from the late 19th or early 20th century. In recent years all have been tastefully restored to their original appearance, and visitors to the site come away not only with an understanding of distilling but a feeling for life on the distillery farms which dotted Kentucky at the turn of the century.

### History

According to Channing, for most of their history Americans have "had a prodigious and unquenchable yen for all forms of hard drink, and Kentuckians" have been "quick to cater to the local and national appetite."<sup>6</sup> This thirst developed, however, long before the settlement of Kentucky in the last three decades of the 18th century. The earliest colonists imported and consumed large quantities of alcoholic beverages, and almost from the beginning, they manufactured beer and wine, utilizing whatever raw materials were readily available.

(continued)

<sup>4</sup>Thomas D. Clark, Kentucky: Land of Contrast (New York, 1968), 189. 667

<sup>5</sup>Steven A. Channing, Kentucky: A Bicentennial History (New York, 1977), 53.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 53.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

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CONTINUATION SHEET Maker's Mark ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE two

The development of a distilled spirits industry proceeded slowly, however, because most colonists lacked knowledge of distilling procedures and did not have the necessary equipment, and those that did had little time to put their expertise into practice because of the difficulties of frontier life. Dutchman William Kieft is generally credited with establishing the first American distillery, on Staten Island in 1640, and many of the Virginia colonists are known to have distilled fruit brandy before 1650, but these operations were on a small scale and only of local significance. Significant commercial distilling began in Boston in 1657 with the establishment of the first rum distillery. For well over a century New England rum was not only the favorite distilled beverage among the colonists but one of the foundations of the famed triangular trade between that region, Africa, and the West Indies.

In the latter years of the 17th century, alcoholic beverages distilled from grain began to appear on colonial tables. Within a century they would challenge and eventually greatly surpass rum in popularity. The Pennsylvania Mennonites are believed to have distilled the first American whiskey in 1683. Whiskey manufacture received its greatest impetus, however, between 1716 and 1733 when large numbers of Irish and Scottish immigrants arrived. Many of them had extensive experience in grain distilling in their respective countries. Most of these people settled in the frontier regions of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina with their portable pot stills and began distilling operations, chiefly utilizing rye or corn, or a mixture of both, for their mash.

In the last three decades of the 18th century, these Scotch and Irish pioneers and their descendants migrated to Kentucky in search of greater opportunities, and many lugged along their primitive distilling apparatus as well. Although Evan Williams of Louisville is often credited with establishing Kentucky's first distillery in 1783, indirect evidence indicates that others probably preceded him. "What actually happened," says Crowgey, "was that a people moved in who regarded liquor as a necessity of life. The distillation of liquor or brandy

(continued)

668

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	
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CONTINUATION SHEET Maker's Mark ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE three

occupied the same place in their lives as did the making of soap, the grinding of grain in a rude hand mill, or the tanning of animal pelts."<sup>7</sup> Thus, in its infancy, the Kentucky distilling industry was little more than a cottage industry producing liquor largely for home consumption with perhaps the surplus to be bartered for needed goods with some local merchant.

In 1795 the signing of the Pinckney Treaty with Spain guaranteed American navigation of the Mississippi River, granted access to the port of New Orleans, and probably contributed more than any single factor to transforming distilling into a major Kentucky industry. The treaty gave the State's citizens an easy outlet for marketing their produce. Because grain could be shipped cheaper in the form of alcohol and because demand for whiskey increased as the Nation's taste for rum declined, the output of Kentucky's distilleries became one of the major commodities in the downriver trade. Between 1792 and 1810 the number of distilleries in the State increased from 500 to 2,000 and achieved an annual output of 2.2 million gallons .

The origins of Burks' Distillery can be traced back to this expansive phase when according to Crowgey, "the manufacture of liquor became more sophisticated, and the distillers began to be specialized businessmen."<sup>8</sup> In 1805 Charles Burks obtained permission from the Washington County Court to dam Hardin Creek (in present day Marion County) for a grist mill he planned to build and operate. By the end of the year, the mill had been placed in operation, and about that same time or shortly afterwards Burks opened a distillery to operate in conjunction with it. The distillery end of the business prospered and expanded. By the early 1830's Burks' sons, Charles Jr. and Samuel, were assisting him in distilling operations which utilized at least three and possibly more stills.

The early history of Burks' Distillery also closely coincides with the initial stages in the development of bourbon whiskey. When Charles Burks first opened his distillery he probably made whiskey or brandy out of whatever raw materials were readily available, and his products probably differed little from those manufactured in other States. Within a few years, however, Burks, like most distillers in Kentucky, discovered

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<sup>7</sup>Crowgey, Kentucky Bourbon, 25.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 52.

669

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CONTINUATION SHEET Maker's Mark ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE four

that whiskey made from a mash containing a large percentage of corn and a lesser percentage of smaller grains like rye suited the public taste better than straight corn, rye, or other combinations. Also, Burks and his contemporaries discovered that the new stills and other equipment that became readily available in the early years of the 19th century enabled them to produce not only a better quality whiskey but to adopt standardized manufacturing procedures.

In the early 1820's whiskey produced in the south central region of Kentucky, where Burks' Distillery is located, began to be called "Old Bourbon" in honor of the original Bourbon County, which at one time included 34 present-day Kentucky counties in whole or part. Soon the "Old" was dropped and the term "bourbon" was used by itself. Although this whiskey was probably a higher quality distillate than any previously produced in the United States, it "was not bourbon as defined today," says Carson, "since it lacked the bouquet and reddish color as well as the smoothness produced by proper aging in charred oak cooperage."<sup>9</sup>

Despite the growing demand for Kentucky bourbon, Burks' Distillery encountered serious difficulties. In the spring of 1831 Charles Burks, Jr., died, and by the end of 1832 Charles, Sr., and Samuel had passed away as well, leaving Richard Burks as the only surviving male heir. Richard, who had been in charge of the grist mill, had never engaged in distilling, and there is no indication that he entered the trade at this time. Indirect evidence indicates that Sarah, the widow of Charles, Sr., and Nancy, the widow of Samuel, probably took over operation of the distillery and hired someone to operate it for them. It is known, for example, that Sarah Burks inherited the distillery and a substantial portion of its equipment from her son, Charles, Jr., and that Nancy Burks purchased eight mash tubs at her late husband's estate sale. All of this indicates that these two women, who resided in the same household, probably intended to keep the distillery going. There are no records to indicate whether they were successful or not, and in any case, Burks' Distillery probably ceased operations by the time of the Civil War.

(continued)

<sup>9</sup>Carson, "Bourbon," 63.

670

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In the late 1880's George R. Burks, the founder's great-grandson, reopened the distillery in response to the Nation's almost insatiable taste for bourbon whiskey, which by this time had taken on most of its modern characteristics. From 1889 to 1896 he and his father and brother operated the facility before leasing it in the latter year to M. H. Chamberlain & Company. The Chamberlain firm apparently utilized the distillery until early in the 20th century when George R. Burks took it over again. In October 1905 Burks took the lead in establishing the Burks' Spring Distilling Company and sold equal partnerships in this operation to J. E. Bickett and J. H. Kearns.

With the onset of Prohibition in 1919, Burks and Kearns sold their interest to Bickett, who apparently utilized the plant and its surrounding acreage for farming and livestock operations. In 1935, shortly after repeal, Bickett's son, Frank, and several associates began refurbishing the distillery and had it back into production by 1937. In the early 1940's they sold the plant to Arthur Cummins, who in turn transferred it to Ed Kaiser of Glenmore Distilleries. Before the end of the decade, Dave Karp bought the property, renamed it "Old Happy Hollow Distillery," and produced whiskey under the brand names of "Burk Springs," "Red Head," and "Kin Folk."

In October 1953 Karp sold the distillery and its surrounding acreage to T. William Samuels, scion of the only American family that has pursued a career of distilling whiskey continuously since the Revolution (with the exception, of course, of the Prohibition years). Samuels renamed the plant Maker's Mark Distillery, Inc., and since February 1954 he has been distilling a sour mash bourbon whiskey here, made from his own personal recipe and personally guided through the distilling, aging and bottling process. His distillery is the smallest legal distillery in Kentucky and one of the tiniest in the Nation.

671

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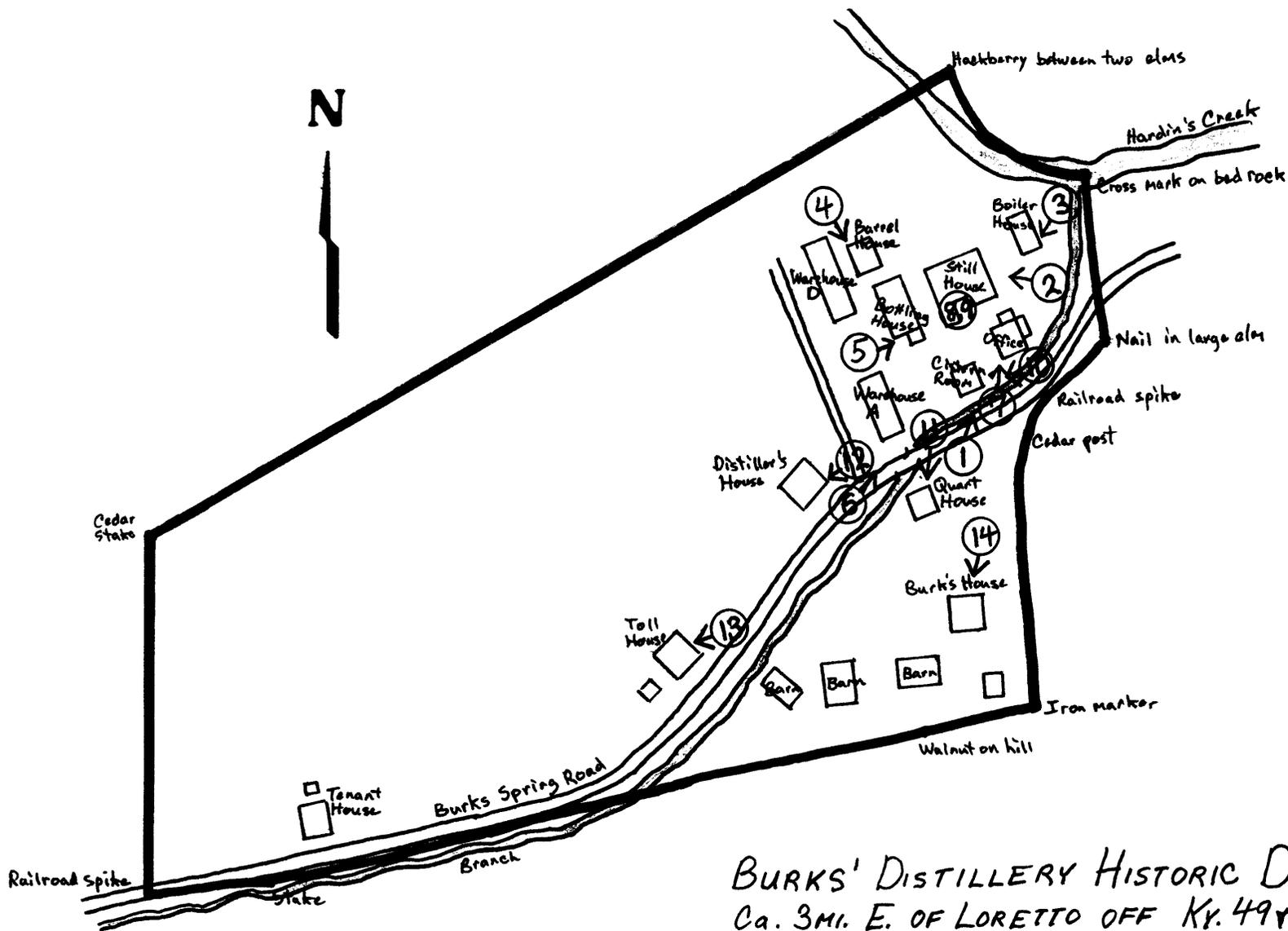
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679



BURKS' DISTILLERY HISTORIC DISTRICT  
 Ca. 3MI. E. OF LORETTO OFF KY. 49 & 52  
 LORETTO, KENTUCKY

CURTIS OCHS - AASLH SKETCH MAP  
 1953, REVISED 1978 (J. GARNER)

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689