

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

# **National Register of Historic Places**

## **Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only

APR 22 1983

received

date entered

### **1. Name**

historic

and/or common Lexington-Fayette County Government Building Block

### **2. Location**

street &amp; number 200-228 East Main Street

n/a not for publication

city, town Lexington

n/a vicinity of~~congressional district~~

state Kentucky

code 021

county Fayette

code

067

### **3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> park
site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
object	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

### **4. Owner of Property**

name Multiple Owners (see attached Kentucky Historic Resources Inventory forms)

street &amp; number

city, town

vicinity of

state

### **5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Fayette County Courthouse

street &amp; number 215 West Main Street

city, town Lexington

state Kentucky

### **6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Kentucky Historic Resources Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date July 1979

 federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Kentucky Heritage Council

city, town Frankfort

state Kentucky

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
		<input type="checkbox"/> moved      date _____

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance** The Lexington-Fayette County Government Block consists of three buildings on the south side of East Main Street in Lexington, Kentucky. The buildings were all constructed around the 1920's and collectively retain many of the architectural elements which were prevalent during that decade. Each has individual architectural character and many of the elements represented are rapidly disappearing from our cityscape.

The most imposing of this group is the old Lafayette Hotel and garage which was the easternmost high-rise building in downtown Lexington until only a few years ago. Not only imposing in size for that period in Lexington, but the details and elegant decor made it a favorite place for Lexingtonians and provided visitors a first-class hotel. Sunday lunch at the Lafayette Hotel dining room was almost a requirement for the local gentry during the building's glorious reign as Lexington's premier hostelry. The garage was built a year or so after the hotel but was included in the original rendering and is internally connected with the hotel.

Movie houses began to be an important part of the urban landscape around this period in the history of American cities. Lexington was no exception for it had on Main Street the Ada Meade, the Ben Ali, the Strand, the Kentucky and the State (now known as the Cinema). The Kentucky Theatre was built as a movie house by the architectural firm of Joseph and Joseph of Louisville. Its lavish polychrome brick and tile facade is still the most vibrant on Main Street today. The Moise/Switow Building is an interesting Arts and Crafts style building erected shortly prior to the 1920's. In the late 1920's much of the structure was converted to a movie theater and it became a mixed-use building as it retained a portion of its space for office rental.

These three buildings look generally as they did when constructed. The contrast of the three distinct styles give this portion of Main Street a variety of architectural detailing which helps to keep the city visually pleasing.

## 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 type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation				
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)				

Specific dates 1920's

Builder/Architect (See attached Survey forms)

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)** This group of buildings represent three distinct styles of the 1920's era, the Arts and Crafts, the Beaux Arts and the Georgian Revival. The Lafayette Hotel was considered, until its last several years, one of the finest run hotels and grandest buildings in the Central Kentucky area. It's refined Georgian Adamesque design was not tampered with when the hotel was converted to offices in the 1960's. The Kentucky Theatre is still one of the most visually exciting buildings on Main Street. Its Beaux-Arts mode with salmon-colored glazed brick and white tile was the perfect inducement to the auditorium in which the first "talkies" were shown in Lexington. The Moise/Switow Building built in the more restrained Arts and Crafts style is visually a nice contrast to the exuberant Kentucky Theatre. Collectively, they represent a decade of early 20th Century building design which is rapidly disappearing from the urban Lexington scene.

Although these buildings have seen some changes over the years, their "modernization" has been kept to a minimum. As much of Main Street in Lexington has been demolished or altered beyond recognition, the architectural value of these buildings has become even more important.

## **9. Major Bibliographical References**

Fayette County Deed research by Walter Place, Lexington-Fayette County Historic Commission  
 Kerr, Judge Charles, ed. History of Kentucky. (5 vols.) Chicago & New York: The American Historical Society, 1922.  
 Lexington City Directories and Sanborn Insurance Maps; Lexington Public Library Newspaper Index and Files

## **10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of nominated property 1.6

Quadrangle name Lexington East

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

**UMT References**

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**Verbal boundary description and justification**

See continuation sheet.

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries**

state	n/a	code	n/a	county	n/a	code	n/a
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state	n/a	code	n/a	county	n/a	code	n/a
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## **11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Richard S. DeCamp, Executive Director and Walter Langsam, architectural historian

organization Lexington-Fayette Cty Historic Commission date January, 1983

street & number 253 Market Street telephone 606-255-8312

city or town Lexington 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 Mary Julian Dopp

title State Historic Preservation Officer date April 1, 1983

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date

5/19/83

*J. Dolores Bixler*  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Lexington-Fayette County Government

Continuation sheet Building Block

Item number 10

Page 2

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Verbal boundary description and justification:

The boundary begins at a point (F), which is approximately 15 feet west of the intersection of East Main Street and Ayres Alley, and proceeds southeast along a line approximately 295 feet to a point (A), thence southwest 225 feet, following the foundation of the southeast wall of the building, to a point (B), thence northwest along a line 50 feet to a point (C), thence northwest along a line 65 feet to a point (D), thence along a line 160 feet, following the southwest wall foundation to a point (E), thence northeast along a line parallel to Ayres Alley, 250 feet to the beginning, thereby incorporating the three buildings.

## KENTUCKY HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY

Site No. Fa-LDT-81

1. Historic Name(s) <u>Lafayette Hotel and garage</u>			22. ADD/County <u>BG/Fayette/Lexington</u> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		
Original Owner			23. Zoning Classification <u>B-2</u> Magisterial District		
2. Present Name <u>Lexington-Fayette County Government Building</u>			24. U.S.G. S. Quadrant (15'/75')		
3. Owner's Name <u>Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government</u>			25. UTM Reference		
4. Owner's Address <u>200 E. Main Street, Lexington, KY 40507</u>					
5. Location <u>200-206 E. Main Street</u>					
6. Open to Public Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No _____	7. Visible from road Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No _____	8. Ownership Private ..... Local ..... <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State ..... Federal .....	Zone _____ Easting _____ Northing _____		
9. Local Contact/Organization <u>Lexington-Fayette County Historic Commission</u>			26. Prehistoric Site Historic Site Structure Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
10. Site Plan with North Arrow			27. District Yes _____ No _____ Name: _____		
<p>200 - 206 E. MAIN ST.</p>			28. Significance Evaluation <u>Potential NR</u> <input type="checkbox"/>		
11. Architect C.C. and E.A. <u>Weber, Cincinnati</u>			29. Status		
12. Builder <u>Mason &amp; Hanger</u>			National Landmark .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	
13. Date <u>ca. 1920</u> <input type="checkbox"/>			National Register .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	
14. Style <u>A. Georgian Revival</u> <input type="checkbox"/> B. _____			Landmark Certificate .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	
15. Original Use <u>hotel &amp; garage</u> <input type="checkbox"/>			Kentucky Survey .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	
16. Present Use <u>offices &amp; garage</u> <input type="checkbox"/>			Local Landmark .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	
17. Condition <u>good</u> <input type="checkbox"/>			HABS/HAER .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	
18. Description Hotel building: 12 S, including ground-level entrance floor and mezzanine of raised lobby; 10B on N front (Main St.), 10B on W side (facing Harrison Viaduct). According to 1919 brochure, p. 56, "The design is Italian Renaissance--12 stories high with well lighted basement--the base of building to be Pink Rockport Granite, and Buff Bedford Limestone (both from Indiana)--the shaft to be Tapestry Brick, soft shades of browns, purple and red, (see back)			No. Stories <u>12</u> <input type="checkbox"/>	Date	
			Single Pile _____ NA _____		
			Double Pile _____		
			Floor Plan <input type="checkbox"/>		
			Structural Fabric <input type="checkbox"/>		
			Decorative Fabric <input type="checkbox"/>		
			A. <input type="checkbox"/>		
			B. <input type="checkbox"/>		
			Roof Form <input type="checkbox"/>		
19. History The large property on which the former Lafayette Hotel and its garages are located extends from Main St. to former Water St. on the S. eastward from the Harrison Ave. Viaduct, whose site was known during the 19C as Ayres Alley. It was an old thoroughfare named for Samuel Ayres (died 1824) a famous and prolific early silversmith who also dealt (see p. 5)			ATTACH PHOTO		
20. Significance The Lafayette Hotel was named for the General Marquis who visited Lexington during his triumphal tour of the United States in 1825, and for whom the county also (see p. 5)			Roll No. DT-XV, 8, s; XIII, 32 Picture No. SW (entrance, lobby floor, Direction and mezzanine), XV, 10 SE 33. Tape No. Negative No.		
21. Source of Information Lexington-Fayette Co. deeds and will books; city directories, and Sanborn Insurance maps; Chinn photo (ca. 1920), A-26; Ranck, Hist. (1872); Collins, Hist. (1874); Biog. Ency. (1878); Kerr, Hist. (1922); (see p. 5)			34. Prepared by: Walter E. Langsam p. 3 Architectural Historian		
22. ADD/County BG/Fayette/Lexington <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			35. Organization LFCHC.		
23. Zoning Classification B-2 Magisterial District			36. Date July 1979		
24. U.S.G. S. Quadrant (15'/75')			37. Revision Dates Jan. '83		
25. UTM Reference			38. Staff Review		

18. (cont.)

while the upper two stories are to be Matt glazed, Ivory white." The ground level, set behind a limestone balustrade on Main St., has large triple mullioned windows below an emphatic belt-course. The lobby and mezzanine bays, except for those at the ends, are recessed to allow colossal Corinthian columns; the large windows of the lobby floor are rounded with low-relief paired griffons on the spandrels. There are limestone balustrades (without balconies) between the piers and columns at the lobby and 2S levels. The brick walls extend from above the balustrade of the 4S (above the mezzanine) through the 9S; only the ends bays, which project very slightly, have stone frames. The top 2S are treated like a flattened version of the piano nobile, with pilaster strips between the openings, which have low-relief panels on the spandrels. There were balconies over the entrance and on all but the end bays of the W side (over-looking the "sunken gardens" in front of the Union Railway Station then W of the viaduct), across the 4 center bays of the 7S on both fronts, and over the end bays on the 10S. Presently only the 11S balconies and concrete-and-iron replacements on the 7S remain. There is a prominent modillioned cornice below a plain parapet. There was a segmental-arched marquee over the elegant center entrance on Main St., with urns and planters; the entrance has been modernized.

Some of the formal interiors described in the brochure remain, basically unaltered, particularly the handsome lobby that extends across the front of the main floor, approached up a flight of marble steps from the ground-level entrance. It is a 2S space surrounded by heavy square wood-panelled piers supporting the mezzanine gallery. The rich and deep ceiling treatment includes octagonal and rectangular molding systems, modillions and dentils, and floral arabesques; the capitals of the piers resemble cartouches. The overall effect is rather heavily Roman, probably inspired by the more pretentious interiors of the Adam brothers. The W end of the lobby was slightly raised to provide views down into the sunken garden of the railway station formerly opposite; the E end was connected to a separate ladies' entrance and contains a handsome mantel in the Renaissance manner with putti between wreaths and central armor.

The original dining-room, to the SE of the lobby, is virtually intact. It has a system of shallow arches containing mirrors and murals of "Italian garden scenes" signed "W.G. Behrens, Cincinnati, Ohio," although possibly over-painted. Elegant arabesque reliefs and other elaborate but delicate trim in pastel coloring ornament the walls and ceiling. The floor is a diagonal checkerboard of black-and-white marble. There is a shallow stage recess flanked by paired Corinthian columns at the S end. Above this room is the former ballroom, somewhat simpler, but also Adamesque; at least one bay has been screened off.

The Lafayette Garage was erected just a year or so after the Hotel proper (see 1934 Sanborn insurance map), but was included in the perspective rendering in the 1919 brochure, apparently sheathed in stone or tile. It is located just to the E of the hotel, connecting with it internally, but was executed with a wire-brick facade accented with a few diagonally-set tiles. The central transomed shop window, which extends under the center 3 bays of the 5B, 3S front, is flanked by elliptically-arched openings, the one to the left (E) leading to the garage. As built, the parapet and panel below the 2S windows are plain brick, rather than the balustrade projected.

Another garage behind (to the S of) the hotel was approached from the Union Station Viaduct; it was built shortly after the one to the E.

nearby Anderson Co. His career began early as he rose in several of the older Lexington hotels in the late 19C; he was associated at the turn of the century with James T. Looney in the grocery business, real estate, and the popular Mecca Saloon (see Survey form for 112-14 N. Broadway); in 1905 they split, Shouse keeping the hotel. Shouse was later also president of the Lexington Wholesale Bakery Co., manager of a huge tobacco warehouse, and director of banks. He was an organizer of the Lafayette Hotel Company and became president, as did his son Leonard, Jr. (on Sr., see Kerr, III, 351-53; Wallis & Tapp, p. 1846; and obit., Her., 9/29/1957, 1-4; on Jr., obit., Her., 6/10/1968. 10-7).

Almost uniquely, the architects received at least equal attention in the 1920 newspaper account: "The man who proposes and the architect who plans and designs a structure as great as The New Lafayette Hotel confer a lasting favor upon the community in which it is located. It will stand as a tribute to the architectural genius of the Messrs. C.C. and E.A. Weber, of Cincinnati. The Messrs. Weber are no strangers to this locality, having many notable creations to their credit; most prominent of which are the Governor's Mansion at Frankfort (see NR nomination form); Sullivan Hall of the Richmond State Normal School (now Eastern State University), and the First Baptist Church of Lexington (see NR form for the Western Suburb Historic District). But the New Lafayette, upon its completion, will mark the triumph of their career."

In spite of this tribute, almost nothing else is known about the architects. Christian C. Weber (ca. 1879-1954) seems to have been associated with his hometown, Fort Thomas, in Northern Ky., rather than with the Cincinnati architectural profession (obit., Cincinnati Enquirer, 2/3/1954, courtesy of the Cincinnati Historical Society obituary file; according to Cincinnati and Northern Ky. architect George Roth, Jr., however, the Webers were members of the Cincinnati Society of Architects in the early 20C). In his later years his partner, particularly in the development of the Briarcliff Subdivision in Ft. Thomas, was S.K. Weber; no reference can be found to E.A. Weber, probably a brother. Nevertheless, the firm seems to have been highly skilled in Beaux-Arts eclectic design. The Executive Mansion is an ingenious (although now easily datable) version of Marie-Antoinette's Petit Trianon at Versailles; the Baptist Church is an extremely handsome Collegiate Gothic design, with restrained details, relying on superb and complex massing of many elements on a difficult site; and the Lafayette is a tellingly simple basic block decorated with unusual refinement of Adamesque detail and effectiveness of planar composition. Because of its evident shallowness, this surface treatment is clearly just that, combining stone, brick, and glazed tile in an ornamental and fireproof cladding for the underlying steel and concrete construction (see 1934 Sanborn insurance map). Just as they successfully handled various historic-inspired styles in these different types of buildings, they also handled somewhat different decorative schemes within the hotel, with interesting and convenient treatment of spaces between and within the major rooms. Apparently the adjoining garages were also well-thought-out, as they are still in use.

The hotel, which continued to maintain high standards, was purchased by Garvice Kincaid's Kentucky Central Insurance Co. in 1960 and closed in 1963. The building was converted into offices for the insurance company, with renovation and adaptation of the major public rooms including the handsome lobby, ballroom, and diningroom, although most of the exterior balconies were removed and there was some additional modernization.

19. (cont.)

in a great variety of useful metal and related goods (see Staples, p. 48 et passim; Dunn, pp. 30-31; Coleman, p. 28; Henry H. Harned, "Ante-Bellum K. Silver," the Magazine Antiques, CV, 4 /April 1974/, 818). Ayres, according to Staples, resided on the corner site at Main and the Alley beginning in 1794, later moving his residence to Limestone and High Sts., but retaining his store on Main. It was later the site of the impressive Greek Revival home of General Leslie Combs (see Ranck, Hist., n 290; Collins [1874], passim; Bios. Ency., p. 79; Kerr, passim; Dunn, pp. 370, 483; see a view of the house in Battaile, p. 19, and the Coleman Photo Collection at Transylvania University; possibly this house belonged to R. Leslie Combs, rather than the general, whose house near the Phoenix Hotel to the W on Main St. was burned in 1879, according to Coleman, p. 60). Later according to Coleman and Battaile, the house was the Gem Hotel, and was demolished for the Lafayette. It also housed the Lexington Conservatory of Music at the turn of the century. The area in the late 19C was a curious mixture of residences, many of them fine antebellum, and industrial "yards," most connected with the railway lines between present Water and Vine Sts to the S. For instance, the Ky. Copper Works & Iron Foundry was on the site of the Lafayette garage at the rear in the 1890s; later there was the W.H. Henderson Grain Elevator & Feed Mill, with a "livery and sales stable" farther east. The area to the west of the alley, where the Union Station was erected 1905-1907 (Lancaster, pp. 142-53), had had a similar mixture of old residences and professional offices, along with a coal yard along the tracks. In 1905-1906 the original Harrison Avenue Viaduct was built rising from Main to High Sts. over Ayres Alley, as part of the railway station complex (see Lancaster, p. 147; Her., 8/5/1905, p. 8; 12/14, 1905, p. 1). This viaduct was replaced in 1960 when the station was razed and the present multi-story parking and office facility erected. One other factor in the development of the east part of downtown Lexington in the late 19C was the presence of the U.S. Government Building and Post Office on the N side of Main St. opposite the alley (1886-87; dem. 1941; see Lancaster, pp. 137-39). By the time the ground was cleared for the Lafayette, the Combs house was surrounded by small-scale offices and stores on Main St.

The Lafayette Hotel was the easternmost high-rise building in downtown Lexington until only a few years ago, aside from an apartment building erected between the world wars on E. Main St. In itself the hotel provided a further incentive for development immediately to the east, particularly the entertainment center represented by the almost-contemporary Ky. Theatre and related facilities (see Survey form for 208-214 E. Main St.); and the elegant retail shopping area typified by The Esplanade opened up in the following decade.

The land for the Lafayette was acquired, the buildings demolished, and constructed begun in 1919; the opening dance was held in December 1920 (see listings in Lexington Public Library Newspaper Index). Earlier, it had been announced in the 1919 promotional brochure, Illustrated Lexington, KY. (pp. 56-57), as "the very latest creation of Hotel construction--viewed from the point of the home-loving classes well as the commercial public." Early in 1920, a most enthusiastic newspaper article heralded the structure, the institution, and thos association with it (Leader, 2/29/1920). The convenient location near the railroad station, the post office opposite, and the downtown retail and wholesale centers was touted; there was to be not only a mezzanine facing the gardens in front of the station, but also a "subway" for direct access in inclement weather; other facilities, such as a barber, billiard rooms, and a laundry were in the building itself. The panoramic views from the upper stories were also to be an attraction, as were above all the lavish and comfortable interiors. The manager, Leonard B. Shouse, was also considered a definite asset he recognized that "A town without a good hotel is like a home without a spare room for company." Leonard B. Shouse, Sr. (1869-1957), was a self-made man, born in

20 (cont.)

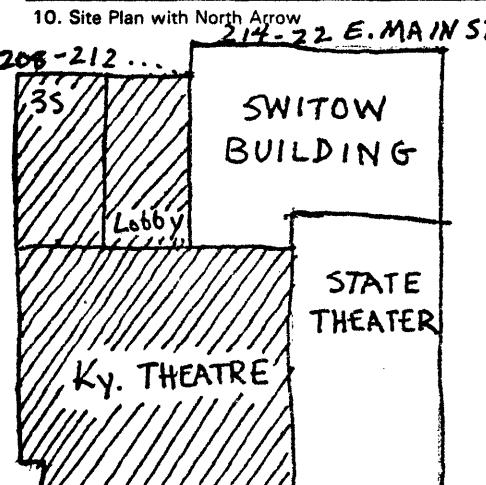
was named (using President Washington's democratically abbreviated form of the title). One of the most handsome of Lexington's early 20th century high-rise buildings, its very refined Beaux-Arts Adamesque (then considered Italian Renaissance) also provided comfort and convenience. The hotel maintained its high quality for over 40 years, when it was converted tactfully into offices for a leading insurance company, later the Ashland Company and now offices for the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government.

21 (cont.)

Collins, Hist. (1874); Biog. Ency. (1878); Kerr, Hist. (1922); Staples, Pioneer (1939); Dunn, "Historic" (ca. 1940); Wallis & Tapp, Sesqui-Centennial (1945); Coleman, Squire's (1972); Lancaster, Vestiges (1978), pp. 154-55.

## KENTUCKY HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY

Site No. Fa-LDT -84

1. Historic Name(s)	Kentucky Theatre		
Original Owner			
2. Present Name	same		
3. Owner's Name	Associated Theaters of Kentucky		
4. Owner's Address	651 4th Avenue, Louisville, KY 40202		
5. Location	208-212 E. Main Street, Lexington, KY 40507		
6. Open to Public	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	7. Visible from road	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
8. Ownership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Federal		
9. Local Contact/Organization			
10. Site Plan with North Arrow	 <p>3S 5B SWITOW BUILDING STATE THEATER Ky. THEATRE Lobby</p>		
11. Architect	Joseph & Joseph, Lou.		
12. Builder	Platoff & Bush		
13. Date	1921-22		
14. Style	<input type="checkbox"/> A. Beaux-Arts <input type="checkbox"/> B. Adamesque		
15. Original Use	theater, shops & offices		
16. Present Use	theater, shops & offices		
17. Condition	good		
18. Description	<p>3S, 5B, salmon-colored glazed brick with white and polychrome glazed tile detail. 2S and 3S case-ment windows are linked vertically; the center 3 bays are round-arched and enclose triple windows with inner round arches on the 3S. Above and between these arched windows are tile cartouches and keystone shields linked by garlands. Consoles under the pale blue and white tile spandrels between the 2S and 3S triple windows suggest suppressed balconies; the end (see p. 2)</p> <p>Before 1900 the E end of Main St. beyond Walnut was still basically residential, with small shops and large lumber company offices and shops interspersed; the latter particularly around the railroad tracks near present Midland Ave. According to Coleman (p. 82), the Ky. Theatre is on the site of H.G. Smith's Livery Stable. It seems, (see p. 2)</p> <p>The lavish polychrome brick and tile facade of the Kentucky Theatre, erected in 1921-22 and designed by the prominent and prolific Louisville firm of Joseph and Joseph, is one of the most exciting on Main St. (see p. 3)</p> <p>Lexington-Fayette Co. deeds and will books, city directories, and Sanborn Insurance maps; Chinn photos (ca. 1920), A-26; "A House of the '20s Starts Life Anew," Box Office Magazine (Nov. 3, 1958), 7-9; interview with Harry Switow, 1979; on Henry Platoff (builder), see Bodley-Wilson, Hist. (1928) IV, 1205.</p>		
19. History			
20. Significance			
21. Source of Information			
22. ADD/County	BGADD/Fayette		
23. Zoning Classification	B-2 Magisterial District		
24. U.S.G. S. Quadrant (15'/75')			
25. UTM Reference			
26. Prehistoric Site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Object <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building X		
27. District	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Name:		
28. Significance Evaluation	National Register		
29. Status	<input type="checkbox"/> National Landmark <input type="checkbox"/> National Register <input type="checkbox"/> Landmark Certificate <input type="checkbox"/> Kentucky Survey <input type="checkbox"/> Local Landmark <input type="checkbox"/> HABS/HAER		
30. Theme	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary Architecture <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary Communications <input type="checkbox"/> Other		
31. Endangered	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
32.	<input type="checkbox"/> ATTACH <input type="checkbox"/> PHOTO		
Roll No.	DT-XIII, 31, S		
Picture No.			
Direction			
33. Tape No.	Negative No.		
34. Prepared by:	Walter E. Langsam Architectural Historian		
35. Organization	LFCHC		
36. Date	July 1979		
37. Revision Dates	38. Staff Review		
Jan. 1983			

18. (cont.)

spandrels have diagonally-laid brick panels. The frieze of the elegant entablature has concentric rosettes between the bays; the cornice has both dentils and modillions; the parapet is solid, with lush tile cartouches and arabesque foliage in panels over the windows; there is also a central acroterion-crest. The original marquee was full-width in front of the facade; the edge was delicately detailed with occasional swags (see Chinn photo A-26, taken shortly after the building was erected). Although the 1S exterior has been entirely remodelled, the upper part of the facade is intact.

Although altered in the 1950s to suggest a popular "Southern Colonial" flavor (as described in Box Office Magazine, 11/3/1958, pp. 7-8), the interior retains much of the original Adamesque decor. The broad outer lobby (behind the deeply recessed modern vestibule) has a shallow lateral vault with beams outlined in meander patterns; paired, partially reeded pilasters; and the original chandelier rosettes. 1950s mirrors and murals of magnolias are over the original beige marble wainscot. Presumably the marble walls of the original vestibule, with its high ceilings, and other interior features remain behind the 1958 cladding. The inner lobby has an octagonal "art glass" skylight, and a few surviving Renaissance-inspired plaster relief panels between panelled pilasters. The auditorium has suffered from simplification, but retains the huge rounded rear section and a smaller section toward the stage, flanked by filled-in boxes. A small circular art-glass skylight is still over the front section, but the much larger domical one at the rear has been removed. The auditorium is actually considerably wider than the facade and extends eastward behind the Moise-Switow Building next door. The street-level shop west of the theater entrance has attractive Georgian Revival detail, as do the offices upstairs reached from an entrance at the west end of the facade.

19. (cont.)

however, to have belonged in the early 30C to Louis des Cognets, a builder, decorator, and local official with many interests in the area (see Survey form for 187-91 N. Limestone and especially Kerr, IV, 127). The property remains in his and related families, by inheritance, although C.N. Manning and George K. Graves are described as having bought the property in 1919 (Her., 7/8/1919, 14-7). It was leased in 1921 to the Lafayette Amusement Co. on the understanding that they would erect a theater and business building by the end of the following year at a cost of at least \$150,000. The Paramount Publix Co. leased the theater when it was completed. The local Phoenix Amusement Co. (see biography of Charles Scott, Her., 4/17/1900, p. 4) leased it later; and since 1958 the original proprietors, M. Switow & Sons, have managed it again. The decline of the theater after World War II was seen as reflecting the condition of the downtown in 1976 (Her.-Leader, 4/11/1976, E-14), but in the last couple of years this downtown theater has been given a new lease on life through the popular repertory system, showing both old and higher quality new films on a rotating basis.

The opening of the Ky. Theatre on October 4, 1922, was accomplished with great fanfare and attention in the press; Governor Morrow was the speaker. The 1st feature was "The Eternal Flame" with Norma Tallmadge and Adolphe Menjou (Her., 10/1/1922, 8-1, and elsewhere); it was described as "the palatial new Ky. Theatre." The special section of the Herald included a large advertisement with a drawing of the facade, as well as extensive articles listing the builders and decorators, which included Louis des Cognets for the cement and reinforced concrete; George N. Connell, draperies; J.J. Fitzgerald, plumbing, James O. Harper, marquee; and Peter Burghardt of Louisville, marble. At the opening, six oil paintings by Guy Leiber (Leber) of Louisville, were displayed in the lobby; Italian-born Leber was best-known as a

Kentucky Theatre  
208-212 East Main Street  
Lexington-Fayette County  
p. 3

painter of Roman Catholic churches, but his firm served as interior decorators and also supplied the woodwork for the Ky. Theatre. There were also biographies of the president of the Lafayette Amusement Co., Fred Levy; M. Switow, vice-president, whose dream the "cinema palace" had been; and Harry Switow, superintendent of construction and its "guiding genius," and still presently president of the company (see also Leader, 4/8/1976, 13-10, cols. 1-6).

The building was described as "all done in the Italian Renaissance style of architecture," although we would now recognize more influence from the 18th-century English architectural and decorative work of the Adam brothers, inspired by both antique and Renaissance sources. There were also many functional and technological innovations, including the theater's own railroad siding behind, in order to permit easy access for dramatic and vaudeville staging.

The Kentucky was listed as one of the 10 best theaters in the U.S.A. at the time of its opening; particularly admired was the "Mighty Wurlitzer, the second largest organ south of Chicago." It was among the 1st 50 theaters in the U.S. (as well as the 1st in Lexington) to install sound equipment for "talkies" in 1926 (see Coleman, p. 52). It also presented the "1st wide-screened production in filmdom," part of "Wings." (See article on Harry Switow, cited above.)

There is also a very attractive shop at street level W of the theater entrance, which has housed various fashionable enterprises, and well-lit offices on the upper floor, now unfortunately vacant.

The architects, Joseph and Joseph of Louisville, were a prominent Louisville firm specializing in theaters and institutional buildings. They published at least 2 brochures illustrating their work; the facade of the Ky. appears in their 1925 brochure. The firm still exists, one of the original partners, Alfred Joseph, having died only recently. From visual evidence (compare, for instance, the East Broadway Theatre, Louisville, and the Anderson Co. and Shelby Co. courthouses) it seems likely that they also designed the Strand Theatre at 157 E. Main St., Lexington (demolished 1979; converted from a livery stable in 1915; see Survey form). Their work was characterized by a lavish use of historic motives (basically classically-inspired for theaters, hotels, and other commercial buildings; often Tudor or otherwise medieval for residences, apartment buildings, and college or school buildings); these decorative elements were delicate or lush but usually confined within a fairly shallow surface plan and without varied or bold massing. The Kentucky Theatre is surely one of their most effective and interesting surviving facades, and could easily regain its interior splendor.

#### 20. (cont.)

Said to have shown the first "talkies" in Lexington, and to have attracted other innovations in the industry, the theatre has been open continuously since its glamorous opening. The interior was renovated in the late 1950s in a "Southern Colonial" manner, but retains much of the superb original "Roman" Adamesque decor, including one of two art-glass skylight domes. The theater auditorium is actually wider than the facade, being accommodated by the smaller theater to the east in the Moise-Switow Building: an early instance of the now-popular grouped theaters. The Kentucky was recently innovated again in bringing the repertory system to Lexington, showing high-quality old and recent films alternately, thus participating in the revival of downtown night-life.

Moise/Switow Building (State Theater)  
214-22 E. Main St.  
Lexington-Fayette Co.  
Page 2

18. (cont.)

now "Switow" after the present owners. The theater has been modernized; it is a small, narrow auditorium less wide than the building, which also incorporates part of the much larger Kentucky Theatre to the W (see Survey form). Delicate Adamesque display cases and period light fixtures remain in the lobby-corridor.

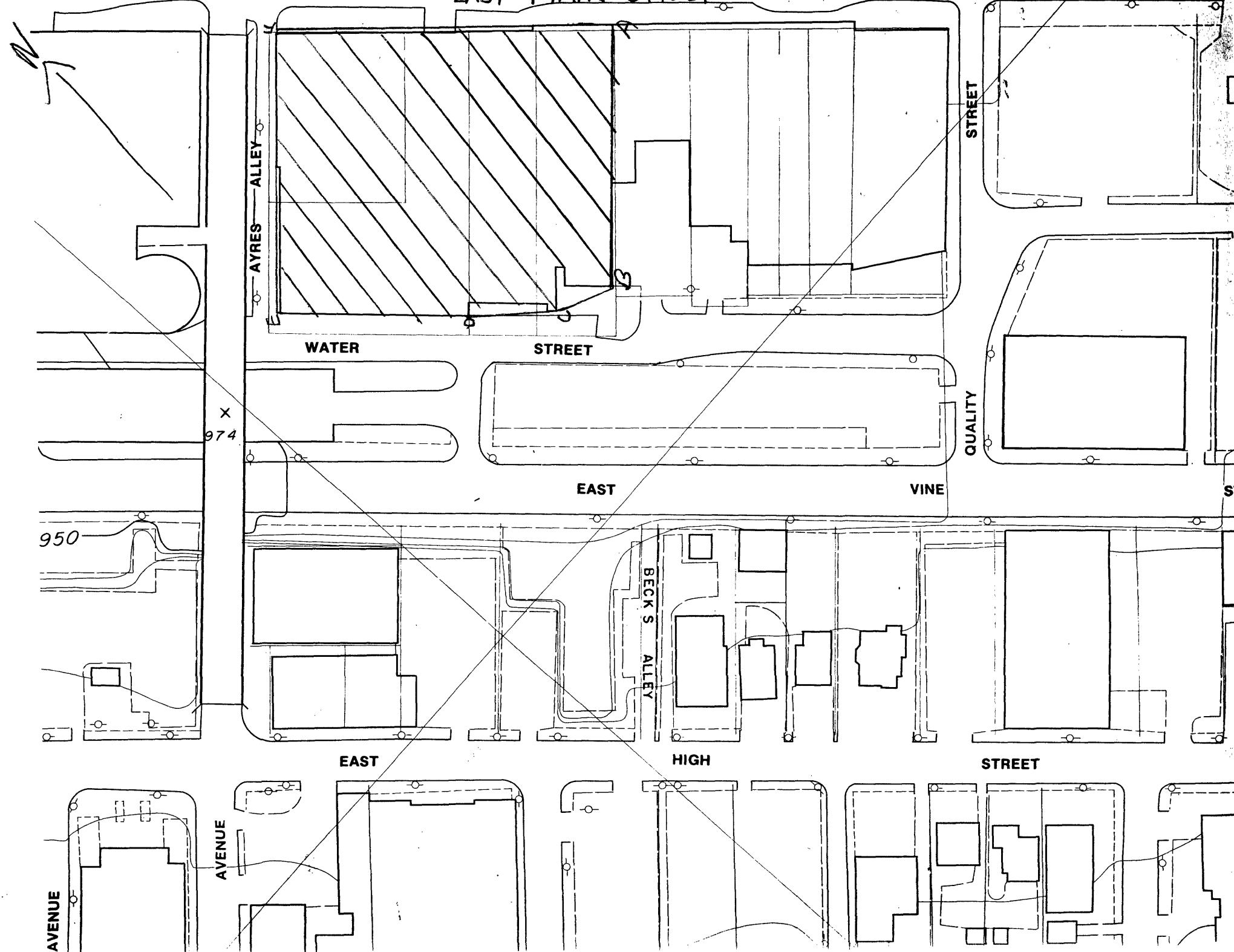
19. (cont.)

J. Haden Moise, whose store inthe building was listed as "Distributors and Jobbers of Everything Electrical" in the 1919 directory, Early occupants also included the offices of "Hamburg Place"; the famous thoroughbred farm of the Madden family (see Survey form Fa-48, and other references), as well as the Swiss Oil and Pipe Line Co; in 1923 the Fuller Brush Co. representative was also listed. In 1925 the building was damaged by fire (Her., 8/25/85, 1-8), but it was not until 1929 that the State Theater opened in the E portion of the structure (part of the larger 1921-22 Kentucky Theatre already occupied the W part of the Moise Building; see Survey form for 208-214 E. Main). Heralded as "The Jewel Box of the Blue Grass," the theater with its 950 seats cost \$200,000 (Her. 4/20/1929, 8-3 & 12). Al Jolson, famous black-face comedian-singer, was the master of ceremonies in a casual welcoming program by means of the Vitaphone process at the grand opening of "the new home of sound pictures." The 1st feature was "Trial Marriage" starring Miss Sally Ellers, with a talking comedy called "Zip, Bang, Boom." The theater was designed both as a functional showplace for the new sound pictures and to create a romantic mood: "The domed ceiling is lighted by concealed blue flood lights giving it the appearance of the sky. The patron of the new State theater will almost believe himself out in woods under a moonlit sky. The twinkling stars and drifting clouds that are to be seen in the blue domed ceiling, the trees, vines and walls included in the decoration, and the cooling system, which causes a constant flow of moist cool air to pass into the building, but not in such a quantity as to cause a draft, carry out the idea of an exterior scene almost to reality." Other aspects of the decor seem to have combined a vaguely Spanish medieval flavor suggesting a walled garden with the "modernistic." Elaborate provisions were made for fireproofing, ventilation, and general comfort, as well as for the most advanced types of sound and projection. The owners of this theater, like the Kentucky next door and some 20 othermotion picture houses in Ky., were members of the Switow family, who still own it. They also changed the name of the building (visible on a plaque over the entrance to the upstairs offices) to their own. Although now devoted to X-rated films, renamed the "Cinema," and modernized internally, this theater and the partially-tenanted building remains an asset to the downtown area.

20. (cont.)

the glamorous original Spanish medieval-modern "theme" interior that allowed it to be called "The Jewel Box of the Blue Grass" at the grand opening emceed via "Vitaphone" by Al Jolson, and the character of the films now shown is frankly questionable, the theater and its building help keep viable the eastern end of downtown Lexington.

EAST MAIN STREET



Lexington-Fayette County Government  
Building Block  
Fayette County, Kentucky  
Planning Commission Map  
Current  
Scale 1" = 100 feet  
Map 1 of 3

S	S	P <small>HOT</small>	S	S	S	S
2	30'	3	45'	2		30'
233	235	237	239	241	243	245
8C	8C		8C 12C		T.H.	OGT

E. MAIN

# HOTEL LAFAYETTE

W.G. STEEL FR CONC. FLS. & RF 12"  
TILE BR FACED CURTAIN WALLS  
200 NIGHT WATCHMAN APPD CLO

— — — — — WOOD RF. ON STEEL FR.  
TRAIN SHED

Lexington-Fayette County Government  
Building Block  
Fayette County, Kentucky  
Sanborn Map  
1934  
Scale 1" = 50 feet  
Map 3 of 3