

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JAN 31 1977
DATE ENTERED AUG 29 1977

**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
**** Floral Hall**
AND/OR COMMON

Standardbred Stable of Memories

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Red Mile Road at 847 South Broadway
CITY, TOWN
Lexington
STATE
Kentucky
VICINITY OF
06
COUNTY
Fayette
CODE
067
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" 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	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
101 East Vine
Floral Hall: Standardbred Stable of Memories, Inc., c/o Nathan Elliott, Treasurer,
STREET & NUMBER
Surrounding Acreage: Lexington Trots Breeders Assoc. - 847 South Broadway
CITY, TOWN
Lexington
STATE
Kentucky
VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Fayette County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER
East Main Street
CITY, TOWN
Lexington
STATE
Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Historic Survey and Plan for Lexington and Fayette County
DATE
1970
DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
Urban County Planning Commission
CITY, TOWN
Lexington
STATE
Kentucky (continued)
 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

7 DESCRIPTION

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

Floral Hall, renamed the Standardbred Stable of Memories, is situated on the grounds of the Red Mile Trotting Track, a block west of South Broadway, at the intersection with Red Mile Road (Forbes Road, extended). Broadway is the major north-south thoroughfare of downtown Lexington. The Red Mile is located in an area of clustered residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Although the grandstands and clubhouse of the adjacent racetrack are new, there are several older barns and stables around the track. Somewhat away from these, at the southern corner of the oval track, among immature trees, rises Floral Hall, its bold mass not mitigated by secondary planting. As was no doubt originally intended, it is visible and approachable from all directions.

Although the upper stories (or story) have undergone alteration and reconstruction in the almost a century since the structure was erected in 1880-82, the brick exterior walls of the first two stories remain intact as built. The basic interior frame superstructure that supports the clerestory and cupola are also apparently original, although the cupola itself may not have been added until after the horticultural display building was purchased by the Kentucky Trotting Horse Breeders Association in 1869 and converted into a stable. No pre-1896 views of the hall are known, but a 1917 photograph in the collection of J. Winston Coleman, Jr., noted Lexington historian, shows a fully and consistently developed design (photo 2). The 1917 view shows gables set on the low sloping roofs of the four major faces of the octagon, those that contain entrances. Moreover, these gables are not only trimmed with the wavy, pierced bargeboards that still decorate the cornices and remained in a photograph published by Clay Lancaster in 1946 (photo 3), and also in a view of the structure being reconstructed in 1963 (photo 4), but they also contain handsome trusswork decorated with open circles.

The cupola shown in the 1917 photograph also appears to be original. Although perhaps somewhat over-scaled, it provides an effective climax to the whole composition. It also fits into the emphatic verticality of the fenestration and trim on the first two stories. Tall, narrow, paired, round-arched windows on each face of the cupola echoed those in the first two stories, especially over the entrance; wooden hoodmolds with "keystones" took the place of the brick arches below; there were pairs of diminutive brackets at the angles supporting a cornice that, in the 1917 photo, lacked the bargeboards of those below. Between the brackets were a band of curvaceous cutout ornaments and apparently an applied row of pickets. Above the cornice was a graceful ogee-curved roof.

(continued)

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION	Relationship to history of harness-racing in Central Kentucky.	

SPECIFIC DATES 1882

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Floral Hall, now called the Standardbred Stable of Memories, was built in 1882 by John McMurtry, famed Kentucky architect, as an exhibition hall for floral displays on what was then the Fair Grounds of the Kentucky Agricultural & Mechanical Association. The Fair Grounds was leased for race meets by the fledging Trotting Association as early as 1875, then purchased by them in 1896. Floral Hall is the focal point of the vista which greets visitors approaching the Red Mile Trotting Track and has become the symbol of the track, significant because of its long involvement with harness-racing in central Kentucky. This large octagonal building, a unique survival in the Bluegrass, is one of the few public buildings by McMurtry still standing in Lexington. It is currently fulfilling its original purpose as an exhibition hall for which it was so effectively designed; this time it houses a collection of standardbred memorabilia.

Prior to the birth of the Red Mile, the sport of harness racing in the Bluegrass suffered through some severe labor pains.¹ Despite reform movements to stop horse racing in the early 1850s, Kentucky remained "thoroughbred country" and thoroughbred men did not look favorably on trotting races. According to a newspaper article in the October 8, 1850, Spirit of the Times announcing a week's trotting meet, "the racing (thoroughbred) men, almost to a man, are down on every effort to get up anything in the way of a 'huking' race!"² However, this did not stop Lexington's pioneer trotting club, whose members went ahead with its first day's racing with a trot for four-year-olds and under. According to the club's secretary, C. W. Kennedy, "it was made under the most inauspicious circumstances. The racing men generally being opposed to the meeting, we had no place even to give decent exercise until after the running was over, as the trotters were not permitted to enter the course until that time (two weeks today)."³

But those gentlemen interested in the sport of harness racing persevered, and on October 29, 1859, Kentucky's first incorporated trotting association was organized at the

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Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky
1971 State
Kentucky Heritage Commission
104 Bridge Street
Frankfort, Kentucky

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At some time between 1907 and 1946 the cupola and the trussworks in the gables were removed (see photo 3). A somewhat truncated cupola was reconstructed in 1963, with much smaller windows, a simplified cornice with token cutouts and no brackets, and a flattened ogee roof with no peak (see photos 1 and 5). The four gables over the entrance arch and the second-story brackets were also omitted in the reconstruction, and the walls were repainted white, as they had been by 1946, but not in 1917. Thus, the building in its present form has a somewhat less angular and imposing silhouette than it did at the turn of the century, but fortunately has been preserved in approximately its original form.

The brick faces of the octagon are articulated by very slender brick pilaster-strips with grooves down the center; or, as the brackets suggested, they may have been conceived as very attenuated paired pilasters. Two sets of these strips occurred on the entrance fronts flanking the doorways, whereas only one set was centered on each of the other four faces (they apparently correspond with the chimneys that appear as early as the 1917 photograph). All openings on the first two brick stories were segmental-headed except for the pairs of round-arched windows over the entrances. The paired windows on the plain facades were very narrow; the single windows flanking the entrance were wider, and the doorways themselves were still wider, creating a rhythmic affect that must have been accentuated by the gables above. The openings were linked by bands of raised and recessed brick: at impost level on both stories, with an additional band at about mid-height of the lower story (and on the pilasters). Over the entrances were similar bands between the stories, and the band between the upper round-arched openings were slightly lowered. The cornice consisted of corbelled brick headers. This rudimentary, but effective, brick trim was characteristic of the later works of architect-builder John McMurtry, responsible for both the design and the construction of Floral Hall (see photo 6).

The main clerestory has exposed timberwork on the outside with diagonal trusses framing fairly small semi-octagon-headed windows, three on each face (these appear to have been slightly altered in the reconstruction, bringing them farther from the angles).

In 1963 Floral Hall, sadly deteriorated, was renovated under the leadership of Walter Gibbons, General Manager, and H. Willis Nichols, Jr., President of the Lexington Trots Breeder Association (see photo 4). Dennis Cravens of Lexington was the general

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contractor. It was necessary to strengthen the structure with the addition of steel I beams that support the galleries and roof. Hanging in the central space is the castiron chandelier that once hung in the spectacular rotunda of Lyndhurst Place, a famous house built by John McMurtry in 1860 and since destroyed (see photos 7 and 8).

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Phoenix Hotel with \$100 shares sold. The corporation purchased land and built a track on what is now University of Kentucky property between Rose and Limestone Streets. R. A. Alexander, son of a British lord and outstanding breeder of standardbreds and thoroughbreds on his Woodburn Farm in Woodford County, was the Association's first president.

Meets were held at the new track in 1859, 1860, and 1861 before they were disrupted by the Civil War, during which the site was used as a military campground. Although trotting races were continued at private tracks, the first meet of any scope after the War was held at the running track on October 16, 1872. In 1874 the Kentucky Trotting Horse Breeders Association was reorganized and the Honorable T. J. Megibben, largest landowner and breeder of fine stock in Harrison County, was elected president (see the National Register nomination form on Megibben's house Monticello in Cynthiana, Harrison County, placed on the National Register December 31, 1974). Additional stock was sold and the new stockholders included John C. Breckinridge, former Vice President of the United States and Confederate Army General; A. J. Alexander, brother of Robert A.; and James F. Robinson, Jr., son of Governor Robinson.

September 28, 1875, was the opening day of the Great Fall Trots at the Red Mile which is known today as the "fastest and most internationally famous racing strip in the sport."⁴ The race, appropriately named the Lexington, ranks today as the oldest stakes race in the sport of harness racing. In 1875 the Red Mile property was owned by the Agricultural and Mechanical Fair Association, which had moved there from the original Maxwell Springs Fair Grounds site in 1871; the Kentucky Trotting Horse Breeders Association leased from them the grounds and grandstand for their trotting meets. After purchasing one-half interest in the Fair Grounds in 1893, the Kentucky Trotting Horse Breeders Association assumed complete ownership in 1896.

"Although abundant prosperity was not one of the blessings enjoyed during the early years of the Red Mile, artistic success in the quality of horses and horse racing, and the high level of sheer pleasure experienced by visitors to the track was a

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trademark."⁵ A number of world records have been established on its clay soil. Some of the famous horses making history there are Maud S., Nancy Hanks, Dan Patch, Billy Direct, Greyhouse, Steady Star, and Bret Hanover. Greyhound, bred at Almahurst Farm, trotted to a world record, 1:55 1/4 in 1938, and was named "Horse of the Century" for the Red Mile's 1975 centennial observance.

The layout of the Red Mile has changed little since its beginning. However, there have been three grandstands. The first structure, which had elaborate cupolas, collapsed in 1892; the second was destroyed in 1931 and replaced by a steel and concrete structure. The lumber from the original grandstand was salvaged and used to build some of the picturesque old barns that add so much to the charm of the Track.

Little is known about the Maxwell Springs Fair Association, that originally owned the 60-acre tract west of Broadway and south of the Southern Railway Station upon which the Red Mile Tract is located. In 1880 the group, by then known as the Kentucky Agricultural and Mechanical Association, commissioned John McMurtry to design and build a hall to house floral exhibits during fairs at the new site. (He had built an earlier Floral Hall at the Maxwell Springs site, which was razed in 1861.) The octagonal brick building which stands near the first turn of the race track was built at a cost of \$5000 and completed in 1882. By virtue of its eight-sided regularity, the building was the perfect setting for exhibitions, entries placed on tiers around the walls being visible to every one in the center of the hall.⁶ Judges could weigh one entry against others by turning their heads rather than moving from one display to another.

During the early years of harness racing, a city anti-gambling ordinance stopped the selling of betting auction pools at the Phoenix Hotel. Fortunately for the sporting gentleman of the era, the city-county line cut through the Red Mile property, leaving Floral Hall outside the city limits. Auction pool selling was speedily transferred to Floral Hall where it was continued legally.

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When the Kentucky Trotting Horse Breeders Association purchased the entire Fair Grounds property in 1896, Floral Hall was converted to a horse barn. "Tom Berry," the noted English trainer who immigrated to America as a stowaway on a freighter and became one of the best known horsemen of his time, "stabled horses there." One of his horses was Hanover's Bertha, the first 2:00 winner of the Kentucky Futurity in 1930. The barn was later home to the Walnut Hall matinee stable, housing such well-known standardbreds as Margaret Castel, Saboteur, and Storm Cloud. Margaret Castleton, driven by Mrs. H. Willis Nichols, the granddaughter of Walnut Farm founder Lamon Harkness, established a record of 1:59 1/4 in 1937; the mare and her driver remain in the book as the fastest feminine tandem in the history of the sport.

Floral Hall, also known as the "round barn," and the Berry Barn, was renovated and the superstructure reconstructed in 1963. It is now officially called the Standardbred Stable of Memories. Directed by Colonel and Mrs. Willis Nichols of Walnut Hall Farm, extensive renovation was completed in 1971, and it was chartered as a museum. In addition, various civic organizations have been granted permission to use the building for fund-raising activities.

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Lancaster, Clay. "Lexington Architecture Panorama." Survey Manuscript, II,
to be published by Lexington-Fayette County Historic Commission in 1976,
pp. 84-85.

_____. "Some Octagonal Forms in Southern Architecture." Art Bulletin,
Vol. XXVIII, No. 2 (June 1946).

Lowry, Biff, Terry Todd, Tom White. A Century of Speed The Red Mile.
Lexington: Thoroughbred Press, Inc., 1975.

Peter, Robert. History of Fayette County, Kentucky. Chicago: O. L. Baskin
& Co., 1882, p. 129.

Rorty, Elizabeth. "The Stable of Memories...Kentucky Standardbred History To
Be Preserved." The Horseman and Fair World, Vol. 87, No. 39 (December
18, 1963), pp. 9-10.

"Trotting Horse Museum to be Housed on Recently Restored Historic Floral Hall."
The Sunday Herald-Leader (Lexington), September 20, 1964.

Wahlgren, Sue. "Red Mile Moved Into Second 100 Years." Sunday Herald-Leader
(Lexington), September 21, 1975, pp. G-1.

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FOOTNOTES

¹Biff Lowry, Terry Todd, Tom White, A Century of Speed the Red Mile: 1875-1975 (Lexington, 1975), p. 8.

²Ibid., p. 10.

³Ibid., p. 10.

⁴Ibid., p. 18.

⁵Ibid., p. 19.

⁶Clay Lancaster, Back Streets and Pine Trees (Lexington, 1956), p. 89.

⁷Biff Lowry, Terry Todd, Tom White, A Century of Speed The Red Mile: 1875-1975 (Lexington, 1975), p. 21.

Floral Hall, Lexington, Kentucky
Urban County Planning Commission
227 North Upper, Lexington, Ky.
Feb. 1970 Scale: 1/3=2000 feet

Map 2. Location of Floral
Hall indicated by black dot,
at left center.

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