

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received JUL 13 1983
date entered

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

1. Name

historic AMBROSE BURTON HOUSE

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Unity Road not for publication

city, town Harrodsburg vic. vicinity of

state Kentucky code 021 county Mercer code 167

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"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Restoration in Progress

4. Owner of Property

name Ann Carol Brown

street & number 2203 Divisadero Street

city, town San Francisco vicinity of state California 94115

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Mercer County Courthouse

street & number Main Street

city, town Harrodsburg state Kentucky

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title KY Historic Resources Inventory ME-35 has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date October 1981 federal state county local

depository for survey records Kentucky Heritage Council

city, town Frankfort state Kentucky

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

The Ambrose Burton House is located on a rolling expanse of farmland approximately seven miles north of Harrodsburg, Mercer County, Kentucky. It is a two-story log and frame I house distinguished by large limestone end chimneys and circular sawn weatherboard siding. A salient and unusual feature of this three bay house is the manner in which it was constructed. Burton's original two-story log house encompasses the east two bays while the west bay includes two later frame additions. Evidence of this composite form of construction can be detected in the slightly asymmetrical fenestration exhibited on the front facade.

Ambrose Burton is believed to have built the two-story log dwelling soon after purchasing the land in 1798. The eighteen by twenty-four feet structure is constructed of inverted V notch ash logs with a single large room on each floor. The logs are approximately six inches deep and one foot in height. When constructed, the log portion was two bays wide with a single outside batten door in the west opening of the north (front) side.

The log building exhibits several important features. Unlike most early Kentucky houses, Ambrose Burton built the limestone chimney on the inside rather than the outside of the east wall. Also, in place of having eaves beams with a butting pole and weighted clapboards on the roof, the rafters were squared and had a concave cut in the underside of the projecting eaves (Photo #6). Roof trusses consisted of horizontal collar beams nine feet above the upper floor level, connecting the rafters, and all members were spliced and pegged together.¹

The seven and one-half feet wide chimney breast is accentuated by a reeded Federal style wood mantel attached to a six inch nailing board five feet above the floor. The fireplace opening is 50 inches wide and bridged by a segmental arch of tooled limestone. A built in cupboard later relocated to the ell was originally built along the north side of the chimney breast. The south recess adjoining the chimney once had an enclosed stairwell. The first floor was finished with plaster and period fittings, however, the second story was not finished. (Mantels and fittings have been placed in storage during the restoration phase of the house.)

The west frame wing of the three-bay house was built in two stages: the first floor and limestone chimney being added circa 1809 and the second floor being built sometime prior to 1840. The first floor of this single cell structure was constructed of mortise and tenon beams with interstices filled with wattle and daub. The wattle and daub method was a system of packing "cats" of mud and straw on a grid of sticks. Based on a preliminary structural analysis, it is possible that this addition may have originally been a free-standing structure.²

Sometime between 1827 and 1851 the house was enlarged into its present configuration. A second story was constructed over the wattle and daub room and a single story ell behind. At this time the west portion of the original log house was divided into a stairhall, and the former stairway and presses flanking the chimney were removed. Both the lower rear (south) windows became doors and a new window was placed in the east wall where the stairs had been.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input 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 c.1798-1851

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Ambrose Burton House is a significant example of early vernacular architecture in Mercer County, Kentucky, illustrating building forms and techniques indigenous to the region in which it was built along with constructural traits quite distinct from the prevailing regional model. Built during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Burton House is important in the way it incorporates the traditional method of log construction with a unique indigenous form known as wattle and daub. The use of wattle and daub as a constructural technique is highly unusual in Kentucky--and of the ten examples documented, half are located in Mercer County.¹ Similarly, the utilization of the interior stone chimney and cut rafters are atypical for Kentucky houses of this period. Together these distinctive features constitute an important and early expression of vernacular architecture in central Kentucky.

Mercer County was established by the Virginia Legislature in 1785, seven years before Kentucky attained statehood. Settlement within the Inner Bluegrass Region of Kentucky was nothing short of astounding; by 1790 over 7,000 people were recorded within the confines of Mercer County.² Ambrose Burton was one of many Virginians who came to Mercer County during the late eighteenth century. In 1798 he left his native Orange County, Virginia, settling on a 150 acre tract of land within the original McAfee survey. Construction of the two story log dwelling must have been an early order of business, since Burton's family is known to have included fourteen children.

Ambrose Burton died in 1808, and the following year his son Ambrose Burton the younger married Jane Jones and inherited the farm. It was about that time that the wattle and daub room was added. During the tenure of Samuel Jones' ownership (1827-1851) the rear ell and existing I form house were completed. Members of the Jones family owned the house until 1888. In 1909 Arabia H. Brown purchased the house and farm for \$4,200. His son, Irmel N. Brown (1912-), now residing in New Jersey, is the current owner of the farm. Under the supervision of Stanley Kelly the Browns are restoring the house to its mid-nineteenth century appearance.

¹Comprehensive survey of Mercer County, 1981.

²Wendell Rone, Historical Atlas of Kentucky and Her Counties, 1965. Historic resource surveys conducted by the Kentucky Heritage Commission have documented nearly 20 eighteenth century structures in Mercer County.

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Lancaster, Clay, "Architectural Notes on the Ambrose Burton House." 21 November 1981.
- Rone, Wendell S., Sr., An Historical Atlas of Kentucky and Her Counties. Mayfield: Mayfield Printing Company, 1965.
- Brown, Irmel N. "The Ambrose Burton-Arabia Brown House," April, 1983.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .82

Quadrangle name Harrodsburg, Kentucky

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6
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6	9	0	1	8	0
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4	1	9	1	4	6	0
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Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at a point approximately 700' NW of Unity Road and gravel driveway, proceed south approximately 175', then proceed west 205' along the rear side of the small barn. Turning north proceed approximately 175' along fencerow, then proceed east 205' along fencerow to the point of origin.

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 Steve C. Gordon, Senior Historian

organization Kentucky Heritage Council date March 1983

street & number 9th Fl., Capital Plaza Tower telephone 564-7005

city or town Frankfort state Kentucky 40601

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 Emma Appel

title State Historic Preservation Officer date July 6, 1983

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 8/11/83

for Melanie Byers
Keeper of the National Register

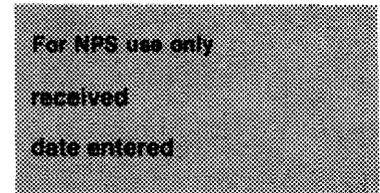
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Ambrose Burton House

Continuation sheet Mercer County, Kentucky

Item number

Seven

Page

Two

The west frame addition also was modified. Its door to the log house was shifted to the front end of the dividing wall and the front door was made into a window. Another window was cut through the west wall flanking the chimney. A new door was installed in the back (south) wall to the ell.

Although altered, the rear ell is an important mid-nineteenth century architectural feature. The two room plan features an interior chimney between the rooms and entrances on both the east and west elevations. A Grecian mantel and pegged two panel doors appear to be original design elements. In the northwest corner of the rear (south) room is the walnut press that formerly was included in the log structure.

In early 1981 a careful restoration was begun by the current owner, slowly securing the house and rescuing it from certain abandonment. Stanley Kelly, a recognized Kentucky historic house contractor, was retained to supervise the project. One of the first priorities was to replace the deteriorating roof and replace all of the rotten log sills. The logs were cut from ash trees on Mr. Kelly's property and shaped with a broadax and adze. All of the period weatherboarding was preserved where possible. The batten door and transom windows are accurate reconstructions and exhibit remarkable authenticity. A narrow room has been sensitively added to the east wall of the ell, and since the photos were taken, Mr. Kelly has installed period nine-over-six, double hung windows. A wooden porch that once was attached to the west side of the ell will also be reconstructed with chamfered cedar posts and a beaded poplar ceiling. Restoration of the Burton House should be completed by 1984.

The less than one acre tract included in the nomination comprises the immediate domestic space surrounding the house. It is separated from the adjacent pastures by a historic fenceline. The barn, privy, and well included in the domestic space contribute to the historic and visual integrity of the site. The more recently built tobacco barn (#5 on map) is not a component of the nominated area.

¹Clay Lancaster, "Architectural Notes on the Ambrose Burton House," 21 November 1981.

²IBID.

KENTUCKY HISTORIC RESOURCE INVENTORY SUPPLEMENT
BOUNDARY AND LOCATION INFORMATION

Historic Property Name Ambrose Burton House Site # ME-35

Multiple Resource/Thematic Nomination Title _____

U.T.M. Coordinates - List multiple UTMs if property is ten or more acres.

A. 16 690180 4191460 D. _____

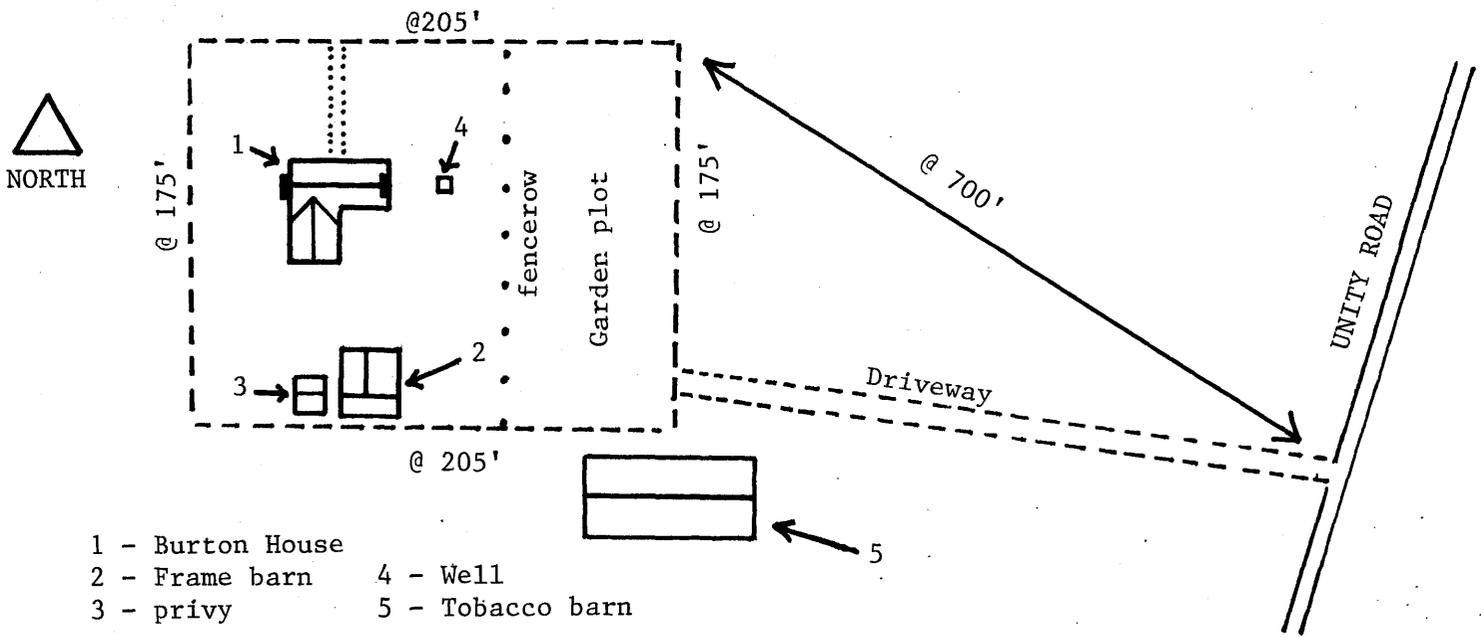
B. _____ E. _____

C. _____ F. _____

Verbal Boundary Description Acreage .82 acres

Beginning at a point approximately 700' NW of Unity Road and gravel driveway, proceed south approximately 175', then proceed west 205' along the rear side of the small barn. Turning north proceed approximately 175' along fencerow, then proceed east 205' along fencerow to the point of origin.

Sketch of Site Plan (Showing outbuildings, structures, landscape features and the site boundary as described above.)



Official Courthouse Property Reference: