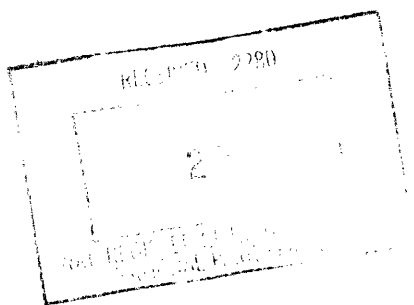


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name Pioneer Log Cabin
other names/site number WAB 1085

2. Location

street S side Kentucky St, near jct with University Dr not for
publication N/A
city or town Bowling Green vicinity NA state Kentucky code KY
county Warren code 227 zip code 42101

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally.

David L. Morgan

5-28-04

Signature of certifying official David L. Morgan, SHPO Date

Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office _____
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification
I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register _____
___ See continuation sheet.

___ determined eligible for the National Register _____
___ See continuation sheet.

___ determined not eligible for the National Register _____

___ removed from the National Register _____
___ other (explain) _____

Edson W. Beall
Signature of Keeper

8/4/04
Date of Action

per

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure
	<input type="checkbox"/> object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u> 1 </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u> Total

Number of resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: museum

Current Functions

Cat: EDUCATION Sub: college

7. Description

Architectural Classification Cat: OTHER Sub: Log-revival

Materials

Foundation	<u>STONE</u>
roof	<u>ASPHALT</u>
walls	<u>LOG</u>
other	<u>STONE</u>

Narrative Description (See continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

- A owned by a religious institution, used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance	<u>ARCHITECTURE</u>
Period of Significance	<u>1939</u>
Significant Dates	<u>1939</u>
Significant Person	<u>N/A</u>
Cultural Affiliation	<u>N/A</u>
Architect/Builder	<u>Davis, Brinton B.</u>

Narrative Statement of Significance (See continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References (See continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determinat. of individual listing has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: University Archives, Western Kentucky University

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	Bowling Green
1	16	548 460	4093 770	3	___	___	South Quad
2	___	___	___	4	___	___	

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (See continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (See continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. Michael Ann Williams and Rachel Baum
organization Programs in Folk Studies, Western Kentucky University
street & number 1 Big Red Way telephone 270-745-5898
city or town Bowling Green state KY zip code 42101
date April 1, 2004

Property Owner

name Western Kentucky University
street & number 1 Big Red Way telephone 270-745-5898
city or town Bowling Green state KY zip code 42101

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1 Name of Property: Pioneer Log Cabin
Location: Warren County, Kentucky

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Narrative Description:

The Pioneer Log Cabin (WAB 1085) is a one-story log-revival building, which was completed in 1939. It is rectangular in shape and is similar in plan to a traditional double pen house. The walls are constructed of log, the foundation and chimneys are stone, and the gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The deliberately rustic look continues in the interior, with wide board floors, unfinished log walls, exposed wooden beams, and massive stone fireplaces. The cabin sits on a large lawn on the campus of Western Kentucky University. The longer sides of the cabin face east and west, and the shorter gable ends face north and south. The front door faces east, and the nearest road is Kentucky Street. The cabin is in excellent condition and has experienced only minimal alterations.

The cabin's grassy yard is approximately one fifth of an acre in size. The yard is bordered by a service road and the Kentucky Library and Museum to the east, dormitories to the south, University Drive to the west, and Kentucky Street to the north. Remnants of the old chestnut split-rail fence that once enclosed the cabin's yard still remain along portions of the yard's northern and eastern sides. A stone walkway runs from the service road to the eastern door. Reminders of the cabin's museum origins remain in the yard, including a stone stile-block and an iron tripod for hanging a large wash-kettle.

The cabin has a continuous foundation made of fieldstone. A newspaper account from the 1930s claims that the foundation stones were recycled "from a dilapidated cabin in Allen County."¹ Due to a slight slope, the visible part of the foundation varies from one foot in height at the northeastern corner, to two feet at the southwestern corner.

The walls are constructed of poplar logs. The sides of the logs are hewn flat, and the tops and bottoms of the logs vary from flat to slightly curved. The logs are double notched at the corners. They vary in height from eight to eleven inches, and in width from six to seven inches. The longest logs, found on the east and west sides of the cabin, are approximately forty-four feet long. The logs on the north and south sides are approximately twenty-six feet at the longest, becoming increasingly shorter in the gable section. According to numerous accounts, the logs were cut on or near the birthplace of then-college President Henry Hardin Cherry.² The space between the logs is filled with small pieces of wood and daubed with concrete. The exterior wall logs have been stained or painted light brown.

The cabin has an asphalt-shingle gable roof which was installed in the 1960s. Originally, the roof was made of white oak boards laid over a wooden sub roof.³ The overhang of the roof extends about two feet on all sides of the building. The underside of the overhang is covered with beadboard in some places and plywood in others. On the eastern and western sides, round cedar rafters extend to the edge of the overhang. A rustic wooden gutter, constructed out of two long boards joined together to form a v-shaped trough, is attached to perpendicular boards which are attached to each of the cedar rafters. On the gable ends, the overhang partially envelops the chimneys. Regularly spaced thick round poles extend about six inches out of the gable walls just below the roofline. It is unclear whether these are merely decorative or structural.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 2 Name of Property: Pioneer Log Cabin
Location: Warren County, Kentucky

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The eastern side is visually divided into four even parts. A door is located in the center of the wall. There are two sixteen-light, casement style windows. They are located on either side of the door, roughly halfway between the door and the end of the wall. The panes of the southern window have been cut to accommodate an air-conditioning unit. A small raised masonry platform constructed of randomly sized rectangular stone blocks serves as a porch.

The northern and southern gable ends are very similar to one another. They both have an asymmetrically placed exterior chimney on their eastern sides and a window to the west. The massive chimneys are constructed of rectangular blocks of rough cut stone. Iron tie rods anchor the chimneys securely to the house. The window on the southern gable end is a sixteen-light casement window. An opening in the foundation on the southern gable end, covered by a wooden door, provides access to the crawl space underneath the house. The window on the northern side has been altered. It has three lights, is fixed rather than casement style, and holds an air-conditioning unit.

The western side of the house is pierced by six openings. Two doors are placed close together slightly to the south of the center of the wall. A small six-light casement window flanks each door. Larger sixteen-light casement windows are found near the ends of the wall. A platform similar to that on the western side is reached by a broad stone masonry step.

The cabin's interior is divided into three sections. The northern half of the house is taken up by one large room. A small kitchen, a bathroom, and a back hall make up the central portion of the house. The southern end is bisected into two rooms by a north-south wall. The kitchen was carved out of the southeastern room in 1967 by erecting a new east-west wall.

The interior of the cabin conveys an intentionally rustic feeling. The four exterior walls are unfinished log. The interior walls, which divide the house into rooms, appear to be log, but are actually hewn boards, approximately two-and-a-half-inches thick. Unlike the exterior wall-logs, these boards have regular and exaggerated axe or adz marks. Both the exterior and interior walls are chinked with concrete. Wide-board wooden floors and exposed hand-hewn beams further contribute to the rustic feeling.

Fireplaces are found on the end walls of the northern and southeastern rooms. Hearths made of blocks of stone extend out about two-and-a-half feet into the room. The fireplaces are lined with firebrick. Although the fireplaces themselves are not especially large, they are made to look massive by a facing of large blocks of finely cut stone. This facing extends about two feet on either side of the fireplace and approximately six feet up the wall. The stone of the facing varies in color from light grey to dark brown. A 1936 newspaper article suggests that these stones, or other stones used in building the cabin, might have come from another campus building that was torn down during the cabin's construction. This building, referred to in the article as "the old building on the Hill," was most likely Recitation Hall.⁴ Constructed in 1889, Recitation Hall was torn down and replaced by Henry Hardin Cherry Hall in 1936 - 1937.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 3 Name of Property: Pioneer Log Cabin
Location: Warren County, Kentucky

Integrity statement

The integrity of the building's design, materials, workmanship, and location allow the cabin to convey its significance as an example of New Deal-era log-revival architecture.

The exterior design of the cabin has seen little change. On the interior, one of the cabin's rooms has been subdivided, but this alteration in the house's floor plan is outweighed by the integrity of materials and workmanship in the interior. The cabin's materials remain mostly unaltered. The most significant replacement is the cabin's roof. It was originally a shake or board roof, and has been replaced with an asphalt shingle roof. The university plans to remove the window air-conditioning units and restore the two altered windows to their historic appearance. The workmanship seen in the rough foundation stones, finely dressed mantel stones, the corner timbering, and hewn logs and beams all help convey the building's significance.

Although the cabin's setting has been altered – its grassy lawn was once surrounded on two sides by a garden of native trees and old-fashioned flowers and shrubs – the cabin's other elements evoke the feeling of the aesthetic sense of New Deal-era log-revival construction.

¹ Paul Ferren. "Log Cabin to Be Realistic Copy of Pioneer Dwelling," *College Heights Herald*, 26 April, 1935.

² See for example, "The Pioneer Log Cabin," *Teachers College Heights*, (December 1935), p. 41; Elizabeth Durham, "Description of All Buildings on Campus 1935-1936." Unpublished research paper, Western Kentucky State Teachers College, 1936, p. 43. University Archives, Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky; "Log House Now Being Finished: Landscaping Rapidly Nearing Completion," *The Students' Weekly*, 15 May 1935.

³ Joyce Reels. "Cabin Reflects History," *Park City Daily News*, 20 February 1967; Gayle Carver, transcript of interview with Miss Tyler, 1973. Pioneer Log Cabin Vertical File, University Archives, Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

⁴ "Work on Cabin Is Halted by Bad Weather," *College Heights Herald*, 7 February, 1936.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 1 Name of Property: Pioneer Log Cabin
Location: Warren County, Kentucky

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Statement of Significance:

The Pioneer Log Cabin (WAB1085) on the campus of Western Kentucky University, in Bowling Green, Kentucky, is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. It is significant as a type of construction: New Deal-era log revival architecture. Built in the 1930s on the campus of Western Kentucky State Teachers College (now Western Kentucky University), the cabin was constructed as a cooperative effort between the college and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA). Louisville architect Brinton B. Davis, who had demonstrated his ability to work in a variety of architectural revival styles in previous campus structures, designed the cabin. Touting it as a "realistic copy of [a] pioneer dwelling," the college built the cabin to commemorate and evoke the experience of Kentucky's early settlers.¹ Rather than depicting an authentic early Kentucky dwelling, however, Western's Pioneer Log Cabin conveys a 1930s image of a pioneer cabin. It falls within a broad tradition of commemorative log cabins constructed by New Deal agencies in Kentucky and across the nation.

New Deal Log Architecture

Horizontal log construction, associated with a variety of regional and ethnic traditions, has long been a staple of vernacular building in the United States. Among the most widespread and enduring of these traditions, log building in the Upper South flourished for over a century. Although commonly associated with pioneer lifestyles, the method of building survived well beyond that era, supported largely by the cooperative labor traditions of rural communities. After 1900 the construction of log dwellings dwindled considerably, although a brief revival occurred during the Depression years, as hard pressed rural communities reached back into their building traditions to provide housing for their families. The construction of log barns and outbuildings proved far more tenacious in parts of the Upper South, and knowledge of log construction survived in living memory well into the mid-twentieth century.

Even as traditional log construction flourished in the nineteenth century, the log cabin began to take on mythic proportions in the American consciousness. Beginning in 1840 with the presidential campaign of William Henry Harrison, politicians used the image of the cabin to denote humble beginnings and egalitarianism. The campaign of Abraham Lincoln revived this imagery. In the late nineteenth century, America's fascination with its pioneer past grew; during the early decades of the twentieth century that interest manifested itself in historical pageantry and the development of museums and historic shrines. As his state of birth, Kentucky stood at the center of the developing cult of Lincoln, which began in the late nineteenth century. In 1909, the Lincoln Farm Association began construction of a memorial to Lincoln at his birthplace near the town of Hodgenville, Kentucky. After completion of the Beaux-Arts classical granite and marble memorial building in 1911, a log cabin, purported to be Lincoln's birthplace, was reconstructed within.²

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Section 8 Page 2 Name of Property: Pioneer Log Cabin
Location: Warren County, Kentucky

Stylistic developments also fueled America's fascination with the log cabin. In response to the industrial revolution and profound cultural change, during the late nineteenth century the Arts and Crafts Movement and related architectural styles gave rise to an interest in craftsmanship and rusticity. Log buildings became especially popular for recreational purposes and following the publication of William S. Wicks's *Log Cabins: How to Build and Furnish Them* in 1889, a spate of pattern books and magazine articles provided instruction for Americans to build their own log cabins. Although the design antecedents were eclectic, many attempted to evoke the quaintness of a frontier cabin. By the 1920s, the aesthetics of rustic design, which include horizontal log construction, had also become fully entrenched in the building plans of the National Park Service.³

Although log cabin revival architecture was well underway during the 1920s, the era of the Great Depression gave it special impetus. With the era's glorification of the "common man," nationwide interest in America's pioneer days grew especially strong. Statues memorializing the Pioneer Mother were erected in many states; grade school students built elaborate replicas of pioneer cabins out of paper and cardboard; and, with the advent of the New Deal, the federal government sponsored the construction of log pioneer cabins throughout the country. The Civilian Conservation Corps built a number of log structures during the 1930s, as well as restored old ones in the national and state parks. In 1933, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, one of the first federal relief programs of the New Deal, began a variety of programs, including construction and engineering projects. FERA continued until 1935, when it was superseded by the Works Progress Administration. Both FERA and the WPA promoted building through cooperative projects with governmental and educational agencies, with the New Deal agencies providing support for labor costs. Many of the log museum and memorial buildings constructed during the 1930s were funded through either FERA or the WPA.

A comprehensive study of New Deal era log construction projects has not yet been undertaken, but examples are numerous. In nearby Tennessee, the CCC and WPA constructed a notched-log, two-room cabin to represent Grinder's Inn, the site of Meriwether Lewis's death. The reconstruction aimed to be "typical of that period, but not intended to be a replica of the original."⁴ Outside Nashville, the WPA in conjunction with the Ladies' Hermitage Association undertook several projects at Andrew Jackson's home, including the quasi-restoration of the original log buildings. In 1935, south of Charleston, Illinois, the CCC reconstructed Thomas Lincoln's two-room log house, based on historic photographs of the original, which had been dismantled and moved for the Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

Not all log house museums were associated with specific historic individuals. The Pioneer Memorial Log House Museum in Houston, Texas, was built by the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, who eschewed public money in building their tribute to their pioneer ancestors. Dedicated in 1936, the building originally served as a hospitality center for those who came to the city for the Texas Centennial. Similar to many other log revival structures of the era, the construction of the Pioneer Memorial Museum recycled historic materials, in this case stones taken from structures associated with famous Texans.

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Section 8 Page 3 Name of Property: Pioneer Log Cabin
Location: Warren County, Kentucky

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In all of these efforts, the degree of authenticity varied considerably. While some, such as the Lincoln Cabin, attempted to more or less reconstruct a historic building, most attempted a historic feel, without necessarily reproducing typical vernacular house plans or technology. More often than not, the structures better represented the National Park Service's "government rustic style" than actual historic vernacular traditions. Indeed, it seems the 1930s gave birth to a new vernacular tradition, the sentimental log cabin.

Even revival log cabins with explicitly commercial functions harkened back to romantic notions of pioneer life. Among the most notable examples in Kentucky is the complex built in the late 1930s by John Lair at Renfro Valley, country music's first automobile-tourism site. Among the first structures built by Lair were small log tourist cabins to house visitors. Although he used traditional building techniques and local labor, he advertised that the cabins had all the modern comforts, thereby offering "the quaint charm of early pioneer days with all the conveniences of the modern age."⁵

The end of the New Deal did not signal by any means the end of log structures celebrating the mythic age of the pioneer. However, the decade of the 1930s represents a golden age in this particular revival. In the Upper South, this material manifestation of the mythologizing of the log cabin took place in the same decade that the construction of traditional log dwellings took its last breath. While hard times drove some to revive the traditional construction method that had sustained rural communities for a century, it led others to join the federal relief programs which help support construction projects which represented the log cabin as an artifact of the romanticized past. Notably, the architect- designed revival cabins seldom drew on the living traditional knowledge of log construction in their buildings.

The Pioneer Log Cabin's History

Western Kentucky State Teacher's College originally intended the Pioneer Log Cabin as an extension of the Kentucky Building and Museum. The Kentucky Building was a dream conceived in the late 1920s by Western's President Henry Hardin Cherry. The expressed goals for the building match the spirit of the rhetoric later developed for the Pioneer Cabin:

Kentucky, the possessor of the richest and most varied historical background, is highly deserving of a permanent place in which those things that are sacred to the memory of her greatness may be preserved. Such a place is the Kentucky Building . . . dedicated by the present as a memorial to the past and an inspiration to the future Kentucky. . . . This spot, where the dreams and hopes of the future may be strengthened by the traditions and achievements of the past, is the common meeting place of all.⁶

The proposed building was to house a library of books written by Kentucky authors, galleries of artwork by Kentucky artists, and collections of artifacts that reflected Kentucky's history and resources. Among these galleries would be a Pioneer Room stocked with objects representative of Kentucky's early history. Although the college broke ground on the building in 1930, and the

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Section 8 Page 4 Name of Property: Pioneer Log Cabin
Location: Warren County, Kentucky

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exterior shell of the building was completed by 1931, it was not until 1939 that the interior was finished and the museum and library opened to the public.

While records show that the Kentucky Museum planned for a Pioneer Room as early as 1930,⁷ a separate cabin was probably not envisioned until sometime after 1932. Landscape plans for the Kentucky Museum drawn up in 1930 and 1932 by New York architect Henry Wright show no indication of the log cabin.⁸ The earliest known reference to the cabin dates from October 18, 1934. On this date, President Cherry placed an order for materials for "the proposed log house to be built on the Kentucky Building grounds." The order included eighty-six poplar logs, thirty cedar poles, and five chestnut poles "to be suitable for construction . . . as planned by Captain Brinton B. Davis." The total cost came to \$224.10, with payment and delivery to be made no later than December 1, 1934.⁹

At this time the College already had one log structure, the Senior Building (now known as the Faculty House), built in 1920-21 by students. In his dedication of that building, Cherry noted, not the evocation of pioneer spirit, but the "spirit of service."¹⁰ In the design for the new log cabin, President Cherry once again turned to Louisville architect Brinton B. Davis, dubbed the "Hill Builder" by a local paper. Between 1909 and 1939, Davis designed most of the new structures on campus, including the Greek Revival Van Meter Hall in 1911, the Italian Renaissance Revival Snell Hall in 1924, the French Renaissance style Library in 1927, the Federal Revival style President's Home in 1931, the Georgian Revival styled Kentucky Building finished in 1939, and the Classical Revival Cherry Hall, built with support of the Public Works Administration in 1937.

In December 1934, shortly after Cherry's order for materials, the college's alumni magazine picked up the story of the proposed cabin. Its article, which included a black and white artist's rendering of the cabin, focused on the building's appearance and future landscaping: "The style will conform to the old traditions with its 'shake' roof, spacious rooms, generous size fireplace with hearthstone and chimney of old weathered stone." The yard would include "an old stone stile-block, ash hopper, wash-kettle, rain barrel and well-sweep" as well as fruit trees and an herb garden. Native trees such as dogwoods, sassafras, and pawpaws, and old-fashioned shrubs would tie the cabin's yard to the nearby old-time garden. According to the article, the College Heights Foundation would pay for the materials, while the federal government would pay for the labor. The author notes that the yellow poplar logs had already been delivered to the Kentucky Building grounds and were seasoning.¹¹

The next mention of the cabin comes four months later, in an April 1935 article in the campus newspaper, *The College Heights Herald*. Repeating verbatim most of the language from the previous article, this journalist added that a stone foundation had been built, the stones of which "were obtained from a dilapidated cabin in Allen County." The article also included the detail that FERA would be financing the labor costs. In this article, we see the first mention of the commemorative function of the building and a focus on the cabin's perceived authenticity. Entitled "Log Cabin to be Realistic Copy of Pioneer Dwelling," the article observes that it will

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Section 8 Page 5 Name of Property: Pioneer Log Cabin
Location: Warren County, Kentucky

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be a "real cabin" in a "real setting," and will be "an institution to the memory of our Kentucky forefathers."¹²

A month later, an article in *The Students' Weekly* featured the optimistic headline "Log House Now Being Finished." This article provides a fuller picture of the cabin's intended use by describing plans for the interior. Furnishings mentioned include a "great open fireplace" with a crane and pot, a long rifle with pouch and horn to hang above the mantel, a spindle, loom and hackle, and "crude but substantial furniture." It becomes clear from this article that the cabin will be a museum where "the traditions of the past, the struggles and hardships of [the] pioneer, as well as the simple comforts he loved, enjoyed, and protected, will be vividly portrayed." The article reported the expectation that the cabin would be completed "before the summer has reached the dog days."¹³

Despite the airy confidence of the May article, work on the cabin does not appear to have progressed with much speed. A December 1935 article in the *Teachers College Heights* made no direct mention of the progress on the construction, but did claim a sacred mission for the project: "Here will be . . . recreated a typical log cabin of the early days, thus providing a shrine to which those who boast pioneer ancestry may come and see for themselves how their courageous ancestors lived while laying the foundation of the Commonwealth."¹⁴ The future tense employed in the article suggests that not much work had occurred since May.

Although a January article reassured readers that the log cabin was "rapidly nearing completion,"¹⁵ in February the *Herald* reported that work on the cabin had halted because of bad weather and because the cabin's workers were needed for the demolition of Recitation Hall. Recitation Hall, also known as Potter Hall, was an academic building that dated to 1889. The college decided to tear it down and replace it with a modern building. The February *Herald* article reported that a Mr. Smith, almost certainly Mr. L.T. Smith, head of the Manual Arts Department¹⁶ was doing the stonework on the cabin. According to the article, he was contemplating using some of the stone from the recently demolished Recitation Hall to complete the cabin's stonework. Despite the delay, the article reported spring as the cabin's expected date of completion.¹⁷

Construction on the cabin continued to lag, most likely due to a number of different factors. As the above article observed, the cabin's workers were needed for other projects. Recitation Hall's demolition required labor, but so too did the building of its replacement, Cherry Hall. Perhaps the cabin's workers contributed to this construction project. In addition, temporary classrooms were needed until the completion of Cherry Hall. The Kentucky Building, an unfinished shell, was commandeered as classroom space. Mr. L.T. Smith supervised the installation of flooring, plumbing, heating, and lighting in the Kentucky Building,¹⁸ and partitions were erected to create makeshift classrooms. All of this took time away from work on the cabin. Since the cabin was intended as part of the Kentucky Building complex, it may have not been a priority to finish the cabin until the Kentucky Building itself was completed.

In November of 1936, an article in *The Student Weekly* claimed that the "Western Pioneer Cabin Progresses." This article focused on the pioneer experience, offering extensive quotes

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Section 8 Page 6 Name of Property: Pioneer Log Cabin
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from Alexis de Toqueville. The author focused on the cabin's ability to evoke the past: "Today the log home with us stands as a symbol of the hardships, plain living, self-reliance, adventurous spirit, unanswered courage, and determination of those men and women who founded and established the commonwealth, breathing a spirit of democracy so precious to the hardy settlers."¹⁹ The article concluded by repeating an earlier article's description of the cabin as a shrine to the memory of pioneer ancestors.

A year passed by without any further mention of the cabin in the press. Estimates from heating companies, and an invoice from a plumbing company in August and September of 1937 indicate that work had indeed progressed by that time.²⁰ In January of 1938, another *Herald* article announced, "The Pioneer Cabin . . . is practically completed."²¹ This article repeated much of the same romantic language of the earlier articles and did not report on any specific progress.

It is not clear exactly when the cabin was completed, but reports show that it was in use by the spring of 1939, albeit in a different capacity than originally planned. Sometime during the 1938-1939 school year, the Pioneer Cabin was put into use as overflow office space. Cherry Hall had been finished in September of 1937 and was dedicated in honor of the college's founding president, Henry Hardin Cherry, who had died unexpectedly in August. With Cherry Hall open, the Kentucky Building was no longer needed as classroom space. By January of 1939, the necessary work to complete the Kentucky Building project finally commenced. The temporary classrooms were dismantled, and the College Heights Foundation and Office of Personnel, which had been using the Kentucky Building for office space, were left without a home.²²

According to an April 1939 *College Heights Herald* article, the completed Kentucky Building would once again house the offices of the College Heights Foundation and the Director of Personnel, as well as the *College Heights Herald*. In the meantime, the Pioneer Cabin served as home to all three. The article, entitled "Unique Cabin to House Kentucky Pioneer Museum," assured readers that this arrangement was only temporary, and that after the Kentucky Building opened, the "cabin will be completely furnished as a pioneer home and will stand as a memorial to the home which is the foundation of our great land."²³ The 1939 college yearbook, *The Talisman*, provides visual evidence of the cabin's status in the spring of 1939. It includes a photo of the cabin's exterior, as well as a photo of the *Herald* staff crowded into one of the cabin's rooms. A caption underneath reads, "The Herald Office is temporarily located in the Pioneer Cabin until the completion of the Kentucky Building."²⁴

The Kentucky Building opened to the public in September of 1939, but even then, the Pioneer cabin did not become a museum. An article from the *Teachers College Heights* in January 1940, which copied the November 1936 *Student Weekly* article nearly word for word, continued to give the impression that the cabin would soon be open to the public as a furnished "shrine."²⁵ Five months later, however, the cabin became museum staff housing, and it continued to serve as housing exclusively until 2003.

Why did the cabin never become a museum as originally intended? The answers may lie partly in changing priorities within the Kentucky Museum as well as in changing national and

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international priorities. One decision that changed back and forth was whether Kentucky's early settlers should be memorialized in a Pioneer Room in the museum or in the separate Pioneer Cabin.

Documents from 1930 show that the museum originally planned to include a Pioneer Room in the main Kentucky Building. An article in the *Kentucky School Journal* by Miss Elizabeth Woods describes the Pioneer Room in terms very similar to those later used to describe the proposed cabin:

The pioneer room with its crude hand-hewn furniture will reflect the simple and frugal life of our forefathers . . . Here a wide-throated chimney with flagstone hearth will give a real picture of the intimate life of our pioneer ancestors, for on the broad hearth will be seen the dutch ovens, the long-handled waffle iron, warming pan and trivet, and, from a crane in the chimney, will hang the copper teakettles and many iron pots of a past mode.²⁶

An undated "Estimate of Equipment for Kentucky Building" report indicates that the museum's plan had evolved. Instead of a Pioneer Room in the main museum building, a separate cabin would be built. This report lists the projected costs for each room in the museum. Under Pioneer Room, the only entry is "Cost of Building Cabin on grounds, \$2,000." By the end of the 1930s, the situation had reversed itself again. Although the cabin had been completed, the Kentucky Museum chose not to furnish it when the main museum building opened to the public in September of 1939. Instead, the old Pioneer Room idea was revived. An April 1939 letter describing plans for the Kentucky Museum to the editor of *The Museum News* mentions a room that was to be "finished in logs to resemble the interior of an old log home. In it will be placed the museum items of the pioneer period."²⁷

While this elaborate plan never came to fruition, the museum implemented a scaled-down version in the relic room in December of 1940: "the wall spaces and display boards were covered with brown wrapping paper over which were painted artificial logs. An imitation stone fireplace was also constructed and the entire division made to resemble as nearly as possible the interior of an old cabin home. In this section we placed our museum materials from Kentucky's early days."²⁸ This description sounds very much like paper pioneer cabins that were created in the fourth grade class at Western's teacher training school that same year.²⁹ A January 1941 Kentucky Museum report claimed the simulated cabin "had been said to be our most effective exhibit."³⁰

If anyone knew why the Pioneer Cabin did not become a museum, it was Gayle Carver. Carver was the supervisor of the WPA-funded project that cataloged the Kentucky Museum's collections and created the initial exhibits. He worked in that position from 1938 to 1942, returning to the museum as curator in 1947, a title that he held for twenty-five years.³¹ In a 1973 interview Carver gave two reasons why the museum chose not to use the pioneer log cabin as exhibit space. He said the museum did not have sufficient funds to hire a full-time staff member to work in the cabin, and he also cited the prohibitive expense of installing a heating system.³²

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Since the cabin was used for staff and faculty housing instead, the lack of heating seems like an implausible reason, although Carver may have been more concerned about maintaining an appropriate environment for the artifacts than for the staff members or visitors. Records from 1937 show that the museum had solicited estimates for two different heating systems, but do not indicate when a heating system was ultimately installed.³³ Quoted in a 1965 *College Heights Herald* article, Mrs. Grace Overby of the Alumni Placement Office remembered that the cabin was heated only by the fireplace during the time that it served as office space and was very cold in the winter.³⁴ Carver also remembers rain coming in through the walls and creating puddles on the floors, which may have made him reluctant to keep items from the museum's collection in the cabin. Carver also noted that the cabin was not an accurate reproduction.³⁵ It is unknown whether he held that view in the 1930s and '40s, and whether that affected his decision not to use the cabin as a museum.

Carver's early ambivalence about the cabin appears in a letter to L.C. Everard, editor of *The Museum News*. Writing to Everard on April 3, 1939, Carver downplays the cabin's original intentions. He mentions first that the cabin was intended as a "home for the care-taker of the Kentucky Building and garden," noting next that "one room [is] reserved for exhibition purposes." This is the first known document that describes the cabin as staff housing. Carver also stresses the cabin's exterior visual impact, rather than its interior. He says those in charge felt it "would be appropriate in the setting of an old-fashioned garden, and, at the same time, show the people of today the type of building in which our ancestors lived."³⁶

A more personal reason may have colored Carver's views on the cabin. In May of 1939, one month after writing to Everard, Carter moved into the caretaker's quarters in the cabin. He remained there until he left his position in 1942. Perhaps he simply did not want to share his home with hordes of visitors.

National and world events may also have affected the cabin's future. With the advent of the Second World War, priorities may have shifted away from the museum's needs, and post-War housing shortages may have provided pressure to keep the cabin as a residence rather than a museum. For the next six decades the cabin served as a home for faculty, staff, and international students. In at least one case, the cabin was used as a dwelling for the family of an African American faculty member, who, because of segregation in Bowling Green, could not find suitable housing near campus. However, the cabin is now most frequently associated on campus with filmmaker John Carpenter, creator of the horror film "Halloween." The son of a faculty member, Carpenter spent part of his childhood living in the cabin. The structure is currently being renovated and in 2004 will become the home of the WKU Center for Folk Studies and Cultural Resource Management.

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Western Kentucky University's Pioneer Log Cabin exemplifies New Deal-era log revival building in many ways. In its intended purpose, it commemorated a mythic pioneer age. Rather than draw strictly from log building traditions still surviving within living memory, an architect designed the structure, only approximating regional vernacular house types and construction technique. Instead the house more clearly reflects the aesthetics of a style often referred to as "government rustic." As is typical of many revival log houses of the era, the building utilizes recycled materials from other historic structures. Finally, a New Deal relief agency provided part of the funding, making the construction of the cabin feasible.

¹ Paul Ferren. "Log Cabin to Be Realistic Copy of Pioneer Dwelling," *College Heights Herald*, 26 April 1935.

² Robert W. Blythe, Maureen Carroll and Steven Moffson, *Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site: Historic Resource Study*, revised and updated by Brian F. Coffey, National Park Service, 2001.

³ See Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), chapter 3.

⁴ Carroll Van West, *Tennessee's New Deal Landscape: A Guidebook* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), p. 180.

⁵ John Lair, *Renfro Valley Keepsake* (1941), p. 26. See also, Michael Ann Williams and Larry Morrissey, "Constructions of Tradition: Vernacular Architecture, Country Music and Auto-Ethnography," in *People, Power, Places: Perspective in Vernacular Architecture, VIII* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), pp. 161-175.

⁶ *The Talisman*, 1931, p. 92. University Archives, Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

⁷ Pioneer Room furnishing list, 12 August 1930. Mary Leiper Moore Correspondence, UA 52/2F, 1930-34, 1938-47, University Archives, Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky; Miss Elizabeth Woods, "The Kentucky Building," *Kentucky School Journal* (1930), p. 18. University Archives, Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

⁸ Henry Wright, Correspondence, Plans, and Sketches for Kentucky Building Grounds, 1930-1932. UA 25, Business Office. University Archives, Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky

⁹ Henry Hardin Cherry, letter to Mr. K.G. Sweeney. 18 October 1934. Cherry Box 21, General Letters 1934. University Archives, Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

¹⁰ Lyn Allison Yeager. *Log Structures in Warren County, Kentucky* (Bowling Green: The Citizens Bank of Bowling Green, 1977), p. 69.

¹¹ "The Log Cabin," *Teachers College Heights* (December 1934), p. 30.

¹² Paul Ferren. "Log Cabin to Be Realistic Copy of Pioneer Dwelling," *College Heights Herald*, 26 April 1935.

¹³ "Log House Now Being Finished: Landscaping Rapidly Nearing Completion," *The Students' Weekly*, 15 May 1935.

¹⁴ "The Pioneer Log Cabin," *Teachers College Heights*, (December 1935), p. 41.

¹⁵ "Cabin Nears Completion," *College Heights Herald*, 10 January 1936.

¹⁶ Beneva Hamby. "Foundation History Written by Reporter," *College Heights Herald*, 5 August 1938.

¹⁷ "Work on Cabin Is Halted by Bad Weather," *College Heights Herald*, 7 February 1936.

¹⁸ Beneva Hamby. "Foundation History Written by Reporter."

¹⁹ "Western Pioneer Cabin Progresses: Log Cabin Back of Kentucky Building Sponsored by College Heights Foundation" *The Student Weekly*, 12 November 1936.

²⁰ Business Office, 1906-1937 - Bursar, Pioneer Cabin 1937. UA 25 D, Business Office (Bursar), Office Files 1906-56, Box 1. University Archives, Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

²¹ Stewart Cuthbertson. "Cabin is Replica of Pioneer Home," *College Heights Herald*, 7 January 1938.

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²² Lowell Harrison, *Western Kentucky University*. (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1987) pp. 103, 107, 112.

²³ "Unique Cabin to House Kentucky Pioneer Museum," *College Heights Herald*, 7 April 1939.

²⁴ *The Talisman*, 1939, p.15, 151. University Archives, Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

²⁵ "The Pioneer Log Cabin," *Teachers College Heights*, (January 1940), p. 24.

²⁶ Woods, p. 18.

²⁷ Gayle Carver, letter to L.C. Everard. 3 April 1939. Gayle Carver Correspondence, 52/301. University Archives, Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

²⁸ Gayle Carver, Production Report to WPA, 31 January 1941. UA 312 B6, Garrett, Subject Arranged Correspondence, 1938-1948, Kentucky Building, 1940-1946. University Archives, Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

²⁹ *The Talisman*, 1940, p. 178. University Archives, Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

³⁰ Gayle Carver, Production Report to WPA.

³¹ Gayle Carver, Personal and Professional Data, UA Bio, Carver, Gayle; Gayle Carver, 100b gayle r carver.doc, UA Bio, Carver, Gayle, University Archives, Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

³² Joyce Reels. "Cabin Reflects History," *Park City Daily News*, 20 February 1967.

³³ Business Office, 1906-1937 - Bursar, Pioneer Cabin 1937.

³⁴ Don Russ. "Log Cabin Constructed Originally As Museum," *College Heights Herald*, 10 December 1965.

³⁵ Gayle Carver, transcript of interview with Miss Tyler, 1973. Pioneer Log Cabin Vertical File, University Archives, Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

³⁶ Gayle Carver, letter to L.C. Everard, 3 April 1939.

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Name of Property: Pioneer Log Cabin
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Verbal boundary description:

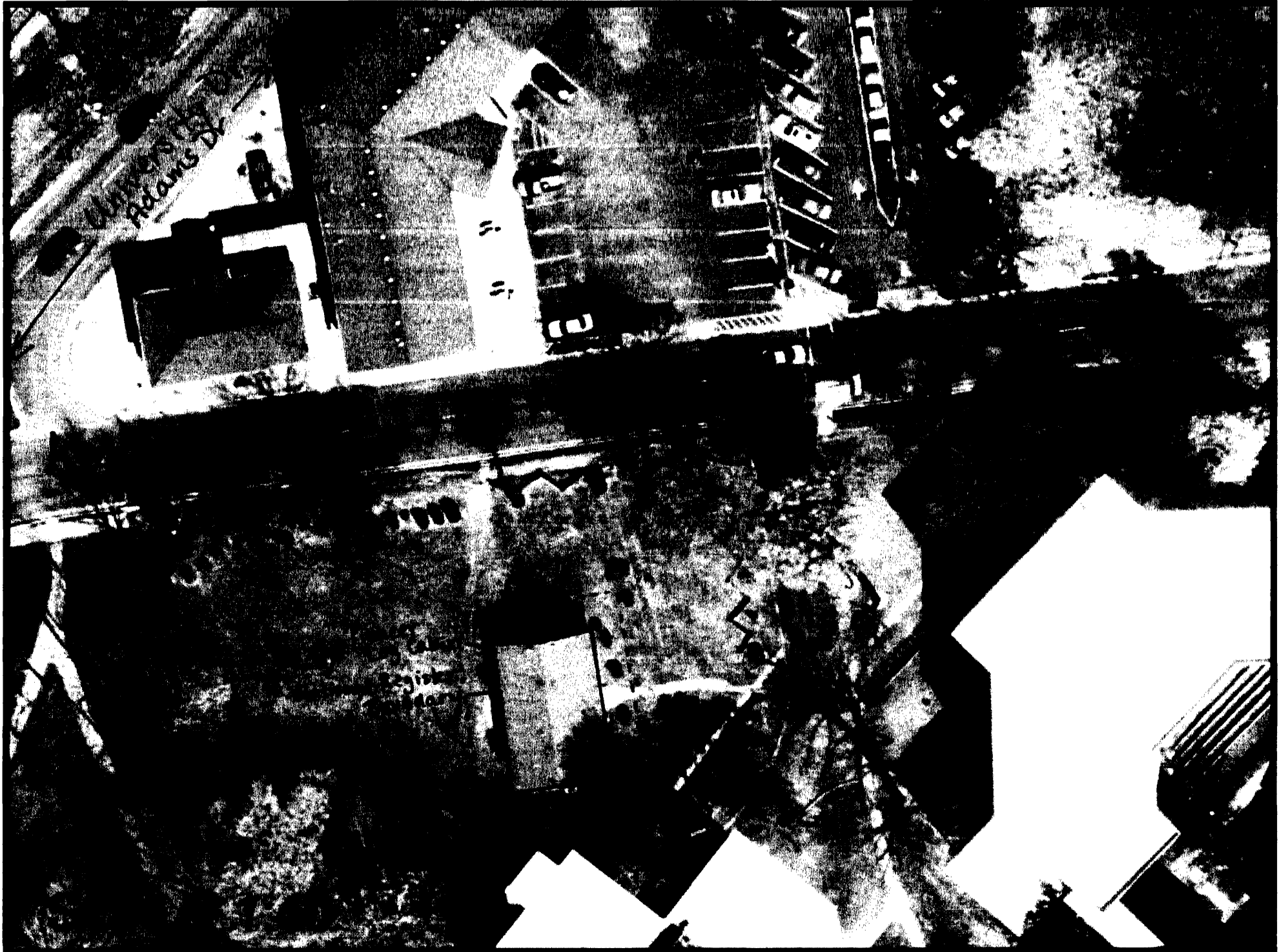
See sketch map of property, figure 1.

Boundary justification:

The boundary proposed for listing includes only the Pioneer Log Cabin and a 10' margin around the building. The cabin's designers proposed a setting for the Cabin that included plantings designed to enhance the Cabin's historic impression. Those plantings either have been lost to time or were never executed in the first place. Consequently, the basis for the Cabin's inclusion in the National Register is restricted to the building itself. The 10' margin around the building is a conventional protective surrounding, consistent with the view of the cabin's architectural significance.

Pioneer Log Cabin, Bowling Green, Warren Co, KY

Figure 1 • Sketch map
• Verbal boundary description map



National Register Boundary - - - -

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PHOTO IDENTIFICATION

Name of Property: Pioneer Log Cabin
Location: Warren County, Kentucky

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Same information for all photos:

Name: Pioneer Log Cabin

Location: Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Warren County, Kentucky

Name of photographer: Rachel Baum

Location of Negatives: Programs in Folk Studies and Anthropology, Western Kentucky
University

Photo-specific information:

1. Setting, from the west, near the intersection of Kentucky St and University Dr. Camera facing east. 3/24/2004.
2. Southern and western facades. Camera facing NE. 3/24/2004
3. Northern and eastern facades. Camera facing SW. 3/24/2004.
4. Interior, northern room. Camera facing NE. 3/8/2004.