

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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# 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  
**\*\*Highfield (Willis Roberts House)**  
AND/OR COMMON  
Same

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER  
303 North Adams Street  
CITY, TOWN  
Owenton  
STATE  
Kentucky  
VICINITY OF  
06  
COUNTY  
Owen  
CODE  
187

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> 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 type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME  
Charles Carter  
STREET & NUMBER  
303 North Adams Street  
CITY, TOWN  
Owenton  
STATE  
Kentucky

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
Owen County Courthouse  
STREET & NUMBER  
100 North Thomas  
CITY, TOWN  
Owenton  
STATE  
Kentucky

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE  
Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky (Supplement)  
DATE  
1974  
DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS  
Kentucky Heritage Commission  
CITY, TOWN  
Frankfort  
STATE  
Kentucky

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Owenton, the small county seat of Owen County (see National Register form for the Owen County Courthouse and Jail listed on the National Register May 6, 1976), nevertheless boasts a number of grandiose Victorian residences scattered along the ridges that extend out from the town center. Many of the finest and most ambitious of these follow the east-west route to the west of the courthouse. Among them, Highfield stands out because of its considerable setback, extensive grounds, and relative age.

The house consists of a large five-bay two-story clapboarded block with two-story gallery in the center and a modernized two-story wing to one side. Although the overall appearance justifies the antebellum date of the house, the details of the cornice and gable brackets suggest that they were added somewhat later, although also perhaps just before the Civil War. Within the pediment is an unusual quatrefoil opening within a round arch.

The dwelling contains eleven rooms, with two hallways, in each of which is a stairway. All lumber used in the building was cut and sawed with crosscut saws, from trees on the premises, and all work was done at the site of erection. Window and door facings, window frames, and doors were made by hand. Door panels are said to represent a cross and open Bible. Shingles (replaced, probably in the mid-19th century by the existing standing-seam metal roof) were hand-hewn.

The residence now includes some modern improvements, such as electric heating, 3½ bathrooms, electric kitchen, and air conditioning.

The iron fence which surrounds the present property was erected by T. W. Staiar, owner in the 1890s, at a cost of \$1,100. It is in splendid condition.

A small octagonal gazebo adorns one corner of the sloping front lawn. There are also appropriate frame outbuildings at the rear of the house.

# 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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

## SPECIFIC DATES

ca. 1840; ca. 1850s

## BUILDER/ARCHITECT

unknown

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Highfield is one of the earliest and largest of the impressive 19th-century residences that distinguish the outskirts of Owenton, county seat of Owen County. The county, which lies along the Kentucky River between the Ohio River and Frankfort, has varied but fertile terrain. The house in its ridge-top setting, reflects the prosperity made possible by the productive farmland, although little is known of the man for whom the house was built in the late 1840s, Willis Roberts, or of succeeding owners.

The original tract of land surrounding Highfield (about 93 acres) included the entire west section of Owenton. In the year 1785 Robert Parker bought the land from the state of Virginia. The land patent was signed by Patrick Henry, Governor. Parker died about 1818, the land going to his six heirs. Andrew W. P. Parker then acquired the real estate and, at his demise, the heirs of Colonel John C. Bacon became the owners in 1839. There were 93 acres in the plot at this time, which sold for \$600.00. George Roberts purchased the land on July 25, 1839, and he, in turn, sold the same to Willis Roberts about 1840. Shortly afterwards Willis Roberts constructed the house that now occupies the site.

John C. Breckinridge is believed to have spoken from the porch of Highfield in the early 1850s, when he was campaigning for a seat in the U. S. Congress. Breckinridge (1821-1875), a prominent lawyer and politician, served in the State legislature in 1849, the U. S. Congress in 1851 and 1853, Vice President of the U. S. under Buchanan in 1856, U. S. Senator in 1861, and Secretary of War in the Confederate Cabinet.

In his campaigns for a Congressional seat in 1851 and again in 1853, Breckinridge received strong support from Owen County, which was crucial in his victories. In both elections, Breckinridge's Whig opponents were favored to win because of their firm backing in the inner Bluegrass counties. However, Breckinridge's overwhelming victories in Owen County and adjoining Scott County overcame the Whig candidates' support in the richer counties of the Bluegrass, giving him the victory. In genuine appreciation, the family and friends called Breckinridge's youngest son "Owen County," which name was soon shortened to Owen. His son was known by this name until adulthood (Heck, p.35).

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Heck, Frank H. Proud Kentuckian, John C. Breckinridge 1821-1875. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1976.

Owen County Court Records (Deed Book A, page 210 (1822); Deed Book 109, page 649).

Owenton News Herald. June 1940.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 1 6	6 8 8 1 1 5 0	4 2 6 7 3 6 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Miss Louella Forsee

WEL

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Owen County Representative, Kentucky Heritage Commission

August 20, 1974

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

102 West Bryan

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Owenton

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

*Edward W. Tutton*

TITLE

SHPO

DATE

1/20/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

*Robert B. Rettig*

DATE

11/17/77

ATTEST:

*Charles A. ...*

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11-16-77