

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED JUL 17 1975  
DATE ENTERED JUL 30 1975

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

~~McCormell-Wurts-Biggs-Harris House~~, Law Office, and Slave Quarters

AND/OR COMMON

Harris House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Wurtland

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

7

STATE

Kentucky

CODE

021

COUNTY

Greenup

CODE

089

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mrs. Addie Chinn

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Wurtland

VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky 41144

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Greenup County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Greenup

STATE

Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Survey of Historic Places in Kentucky (Supplement)

DATE

1975

FEDERAL  STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN

401 Wapping Street Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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 McConnell House is located on an inlet (the mouth of Taylors' or Uhlens' Run), that extends south of the Ohio River in far northeastern Kentucky. The house faces inland toward the old road along the Ohio; across the inlet to the east is the small town of Wurtland. There was once a boat landing with a scale-house in the north-east corner of the original property.

The present property of 15 acres has been reduced from extensive land-holdings in the 19th century. Greenup is one of the counties being most rapidly industrialized in the State. The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad line passes to the north of the house\* and the inlet, leading to a large Dupont Chemical Plant to the north. To the southwest a large National Mines Plant is under construction. All the remaining land in the area is owned by these companies. Nevertheless, although the property is fenced in, just enough land with fine trees has been retained to provide some sense of setting and scale for the house and its outbuildings (photo 1).

The house is a large two-story, five-bay, ell-shaped structure of brick, reputedly made on the site by slave labor (photo 2). It was built in 1833-34 for John McConnell. The foundations are of large sharply-cut ashlar blocks. The proportions are unusually ample. On both stories, doors with the elliptical fan-lights and sidelights are flanked by windows with 12-over-12 pane sash. These large openings are set in generous expanses of wall above, between, and below. Both ends of the main block also have two windows on both stories on either side of the central chimneys that are only half set into the wall and rise substantially above the low-sloped roof. Quarter-circle lookout windows with fan-muntins light the attic of both the main block and the large two-story rear ell. The ell extends flush with the west side of the main block and has four additional more closely-spaced bays on the west side (photo 3). With so many large windows on the front and sides, there are none except the ell lookouts facing north, toward the river (photos 4 and 5).

Along the east side of the ell is a deep two-story wooden gallery of 4 bays (photo 7). Tall, slender unfluted columns with smooth concave capitals (two of them apparently, but not necessarily, replaced with square posts), support the upper porch, which has much shorter columns with shallow cushion capitals and plain, slender railing. An enclosed stair is at the northeast corner of the gallery; the north end of the porches is clapboarded, with an upper window that looks original inset; there may also have been an opening in the lower-story wall. The southernmost bay-and-a-half of the upper-story gallery have been enclosed (probably for a bathroom). Across the central three bays of the main south front is a one-story wooden porch, probably mid-Victorian. It is divided into five bays of variable width with coupled end-posts (photos 1-3, 6). The chamfered

\*between it and the river. A road runs just to the east of the house between the house.....

(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 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1833-34 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The McConnell house is one the earliest-surviving, largest, best-constructed, and most handsome houses in the northeastern tip of Kentucky. Except for decorative porches and a fine original double gallery, the exterior is plain but substantial, following the Federal or even Georgian ell-shaped plan with the central hall. Interior spaces are large and well-lit. The woodwork is masculine in character, relying on juxtapositions of varied moldings for effect, with some architectonic features that look forward to Greek Revival.\*

The house was built in 1833-34 for John McConnell, a prominent and successful lawyer who practiced in nearby Greenup and Louisa and had served as State Senator for four years. He had bought 335 acres of land from Charles and Abraham Buford. A law office was built near the house for McConnell, but, as he died only a few weeks after moving into the house, the building was never used for that purpose. McConnell was buried on a hill overlooking the house.

In 1857 George Wurts bought the place from the McConnell heirs. Active in mining and manufacturing, he dealt especially in furnaces. Wurts established a private school (for which tuition was paid) in the unused law office--the first schoolhouse in the county, attended by some pupils who were to become outstanding citizens of the area.

James D. Biggs of Louisville, who had married George Wurts' daughter Alice, purchased the property from Wurts' widow Mary Ann in 1874. The Biggs' occupied the house until 1907, and made it a center for the social life of the community. Biggs was a farmer and timber dealer; John Harris, who purchased the property from him, was also a stock dealer. The latter's daughter still owns the house and several out-buildings. In spite of the encroachment of industrial plants on all sides, which have cut off access to the Ohio River on the north and to the inlet on the east that once made the place a prosperous and popular boat-landing, the property is well-maintained and preserves much of the substantial quality that befitted its series of distinguished owners.

\*Interestingly, the panoply of woodwork so far observed in Kentucky that most resembles this ensemble in the far northeastern portion of the state is in the Van Dyke-Holloway House near Taylorsville, Spencer County, on the western edge of the Central Bluegrass region.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Greenup County records and local history.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 15 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,7	34,41,9,0	4,26,844,0	B	1,7	34,41,5,0	4,26,82,4,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,7	34,39,5,0	4,26,83,0,0	D	1,7	34,40,3,0	4,26,85,5,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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 Jacob C. Savage, Member, Board of Directors  
Bertha Savage, Curator (WEL)

ORGANIZATION Greenup County Historical Society DATE April 7, 1975

STREET & NUMBER 600 Heaberlin Road TELEPHONE 777-2611

CITY OR TOWN Wurtland STATE Kentucky 41144

## 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE Charles W. Melton

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer DATE 7-14-75

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

AK Montague DATE 7/20/75

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: W. Montague DATE MAY 29 1975

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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McConnell-Wurts-Biggs-Harris House

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

posts, arched open spandrels, and paneled frieze are all restrained, yet handsome. Like the more frilly bracketted porch on the west side of the ell (photo 3), the front porch has stone foundations matching those of the house itself. There is also a small porch over the door in the north end of the ell (photo 5).

The openings lack outer frames, except for stone sills. The two arched openings of the front have plain moldings (photo 6). The cornice is of plain boards that oddly pass over part of the lookouts.

The woodwork throughout the interior is handsome rather than delicate. There is much use of symmetrically grooved and/or heavily reeded frames (photos 8 and 15). One very striking door frame has framed panels at the top that seem to have refined the bold moldings as they passed through; furthermore, the panels are crowned by parapets (photo 11). The numerous mantels are also varied by the play of these moldings and panels (photos 12-14); at least one has elongated Doric colonnettes (photo 13). [(There is also a fine post-Civil War marbelized castiron mantel (photo 16)]. The overall effect of the woodwork is midway between Federal linearity and Greek Revival boldness of scale.

The front stairway similarly has cross-landings of an earlier type, but the unusual scrolled newel and bulbous posts foretell the Grecian (photo 9). Otherwise, the rails and stringers are plain (photo 9).

There is a water storage tank in the attic, once used to fill a hand-chiselled stone basin in basement, which was packed with ice for storage of milk, butter, vegetables, and so forth (photo 19).

Southeast of the house is a one-and-a-half-story brick structure built as a law office for John McConnell but used later as a schoolhouse (photo 1). This one-room building has 9-over-6 pane windows flanking a narrow door with three-light transom. The wide lintels, sills, and foundations are of stone and there is a corbelled brick cornice.

The surviving slave quarters at the rear of the house has two entrances and no windows in the front (photo 20). There is also a frame barn reached from the house by a flagstone walk. A windmill, blown over in a storm, is stored on the property.

At one time the house was approached from the road through an avenue of trees. Walks from the side entrances led to arbors and flower gardens. In the rear were vegetable gardens. None of these features survive.