

PH0354031

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 21 1976

DATE ENTERED JUL 19 1976

# 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 **\*\*** *wh*

Shawnee Springs (George C. Thompson House)

AND/OR COMMON

Same

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Curry Road

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

4 miles northeast of Harrodsburg VICINITY OF

06

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Kentucky

021

Mercer

167

## 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

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER:

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. and Mrs. Tom Early

STREET & NUMBER

Route 4

CITY, TOWN

Harrodsburg

VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Mercer County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Harrodsburg

STATE

Kentucky

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky

DATE

1971

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Kentucky Heritage Commission, 104 Bridge Street

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		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Shawnee Springs, located on Shawnee Run Creek five miles northeast of Harrodsburg, was built between 1788 and 1792, with major additions made between 1792 and 1850. The house is situated in a grove of trees tucked in a bend of Curry Lane, a narrow country road which extends north off U.S. Highway 68 and in a sense forms a private drive for the house, although it swerves westward in front of the entrance and then continues to the north. Acres of rich farmland adjoin the site, although the creek is in a steep ravine north of the house.

The original block of Shawnee Springs consisted of a two-story, five-bay brick structure one room deep, built in the late Georgian style. The facade, which is believed to have faced north, is laid in Flemish bond with glazed headers (see photo 1). On the west gabled end the bricks are laid in Dutch cross-bond (see photo 4). Most of the original wooden cornice, with dentils and a string of delicately carved Greek keys below, remains intact (see photo 3). Interior brick chimneys are located at each end of the block. The somewhat short windows characteristic of the early period have nine-over-nine-pane sash and simple pegged frames.

It is believed that shortly after the completion of the main block, the two-story, two-bay brick wings were added on the east and west sides. The brick of these is laid in Flemish bond on the front and back and common on the sides. Each wing has lookout windows placed high in the gable ends on each side of the interior chimneys. The fenestration on the first floor consists of nine-over-nine-pane sash, while the second floor windows have six-over-six-pane sash (see photo 7).

A short time after the completion of the wings it seems probable that the one-story, two-room ell which extends north off the west wing was added. This ell has long nine-over-nine-pane sash windows and lookout windows on the north end. Interior end chimneys are located in the center of the north end wall and the center of the ell. A shed porch, raised several feet above ground level, is supported by square posts which are connected by balustrades (see photo 5). The porch extends along the west side of the ell. A brick cornice, made from two rows of headers which are set diagonally opposite each other, creating a sawtooth effect, is located on the east side (see photo 6). It seems probable that at the same time the ell was added, the front of the house was reoriented to the south, if it was not facing that direction originally. (It is assumed that the original facade was on the north, facing the Run and the Kentucky River. Glazed headers in Flemish bond are also found on the north side.)

(continued)

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
—PREHISTORIC	—ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	—COMMUNITY PLANNING	—LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	—RELIGION
—1400-1499	—ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	—CONSERVATION	—LAW	—SCIENCE
—1500-1599	—AGRICULTURE	—ECONOMICS	—LITERATURE	—SCULPTURE
—1600-1699	XARCHITECTURE	—EDUCATION	XMILITARY	—SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
X1700-1799	—ART	—ENGINEERING	—MUSIC	—THEATER
X1800-1899	—COMMERCE	XEXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	—PHILOSOPHY	—TRANSPORTATION
—1900-	—COMMUNICATIONS	—INDUSTRY	XPOLITICS/GOVERNMENT	—OTHER (SPECIFY)
		—INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES ca. 1790; ca. 1850

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The house known as Shawnee Springs is located above the springs of that name, overlooking a ravine that descends eastward to the Kentucky River. The property is approximately midway between Harrodsburg, the first permanent settlement in Kentucky, and Shakertown at Pleasant Hill. The core of the imposing brick house was built between 1788 and 1792 by Colonel George Thompson (1748-1834), a member of the Virginia Assembly 1779-1781, a Revolutionary War soldier, an aid to General Lafayette in 1781, and a member of the Kentucky House of Representatives. Several wings seem to have been added for Thompson in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The large Greek Revival block, which now forms the front of the house, was added around the late 1840s by Colonel Thompson's son, Major George C. Thompson (1778-1856), also a member of the Kentucky House of Representatives, and Speaker of the House. The house and farm remained in the Thompson family until 1898 when it was sold to the Bonta family, prominent Mercer County farmers and stock raisers. The house, which retains evidence of its gradual evolution, has unique architectural features of both the Georgian and Greek Revival styles.

Colonel George Thompson, born in 1748, was the son of Joseph and Sarah Claiborne Thompson, wealthy plantation owners in Albemarle County, Virginia. On the death of his father, George's older brother inherited the family's land, leaving George penniless. In order to earn his living, George Thompson was apprenticed to a blacksmith. After working at this trade for a few years Thompson worked in the mercantile business in Richmond, Virginia, and became very successful.

In December 1773, Thompson married Rebecca Burton, daughter of Colonel William Burton of Albemarle County, Virginia. Rebecca Thompson died a month after the birth of their second son, George Claiborne Thompson, in 1778.

In 1777 Thompson was the commanding officer of Williamsburg, in charge of 4,000 men. Two years later, he was elected to the Virginia Assembly and served two terms ending in 1781. At the end of his term as a delegate, General Lafayette asked Colonel Thompson to be an aide on his staff. Thompson accepted and served in this position until October 1781, when Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown.

(continued)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Collins, Richard. History of Kentucky. Covington: Collins & Co., 1874.
- Grimes, Carolyn. "Shawnee Springs and the Thompson Family." Unpublished article, 1955.
- Lancaster, Clay. "Adaptations from Greek Revival Builders' Guides in Kentucky." Art Bulletin, XXXII (March 1950), pp. 62-70.

(continued)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 5 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,6	6,9,3	4,8,0	4,1	8,7	5,9,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING				
C				D						

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

Mary Cronan, Historian; and Walter E. Langsam, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Kentucky Heritage Commission

DATE

May 1976

STREET & NUMBER

104 Bridge Street

TELEPHONE

(502) 564-4452

CITY OR TOWN

Frankfort

STATE

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

*Edred W. Miller*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

6/17/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Acting DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAELOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

7/19/76

ATTEST: *Robert B. Kettig*  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

7/22/76

Acting

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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It is believed that the one-story brick arcade that extends across the original facade on the north side was added a short time after the ell. The west end of the arcade, which has a brick cornice identical to that of the ell, butts up to the southeast corner of the ell, partially obscuring a window (see photo 6). Similar arcades have been found on two other Kentucky houses: Clay Hill, circa 1812, in Harrodsburg, and Pleasant Lawn, circa 1829, in Woodford County. The arcades on Clay Hill and Pleasant Lawn are refined and supported on brick columns, while the arcades at Shawnee Springs are rustic and are supported by brick piers. At some time in the 20th century, the arches were enclosed by windows or brick infill.

The final addition to the house probably took place in the late 1840s. At this time a two-story, five-bay Greek Revival block, one-room deep with a tetrastyle Ionic portico, set high above ground level, was added (see photo 1). The facade is laid in Flemish bond and seems to have always meant to be painted, since the bricks are of varied color and texture. (An old photograph of the house shows that it was painted at one time (see photo 1A).

The front entrance is framed by fluted Doric columns set between the single-panel double doors and the four-pane sidelights. The architrave is slightly raised in the center, forming a broad panel allowing for carved Greek keys above the columns. A very similar front entrance design is found in the pattern book, Civil Architecture (1837) by Edward Shaw. (Located fifteen miles northeast of Shawnee Springs near Lexington on U.S. 68 is a house with a similar entrance. The Elms was built in the late 1840s by John McMurtry, a prominent local architect-builder (see photo 1B).) Centered above the entrance is a window with sidelights. Located at each end of the block are interior end chimneys. The roof of the old main block was raised at this time to cover the whole block. The windows in the Greek Revival section have six-over-six-pane sash. A large six-over-six-pane sash window is also centered high in the gable ends.

Most of the interior woodwork of the main block is Greek Revival, although some Georgian details remain in a few of the rooms. The front entrance opens onto a large central hall with a sweeping half-turn stairway in the northwest corner. An arch with a stylized four-petal flower in the center of each side bisects the hall. On the east of the hall is a double parlor, with black marble mantels. A door in the northeast corner

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room leads into the east wing. To the west of the hall is a room with a plain Greek Revival mantel and moldings. The room that adjoins it to the north, however, has Georgian features, such as a large early mantel and paneled door.

The northwest room on the second floor retains the original low panelled wainscoting and has a simple mantel. A door on the west side of the room steps down into the west wing and a door directly opposite opens onto an enclosed stairs that lead to the light airy attic over both the original and the Greek Revival portions of the main block. There are small square rooms on two floors with connecting staircase in the southwest corner and a very large room, perhaps originally a formal dining room or even a ballroom-banquet hall in the center of the ell.

The mantels and woodwork in the west wing and ell are of the early Federal style. To the right of the fireplaces in the wing and ell are built-in-cupboards framed by fluted pilasters. The cupboards are very similar to the ones at Waveland in Boyle County, built circa 1800 (listed on the National Register May 6, 1976). The doors which separate the wings from the main block are made of diagonal beaded boards on one side and vertical panels on the other, another early feature, suggesting the need for security. The room at the north end of the ell was evidently the kitchen and was perhaps used later as a tannery. A large fireplace is located in the north wall. Opposite the fireplace is a stairway, enclosed by wide horizontal boards. The stairs lead to a room above the kitchen where timbers, which are raised four feet above the floor, extend across the room and are thought to have been used for drying animal hides.

The entire house is built on a stone foundation which rises two feet above ground level. A full basement extends under all the rooms. Fireplaces are located under the original block. In the southwest room under the Greek Revival portion is a room with a fireplace and a large stuccoed brick trough that was either used for laundry or perhaps for salting meat.

An ice house which has been filled in and converted into a shed remains west of the house (photo 8) as well as several large barns, which probably date from the early 1900s (see photo 9). There is a square brick building, perhaps once a smokehouse, southwest of the ell (see photo 5 for location).

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A small cemetery enclosed by a stone wall is located north of the house near Shawnee Run. Members of the Thompson family are buried here.

The house has been sold recently and the new owners have begun intensive restoration work.

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While serving in the Virginia Assembly, Thompson made a trip to Kentucky in 1779-80 with Virginia land commissioners. In 1785 he was appointed by the Governor of Virginia to survey land along the James River and the "Western Waters"(the Kentucky frontier).

Thompson returned to Kentucky temporarily in 1788, and at this time bought 475 acres on Shawnee Run from Hugh McGary, a member of James Harrod's company that founded Harrodsburg in 1774. In 1792 Colonel Thompson moved permanently to his land on Shawnee Run, bringing with him his only son, George Claiborne. It is believed that the original portion of the house was constructed for Thompson between 1788 and 1792.

Thompson soon established himself in Kentucky and was elected from Mercer County to serve in the State House of Representatives in 1799 and 1804-1809.

In 1824 Colonel Thompson constructed another house, called Pleasant Fields on lands adjoining Shawnee Springs. According to family tradition the new house was an English Gothic mansion. However, other houses of this style were not built in the area until the 1840s and 1850s. It is possible that Thompson's grandson built the Gothic house at a later date, or enlarged an earlier house in the more fashionable mid-19th-century mode. At this time he deeded Shawnee Springs to his son, George Claiborne, and moved into Pleasant Fields himself.

George Claiborne Thompson, born in Virginia in 1775, came with his father to Kentucky in 1792 at the age of fourteen. In 1809 the younger Thompson was elected to the State House of Representatives. He ran again in 1820 and was selected Speaker of the House. Thompson served one last term in 1840.

While the famous naturalist Constantine Rafinesque taught at Transylvania University in Lexington from 1819 to 1826, he evidently was a visitor at Shawnee Springs. Sketches of Colonel Thompson and Major G. C. Thompson, drawn by Rafinesque, appear in Weiss' Rafinesque's Kentucky Friends (1936) (see photo 10).

Thompson was married three times. His first wife was his first cousin, Sarah Thompson. They were married in 1807 at Viney Grove, near Shawnee Springs in

(continued)



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Mercer County. The following year she died in childbirth. In 1809 Thompson married Mary Madison McDowell, daughter of General William McDowell and Margaret Madison. The Thompsons had four children, two of whom reached maturity. Shortly after the death of his second wife, Thompson married Sarah Hart, daughter of Nathaniel Hart, Jr. (son of Nathaniel Hart, one of the first permanent settlers in Kentucky) and Susan Preston. They had two daughters, Sarah and Letitia.

Sometime after Thompson was deeded the house and land from his father, he added the two-story Greek Revival south front with a large Ionic portico, thus more than doubling the size of the main block. At his death in 1856, Thompson left the house and land to his wife and two youngest daughters.

In 1898 the property was sold to A. B. Bonta. Bonta was a farmer, trader, and stock raiser, dealing mainly with jacks. For a short period of time in the mid-1900s, a section of the house was used as a restaurant. The house remained in the Bonta family until 1972. It is currently under restoration after a period of neglect.

Architecture

Shawnee Springs, built in at least two distinct periods, has unique architectural features from both the Georgian and the Greek Revival styles. The original facade of the house is believed to have faced north. The brick is laid in Flemish bond with glazed headers. There is a fine original cornice on the north facade with shaped modillions and dentils linked to form a rudimentary Greek key pattern as seen from a distance. On the west gabled end of the house, visible above a later wing and in its attic, glazed bricks are laid in Dutch cross-bond in a diaper pattern. The use of glazed bricks in this manner is very unusual for Kentucky. One of the few other houses, if not the only, that has similar brick work in Kentucky is the William Whitley House in Lincoln County (listed on the National Register April 11, 1973) built in 1787 and reputed to be the first brick house in Kentucky. In Introduction to Early American Masonry (1973) the Dutch pattern is described:

In a variation, called English cross bond on Dutch bond, the stretchers were placed so that the end joints formed a stepped diagonal line in the masonry of the wall.

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This bond lent itself to emphasis of diagonal patterning, in which dark headers outlined diamonds or other geometric figures. Pattern work of various kinds is found on early American brick buildings (p. 52).

Morrison in his Early American Architecture (1952) states that the Dutch cross bond was introduced and used in Holland in the 15th and 16th centuries. Evidently the pattern was used in early American brick buildings but went out of use before the 1800s.

Another unusual Georgian survival found in Shawnee Springs is a room that retains the original low panelled wainscoting, a feature that has not been found in other Kentucky houses. In a west wing there are also pilastered chimney and cupboard facings (see the National Register nomination form for Waveland, the Willis Green House, in nearby Danville, Boyle County, built in 1800, listed on the National Register May 6, 1976).

Another feature of Shawnee Springs is the brick arcade supported on simple brick piers, which extend across the original facade of the house on the north side. The date of this addition is unknown. There are two other Kentucky houses with similar arcades: Clay Hill, which is in Harrodsburg five miles southwest of Shawnee Springs (nominated to the National Register and approved at the State level March 25, 1975), and Pleasant Lawn in Woodford County. Clay Hill was constructed circa 1812 and Pleasant Lawn was built as late as 1829, so the possible addition date of the arcade on Shawnee Springs could be during this period, although the construction of the arcade at Shawnee Springs is considerably less subtle than at Clay Hill. Architectural historian Rexford Newcomb, in referring to Shawnee Springs in his Architecture in Old Kentucky (1953), states that "arcades are somewhat unique in Kentucky architecture" (p. 54).

The last major addition to the house consisted of the central Greek Revival block with the large tetrastyle Ionic portico. This portion, which was probably added by George Claiborne Thompson in the late 1840s, is an excellent example of Greek Revival architecture, of which there are many examples in the Harrodsburg area, ranging from applied porticoes like that of Clay Hill to fully integrated Grecian designs.

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The front entrance with engaged fluted Doric columns, sidelights, and a Greek key motif above the door, is closely based on a pattern-book design from Edward Shaw's Civil Architecture (1837). The large central hall of this block is bisected by an arch with a carved four-petal flower in the center. The arch supports the original outer wall of the main block above, incorporated in the enlarged house.

These varied features, and others that are gradually being revealed during the restoration, make of Shawnee Springs a fascinating record of changing tastes and techniques of construction from the very earliest use of brick for residences in the late 18th century until the full-blown Greek Revival of the mid-19th century.

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McKee, Harley J. Introduction to Early American Masonry. Washington, D. C.:  
The National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1973, p. 52.

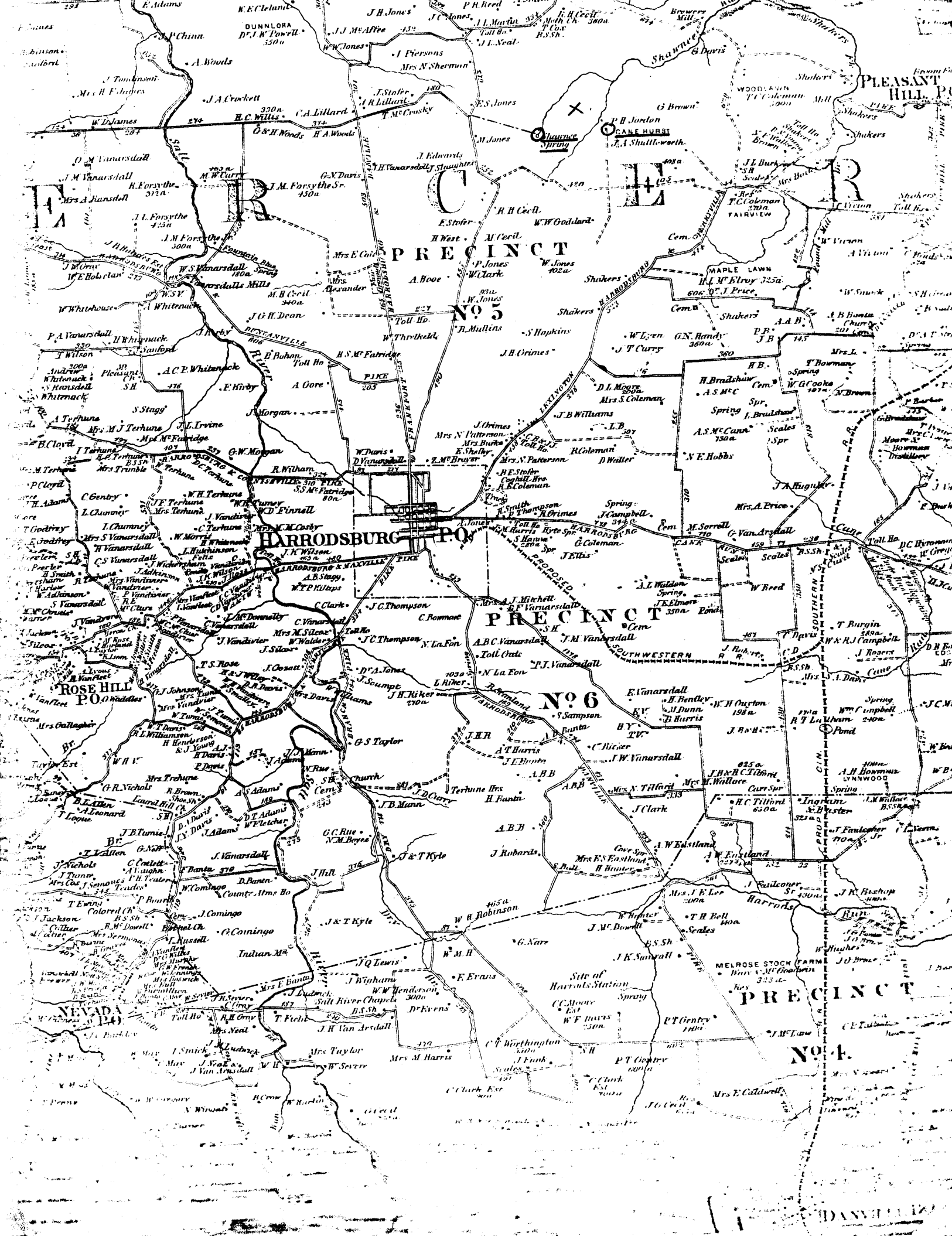
Map of Boyle and Mercer Counties, Kentucky. Philadelphia: D. G. Beers and Co., 1876.

Morrison, Hugh. Early American Architecture. New York: Oxford University Press,  
1952, p. 103.

Newcomb, Rexford. Architecture in Old Kentucky. Urbana, Illinois: University of  
Illinois Press, 1953, pp. 53-54.

The Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society. X (1912), p. 12.

Weiss, Harry. Rafinesque's Kentucky Friends. New York: Rogers-Kellogg-Stillson,  
1936, pp. 46-48.



P R E C I N C T

No 5

HARRODSBURG P.O.

P R E C I N C T

No 6

P R E C I N C T

No 4

PLEASANT HILL P.O.

A

C

E

G

B

D

F

H

F

H

J

L

R

T

V

X

S

U

W

Y

V

X

Z

A

W

Y

B

C

DANVILLE

Shawnee Springs (George C.  
Thompson House), Harrodsburg,  
Mercer County, Kentucky.  
Map of Boyle and Mercer Counties,

Kentucky. Philadelphia: D. G.  
Beers and Co., 1876.

Shawnee Spring is marked in red,  
although strangely the house  
(marked x here) is not shown on  
this map. Notice Cane Hurst,  
indicated in blue, which was built  
by Colonel Thompson in 1824. Also,  
Shakertown at Pleasant Hill  
directly east.

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Map 2



Col. George Thompson  
of Shawanee Spring.

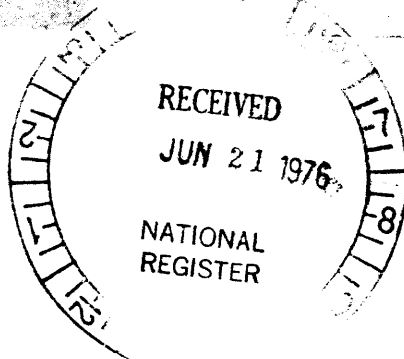
age 75.



MAJOR GEO. C. THOMPSON.

of Shawanee Spring  
Speaker of the H. of Repr. of Kentucky

age 45.



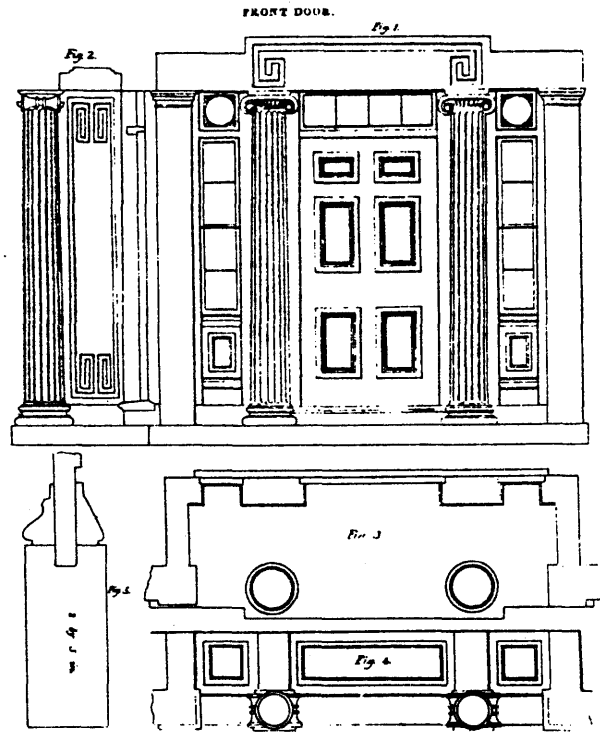
Shawnee Springs (George C.  
Thompson House), Harrodsburg,  
Mercer County, Kentucky.  
Weiss, Harry. Rafinesque's

Kentucky Friends. New York: Rogers-  
Kellogg-Stillson, 1936, pp. 49-50.  
Photo 10. Sketches of Colonel and  
Major Thompson drawn by Constan-  
tine Rafinesque.

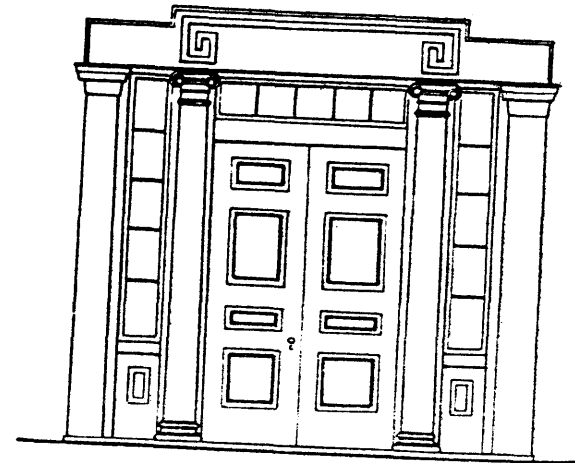
JUN 21 1976

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107. Design for a Front Door. Edward Shaw, *Civil Architecture* (Boston, 1836), 78.



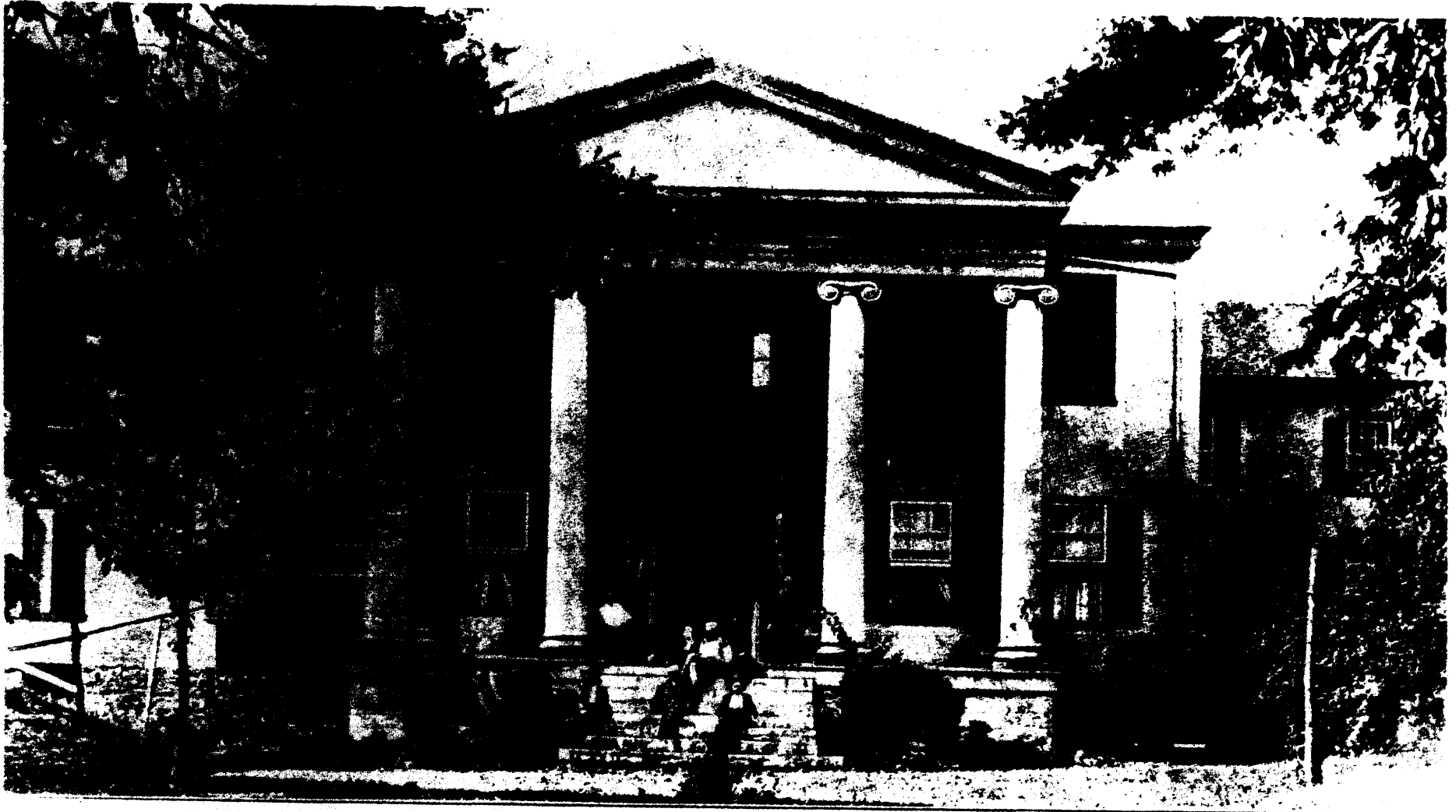
108. Front Doorway of *The Elms*.

Shawnee Springs (George C. Thompson House), Harrodsburg, Mercer County, Kentucky. Lancaster, Clay. Ante Bellum Houses of the Bluegrass, Lexington:

University of Kentucky Press, 1961. Photo 1B.



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THE OLD THOMPSON HOUSE ON SHAWNEE CREEK.

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Shawnee Springs (George C.  
Thompson House), Harrodsburg,  
Mercer County, Kentucky. Photo  
1c. Photo taken from the south  
during the 19th century.

JUL 18 1976 Doe



Photo by Elmer L. Foote

HOME OF J. C. BONTA AND BROS.  
Shawnee Springs.

Shawnee Springs (George C.  
Thompson House), Harrodsburg,  
Mercer County, Kentucky.  
Elmer L. Foote, The Register of the  
Kentucky State Historical Society,

Vol. 10 (1912), p. 12. Photo 1 A.  
Photo taken from the south showing  
the Greek Revival block, when it  
was painted.

JUL 19 1976 *Dec*

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PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES