

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

SEP 1 1 1989

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Forest Hill

other names/site number Guerrant Place; Nelson-Lewis House; B0-362

2. Location

street & number North side, KY Highway 34, 3 miles NE of Danville [] not for publication N/A

city, town Danville [x] vicinity

state Kentucky code KY county Boyle code 021 zip code 40422

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- [x] private
[] public-local
[] public-State
[] public-Federal

Category of Property

- [x] building(s)
[] district
[] site
[] structure
[] object

Number of Resources within Property

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. 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. [] See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official David L. Morgan, State Historic Preservation Officer & Executive Director, Kentucky Heritage Council Date 9-1-89

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. [] See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- [x] 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:)

Entered in the National Register 10/16/89

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Federal

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Limestone
walls Brick

roof Asphalt
other Contemporary stone kitchen

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Forest Hill, erected in 1815, is situated at the end of a long paved drive that ends in a circle, atop a low rise approximately three miles northeast of Danville, Kentucky (1980 pop., 13,000). The two-lane Kentucky Highway 34 is 1,200 feet south of this farm residence; however, the original road -- Old Lexington -- ran the same direction but within half that distance. The only other residences within a 1,000-foot radius of Forest Hill are two houses of somewhat recent construction to the southwest. The surrounding topography is characterized by pronounced undulation; also, an L-shaped inlet of Dix River/Herrington Lake is below a sharp land-drop 2,000 feet to the east.

1
C:

Rexford Newcomb provided the following physical observations regarding Forest Hill:

The plan is that of a typical Kentucky, one-story Federal house of three pavilions, each crowned by a hip roof. The central pavilion features a portal with fanlight and sidelights, above which stands a pediment with a circular window. The fanlight, originally leaded, has been replaced with a wooden sash. There is no portico but circular steps radiate from the portal. The end pavilions are graced with Palladian windows (Architecture in Old Kentucky, p. 65).

Brickwork on the principal facade -- which faces south and is 95 feet wide -- is laid in Flemish bond, while all other sides are laid in common bond. Also, there are four interior brick chimneys that are carefully balanced, and the foundation is of limestone ashlar. The shape is that of an H.

With the main entrance flanked by four rectangular windows, plus the two Palladian windows of the side pavilions, Forest Hill has seven bays on its principal (south) facade. Two evenly-placed rectangular windows pierce each side wall.

2 & 3
C:

To the rear of Forest Hill -- and contemporary with this 1815 residence -- are two auxiliary buildings: a stone kitchen, and a former brick slave quarters. The kitchen is square in shape and has a pyramidal roof: the slave quarters is a one-story rectangular building, with a gabled roof and one exterior-end chimney set flush with the wall. A mid-20th-century, 3-car, brick garage and an early-20th-century frame barn -- neither included within the nominated area -- round out this rural assemblage.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

ARCHITECTURE
EDUCATION

1815-25³⁰

1815
1815-25

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Nelson, Rev. Dr. Samuel Kelsey

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Forest Hill, an 1815 residence outside Danville, Kentucky, is significant under National Register Eligibility Criteria B and C: it was erected for a frontier Presbyterian clergyman who made substantial contributions to the field of education -- and with whom the property is strongly associated; architecturally, Forest Hill ranks among the finest and best-preserved Federal dwellings in the lower portion of Kentucky's renowned Bluegrass region -- such region containing both the largest number and perhaps the finest products of Federal architecture in the Commonwealth.

Danville, Kentucky, was described in 1820 by a visitor as:

One of the most handsomely situated towns I have ever seen during my tour on this side of the (Allegheny) mountains, placed on an elevated plain, with convenient and numerous springs, and mill streams, it enjoys a pure and salubrious air, and the surrounding country (comprising some of the best lands in Kentucky) is thickly inhabited by the wealthiest and most independent people of the state (Griffin, p. 30).

The Rev. Dr. Samuel Kelsey Nelson (1787-1827) was born near Jonesboro, Tennessee, which is said to have been "the first town in Tennessee that was not a mere stockade" (Sweet, p. 34). The son of Henry and Anna Nelson, he graduated from Washington College (now Washington and Lee) in Virginia -- later completing theological studies there under the eminent Presbyterian theologian Samuel Doak, founder of Washington College and of Salem College near Jonesboro, Tennessee (Concise Dictionary of American Biography, p. 34)

Nelson came to Kentucky in October, 1809, where he probably soon settled in Danville: he received full ordination as a minister in the Presbyterian Church one year later. Forest Hill, Nelson's residence constructed a short five years later, belies the typically-modest income earned by the clergy in Kentucky at that time. Quite simply, the Rev. Dr. Nelson married well:

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Concise Dictionary of American Biography. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980.
Fackler, Calvin M. A Chronicle of Old First. Louisville: Standard Printing Co., 1946.
_____ Early Days in Danville. Louisville: Standard Printing Co., 1941.
_____ Historic Homes of Boyle County, Kentucky. Danville: Danville Messenger-Advocate, 1959.
Griffin, Richard W. Newspaper Story of a Town. Danville: Danville Advocate-Messenger, 1965.
Frazer, John W. NRHP Inventory-Nomination Form, Old Centre, Boyle Co. KY Frankfort: KY Heritage Commission, 1972.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) 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

Specify repository:
KY Heritage Council, Frankfort, KY

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of property less than one approximately one and one-half acres

UTM References

A

1	6	7	0	0	2	4	0	4	1	7	1	3	4	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

B

Zone			Easting					Northing						

C

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D

Zone			Easting					Northing						

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

A thin rectangular area -- the rear facades of the 2 contemporary outbuildings delineate the far northern extent, this width being 95 feet, the same width as Forest Hill. The nominated property then extends 660 feet to the south, to the point about where the Old Lexington Road ran. See map.

See continuation sheet

Bryantsville Quadrangle

Boundary Justification

Forest Hill is situated atop a low prominence and commands an important vista to the south. This factor figures prominently into the site selection for the historic house and its 2 contemporary outbuildings.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Daniel Kidd, Architectural Historian
organization Private Consultant date March, 1989
street & number 2218 Perryville Rd. telephone 606/734-7489
city or town Harrodsburg state Kentucky zip code 40330

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Forest Hill, Boyle County, Kentucky

Section number 7 Page 2

Of Forest Hill's interior, Newcomb has written the following:

The joists, which from the basement appear as staunch and well-preserved as when hewn, are 3 by 12 inches in cross section. These are tenoned into girders and secured with wooden pegs. The floors are 1½-inch blue ash. In the basement is the old laundry with a great stone fireplace (Ibid.).

Forest Hill's central section contains a wide transverse hall flanked by a parlor to the east and a dining room to the west; each end pavilion contains what were originally two bedrooms. A rear porch ran the length of the central pavilion: the kitchen, as mentioned previously, was originally housed in a stone building -- to the immediate rear. Through the years, the kitchen facility was transferred to the northwest bedroom; two bathrooms have inobtrusively been installed -- one is ingeniously set inside what was a large bedroom press, and the other is in a space taken from the rear porch; and the remaining rear porch space has been enclosed for compatible use as a breakfast area and informal family space.

Forest Hill contains exceptional wooden interior fittings, with such woodwork being compared favorably by Newcomb to that of Burford Hill (NRHP, March 1989) in neighboring Harrodsburg (Ibid., p. 64). The wide hall retains its ceiling's original height of 14 feet (other ceilings have been lowered elsewhere). Federal-style woodwork of the geometric phase throughout the single-level house includes: wainscoting in the principal chambers; profiled baseboards and chair-rails; and doorframes with concentric corner blocks; paneled doors and 1-foot-thick paneled door jambs; three built-in presses with paneled doors, fluted frames, and round-arched tops containing a sun-burst motif; and notable mantels with finely-detailed gougework that is typical of the era concerned in Kentucky's Bluegrass region.

The residence, the former stone kitchen, and the former brick slave quarters are in close proximity and possess a somewhat tight physical relationship. There is a somewhat majestic vista commanded from the front of Forest Hill -- which one catches a brief glimpse of when traveling Kentucky Highway 34 below. The site integrity is strong and is an important factor; also, Forest Hill is in a good state of preservation-- having been carefully maintained through the years.

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Continuation Sheet

Forest Hill, Boyle County, Kentucky

Section number 8 Page 2

Dr. Nelson had married into one of our wealthiest families. His wife was the daughter of John Reed of Washington County and granddaughter of John Reed of Reed's Station. It may have been, though the record does not clearly say, that she heard him preach his trial sermon at her home in the town of Springfield; presbyteries were field days then, among the elect. Howbeit, they were wedded. Then the law, very comfortably for the husband, gave all the wife's property into the husband's hands. So we find ourselves becoming one of the greatest proprietors of our community. He built "Forrest (sic.) Hill," that quaint old mansion on the Lexington Road, circa 1815. Though he sold it in 1825, he still owned 1,300 acres of farm land and some forty slaves (Fackler, A Chronicle of Old First, p. 22).

"Dr. Nelson bought a tract from Samuel McDowell Jr., in 1814. AS he acquired the adjoining land the next year, it is likely that he built the house soon after. Another conveyance, from William McDowell, Aug., 1815, declares that it 'is now occupied by Dr. Nelson' " (Fackler, Historic Homes of Boyle County, Kentucky, p. 30).

Called to the pastorate of what is historically known as "Old First" (Presbyterian Church of Danville, listed in the NRHP) in 1810, Dr. Nelson proved most effective in his leadership of this historic congregation -- increasing the number of members from 30 to 200 during his 17-year pastorate and necessitating the construction of two successively larger houses of worship to accommodate such increased numbers (Fackler, Early Days in Danville, pp. 116-17).

Relatedly, Samuel Nelson's contributions to early Central Kentucky society extended to education: "To Mr. Nelson it is understood belongs the honor of having been the principal founder of Centre College" (Presbyterian Encycloaedia, p. 565, quoted in Fackler's A Chronicle of Old First, p. 23). Chartered in 1819, the Centre College of Kentucky continues today under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church. "Among . . . (Centre's) . . . graduates have been two Vice Presidents of the United States, one Chief Justice and one Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, eight United States Senators, and forty-two Congressmen, eleven Governors of the States, and thirty-one college presidents" (NHRP nomination for Old Centre, 1972).

Nelson also served on the board of trustees of the 1823-founded Kentucky School for the Deaf, also in Danville. Significantly, this school is noted as "the first such institution in the country to be publicly supported" (NHL form for Jacobs Hall, Kentucky School for the Deaf). Private donors to the Danville school included John Quincy Adams and Martin Van Buren (Ibid.). However, principal early support came from the sale of public lands granted to the school by the U.S. Congress in 1826. That same year, Nelson went to Florida to look after such land grant, and that is where he died: "He was taken ill in the office of a Mr. Allen, in Tallahassee, while pouring out a tumbler of water and expired without

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Forest Hill, Boyle County, Kentucky

Section number 8 Page 3

pain in twenty minutes. And no wonder! What with his pastorate, trusteeship in the College and Deaf School, not to speak of the burden of two large farms and some thirty-eight slaves, he must have been worked to death" (Fackler, Historic Homes, p. 30).

Architecturally, Forest Hill is distinguished as one of Boyle County's foremost Federal houses. Two other residences in the county bear important similarities to Forest Hill: the Daniel Yeiser House and Pleasant Vale (listed in the NRHP). The Yeiser House has fallen into serious disrepair, and it has undergone several compromising alterations. Pleasant Vale was purportedly initially constructed in 1784 (Fackler, Historic Homes, p. 8); however, the first quarter of the 19th century is a more likely date. In any event, Pleasant Vale was given a much later Neo-Classical verandah across the front -- thus obscuring some of its Federal character.

Created in 1842, Boyle County had previously been a part of Mercer County, a political subdivision adjacent to the north. Historic resource survey work in Boyle County has revealed 25 buildings identified as built before 1850, of brick construction, and Federal in style: similar efforts in Mercer have revealed 30 such buildings there. Mercer's most comparable building to Boyle's Forest Hill is the previously-mentioned 1820's Burford Hill.

Samuel Nelson sold Forest Hill in 1825 to John Wheelan, nephew of early Danville civic leader James Birney. The property was acquired in the 1850's by Jackson Davis, whose great-grandson, Robert K. Lewis, is the current owner and occupant of the property. Mr. and Mrs. Lewis have maintained Forest Hill in a highly admirable manner, and they have no plans for the 1815 residence and its two contemporary outbuildings other than continued family retention.

For a while, Forest Hill was locally known as the "Guerrant Place," after Dr. and Mrs. Richard P. Guerrant, Jackson Davis' daughter and son-in-law -- who resided there for a lengthy period (Fackler, Historic Homes, p. 30). Richard Guerrant was the brother of "the famed Dr. Edward O. Guerrant, physician, Presbyterian minister, and 'the first medical missionary to the Kentucky mountains'" (Thierman, "Plain and Simple").

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Forest Hill, Boyle County, Kentucky

Section number 9 Page 2

Newcomb, Rexford. Architecture in Old Kentucky. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1953.

Rettig, Polly; and Sarles, Frank. National Historic Landmark Form -- Jacobs Hall, Boyle Co., KY Washington, D.C.: Historic Sites Survey, NPS, 1960.

Swain, Enos. Kentucky Historic Resources Inventory Sheet for Forest Hill (BO-362). Frankfort: Kentucky Heritage Commission.

Sweet, William Warren. Religion on the American Frontier, Vol. II, The Presbyterians. New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1964.

Thierman, Sue McCelland. "Plain and Fancy." The Courier-Journal Magazine. Louisville, Kentucky, Sunday, May 11, 1958.

Wilson, Everett. Early Southern Towns. Brunswick, New Jersey: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1967.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Photo _____ Page 1

Forest Hill
Boyle County, KY

Same for all photos:

Property: Forest Hill

Address: Rural Boyle County, KY

Photographer: Mary Cronan Oppel

Date of Photograph: Fall, 1983

Location of Negatives: Kentucky Heritage Council, 12th Floor, Capital Plaza Tower, Frankfort, KY

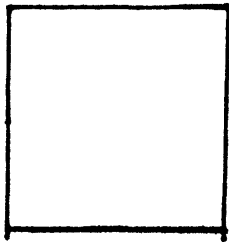
Photo 1: View of front facade of house, photographer looking NNW

Photo 2: View of former slave quarter, photographer looking NE

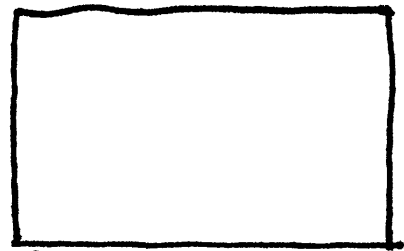
Photo 3: Interior view

Photo 4: Interior view

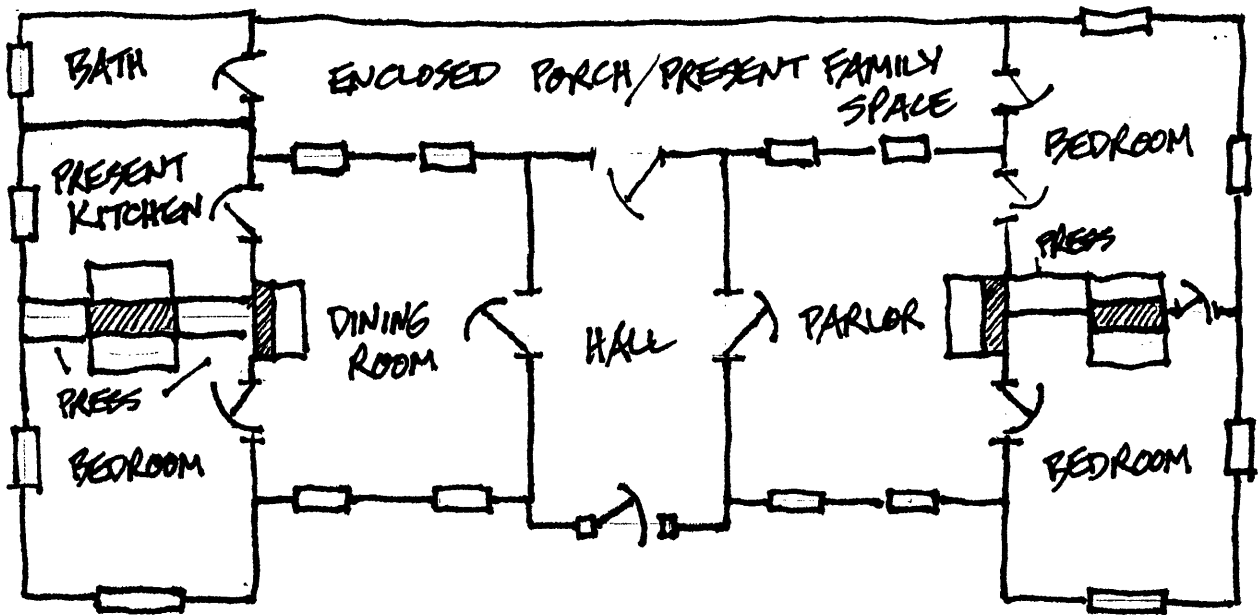
The nomination preparer indicates that these views represent the property as it currently appears.



FORMER KITCHEN



FORMER SLAVE QUARTERS



FOREST HILL, BOYLE COUNTY, KENTUCKY

FLOOR PLAN

NO SCALE

DANIEL KIDD

MARCH, 1889



United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

SEP 1 1 1989

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1. Name of Property

historic name Forest Hill

other names/site number Guerrant Place; Nelson-Lewis House; B0-362

2. Location

street & number North side, KY Highway 34, 3 miles NE of Danville [] not for publication N/A

city, town Danville [x] vicinity

state Kentucky code KY county Boyle code 021 zip code 40422

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- [x] private
[] public-local
[] public-State
[] public-Federal

Category of Property

- [x] building(s)
[] district
[] site
[] structure
[] object

Number of Resources within Property

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. 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. [] See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official David L. Morgan, State Historic Preservation Officer & Executive Director, Kentucky Heritage Council Date 9-1-89

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. [] See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- [x] 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:)

Entered in the National Register 10/16/89

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Federal

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Limestone
walls Brick

roof Asphalt
other Contemporary stone kitchen

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Forest Hill, erected in 1815, is situated at the end of a long paved drive that ends in a circle, atop a low rise approximately three miles northeast of Danville, Kentucky (1980 pop., 13,000). The two-lane Kentucky Highway 34 is 1,200 feet south of this farm residence; however, the original road -- Old Lexington -- ran the same direction but within half that distance. The only other residences within a 1,000-foot radius of Forest Hill are two houses of somewhat recent construction to the southwest. The surrounding topography is characterized by pronounced undulation; also, an L-shaped inlet of Dix River/Herrington Lake is below a sharp land-drop 2,000 feet to the east.

1
C:

Rexford Newcomb provided the following physical observations regarding Forest Hill:

The plan is that of a typical Kentucky, one-story Federal house of three pavilions, each crowned by a hip roof. The central pavilion features a portal with fanlight and sidelights, above which stands a pediment with a circular window. The fanlight, originally leaded, has been replaced with a wooden sash. There is no portico but circular steps radiate from the portal. The end pavilions are graced with Palladian windows (Architecture in Old Kentucky, p. 65).

Brickwork on the principal facade -- which faces south and is 95 feet wide -- is laid in Flemish bond, while all other sides are laid in common bond. Also, there are four interior brick chimneys that are carefully balanced, and the foundation is of limestone ashlar. The shape is that of an H.

With the main entrance flanked by four rectangular windows, plus the two Palladian windows of the side pavilions, Forest Hill has seven bays on its principal (south) facade. Two evenly-placed rectangular windows pierce each side wall.

2 & 3
C:

To the rear of Forest Hill -- and contemporary with this 1815 residence -- are two auxiliary buildings: a stone kitchen, and a former brick slave quarters. The kitchen is square in shape and has a pyramidal roof: the slave quarters is a one-story rectangular building, with a gabled roof and one exterior-end chimney set flush with the wall. A mid-20th-century, 3-car, brick garage and an early-20th-century frame barn -- neither included within the nominated area -- round out this rural assemblage.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

ARCHITECTURE
EDUCATION

1815-25³⁰

1815
1815-25

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Nelson, Rev. Dr. Samuel Kelsey

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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Forest Hill, an 1815 residence outside Danville, Kentucky, is significant under National Register Eligibility Criteria B and C: it was erected for a frontier Presbyterian clergyman who made substantial contributions to the field of education -- and with whom the property is strongly associated; architecturally, Forest Hill ranks among the finest and best-preserved Federal dwellings in the lower portion of Kentucky's renowned Bluegrass region -- such region containing both the largest number and perhaps the finest products of Federal architecture in the Commonwealth.

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See continuation sheet

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 - University
 - Other

Specify repository:
KY Heritage Council, Frankfort, KY

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UTM References

A

1	6	7	0	0	2	4	0	4	1	7	1	3	4	0
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Zone			Easting					Northing						

C

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D

Zone			Easting					Northing						

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

A thin rectangular area -- the rear facades of the 2 contemporary outbuildings delineate the far northern extent, this width being 95 feet, the same width as Forest Hill. The nominated property then extends 660 feet to the south, to the point about where the Old Lexington Road ran. See map.

See continuation sheet

Bryantsville Quadrangle

Boundary Justification

Forest Hill is situated atop a low prominence and commands an important vista to the south. This factor figures prominently into the site selection for the historic house and its 2 contemporary outbuildings.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Daniel Kidd, Architectural Historian
organization Private Consultant date March, 1989
street & number 2218 Perryville Rd. telephone 606/734-7489
city or town Harrodsburg state Kentucky zip code 40330

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
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Section number 7 Page 2

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Forest Hill, Boyle County, Kentucky

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Dr. Nelson had married into one of our wealthiest families. His wife was the daughter of John Reed of Washington County and granddaughter of John Reed of Reed's Station. It may have been, though the record does not clearly say, that she heard him preach his trial sermon at her home in the town of Springfield; presbyteries were field days then, among the elect. Howbeit, they were wedded. Then the law, very comfortably for the husband, gave all the wife's property into the husband's hands. So we find ourselves becoming one of the greatest proprietors of our community. He built "Forrest (sic.) Hill," that quaint old mansion on the Lexington Road, circa 1815. Though he sold it in 1825, he still owned 1,300 acres of farm land and some forty slaves (Fackler, A Chronicle of Old First, p. 22).

"Dr. Nelson bought a tract from Samuel McDowell Jr., in 1814. AS he acquired the adjoining land the next year, it is likely that he built the house soon after. Another conveyance, from William McDowell, Aug., 1815, declares that it 'is now occupied by Dr. Nelson' " (Fackler, Historic Homes of Boyle County, Kentucky, p. 30).

Called to the pastorate of what is historically known as "Old First" (Presbyterian Church of Danville, listed in the NRHP) in 1810, Dr. Nelson proved most effective in his leadership of this historic congregation -- increasing the number of members from 30 to 200 during his 17-year pastorate and necessitating the construction of two successively larger houses of worship to accommodate such increased numbers (Fackler, Early Days in Danville, pp. 116-17).

Relatedly, Samuel Nelson's contributions to early Central Kentucky society extended to education: "To Mr. Nelson it is understood belongs the honor of having been the principal founder of Centre College" (Presbyterian Encycloaedia, p. 565, quoted in Fackler's A Chronicle of Old First, p. 23). Chartered in 1819, the Centre College of Kentucky continues today under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church. "Among . . . (Centre's) . . . graduates have been two Vice Presidents of the United States, one Chief Justice and one Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, eight United States Senators, and forty-two Congressmen, eleven Governors of the States, and thirty-one college presidents" (NHRP nomination for Old Centre, 1972).

Nelson also served on the board of trustees of the 1823-founded Kentucky School for the Deaf, also in Danville. Significantly, this school is noted as "the first such institution in the country to be publicly supported" (NHL form for Jacobs Hall, Kentucky School for the Deaf). Private donors to the Danville school included John Quincy Adams and Martin Van Buren (Ibid.). However, principal early support came from the sale of public lands granted to the school by the U.S. Congress in 1826. That same year, Nelson went to Florida to look after such land grant, and that is where he died: "He was taken ill in the office of a Mr. Allen, in Tallahassee, while pouring out a tumbler of water and expired without

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Forest Hill, Boyle County, Kentucky

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pain in twenty minutes. And no wonder! What with his pastorate, trusteeship in the College and Deaf School, not to speak of the burden of two large farms and some thirty-eight slaves, he must have been worked to death" (Fackler, Historic Homes, p. 30).

Architecturally, Forest Hill is distinguished as one of Boyle County's foremost Federal houses. Two other residences in the county bear important similarities to Forest Hill: the Daniel Yeiser House and Pleasant Vale (listed in the NRHP). The Yeiser House has fallen into serious disrepair, and it has undergone several compromising alterations. Pleasant Vale was purportedly initially constructed in 1784 (Fackler, Historic Homes, p. 8); however, the first quarter of the 19th century is a more likely date. In any event, Pleasant Vale was given a much later Neo-Classical verandah across the front -- thus obscuring some of its Federal character.

Created in 1842, Boyle County had previously been a part of Mercer County, a political subdivision adjacent to the north. Historic resource survey work in Boyle County has revealed 25 buildings identified as built before 1850, of brick construction, and Federal in style: similar efforts in Mercer have revealed 30 such buildings there. Mercer's most comparable building to Boyle's Forest Hill is the previously-mentioned 1820's Burford Hill.

Samuel Nelson sold Forest Hill in 1825 to John Wheelan, nephew of early Danville civic leader James Birney. The property was acquired in the 1850's by Jackson Davis, whose great-grandson, Robert K. Lewis, is the current owner and occupant of the property. Mr. and Mrs. Lewis have maintained Forest Hill in a highly admirable manner, and they have no plans for the 1815 residence and its two contemporary outbuildings other than continued family retention.

For a while, Forest Hill was locally known as the "Guerrant Place," after Dr. and Mrs. Richard P. Guerrant, Jackson Davis' daughter and son-in-law -- who resided there for a lengthy period (Fackler, Historic Homes, p. 30). Richard Guerrant was the brother of "the famed Dr. Edward O. Guerrant, physician, Presbyterian minister, and 'the first medical missionary to the Kentucky mountains'" (Thierman, "Plain and Simple").

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Rettig, Polly; and Sarles, Frank. National Historic Landmark Form -- Jacobs Hall, Boyle Co., KY Washington, D.C.: Historic Sites Survey, NPS, 1960.

Swain, Enos. Kentucky Historic Resources Inventory Sheet for Forest Hill (BO-362). Frankfort: Kentucky Heritage Commission.

Sweet, William Warren. Religion on the American Frontier, Vol. II, The Presbyterians. New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1964.

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Forest Hill
Boyle County, KY

Same for all photos:

Property: Forest Hill

Address: Rural Boyle County, KY

Photographer: Mary Cronan Oppel

Date of Photograph: Fall, 1983

Location of Negatives: Kentucky Heritage Council, 12th Floor, Capital Plaza Tower, Frankfort, KY

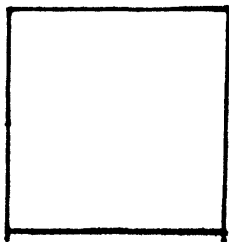
Photo 1: View of front facade of house, photographer looking NNW

Photo 2: View of former slave quarter, photographer looking NE

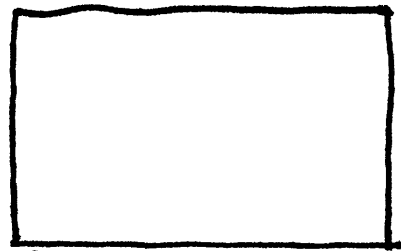
Photo 3: Interior view

Photo 4: Interior view

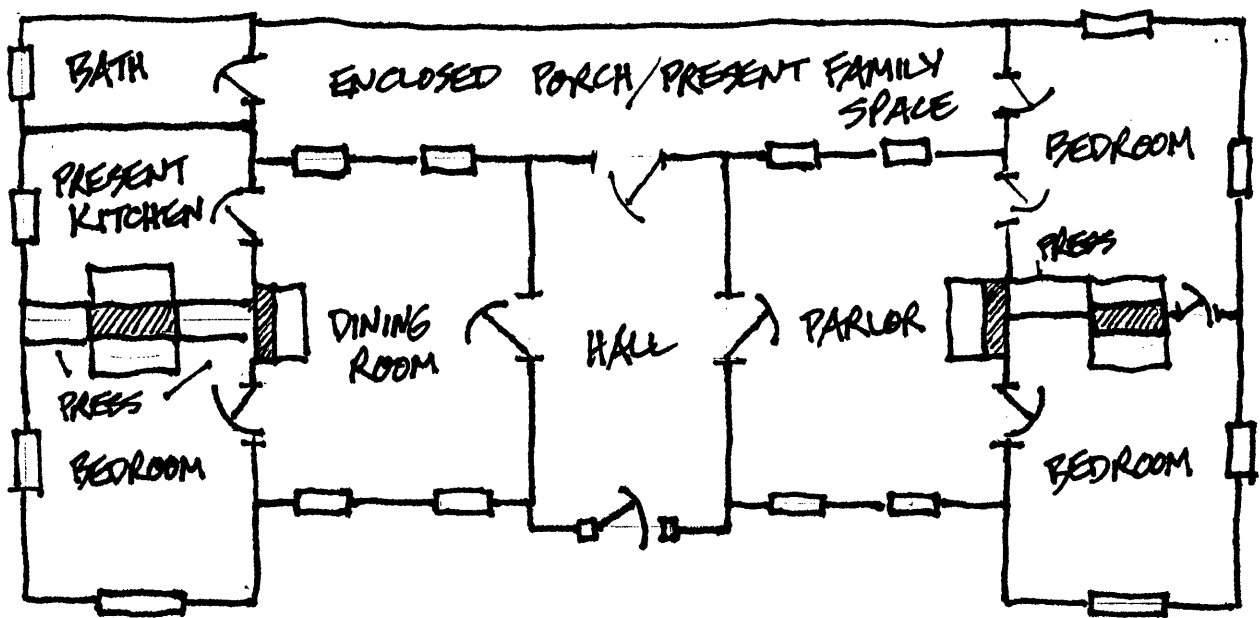
The nomination preparer indicates that these views represent the property as it currently appears.



FORMER KITCHEN



FORMER SLAVE QUARTERS



FOREST HILL, BOYLE COUNTY, KENTUCKY

FLOOR PLAN

NO SCALE

DANIEL KIDD

MARCH, 1889

