

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUL 13 1976
DATE ENTERED	NOV 7 1976

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

**

Judge Daniel Breck House *no.*

AND/OR COMMON

Brighton

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

312 Lancaster Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Richmond

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

5

STATE

Kentucky

CODE

021

COUNTY

Madison

CODE

151

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 type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Joseph G. Bosley

STREET & NUMBER

312 Lancaster Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Richmond

VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Madison County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Court House Square

CITY, TOWN

Richmond

STATE

Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky

DATE

1970

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Kentucky Heritage Commission

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		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Breck House is located on the west side of Lancaster Avenue, a handsome tree-lined street several blocks long that leads south from East Main Street (see the National Register nomination form for the Downtown Richmond Historic District, approved at the state level on March 9, 1976) toward the main campus of Eastern Kentucky University (shown as Central University on the 1876 map; see the National Register nomination form for Old Central University Building, listed June 19, 1973). Among the attractive and in many cases historic residences on Lancaster Avenue is Irvineton, the William Irvine House (listed on the National Register May 6, 1976), on the opposite side of the avenue from the Breck House. The latter is set well back from the street, and is considerably farther back than most of its neighbors, reflecting its original position as a mansion on a town estate. The large lot still retains magnificent trees and other plantings (that unfortunately make it difficult to photograph the house itself; see photo 2).

The house has a two-story, five-bay main block only one room deep, unlike many other residences of the Kennedy type (see section #8). In keeping with them, however, it has a grand central feature consisting of a broad, low pediment over the central three bays, "supported" by two-story colossal pilasters. The emphatic cornice, which extends around the front block, continues across the base of the gable (unlike that of Kennedy's own house; see photo C3). The cornice that surrounds three sides of the gable projects slightly forward of the main cornice on the end bays. A large lunette in the center of the pediment is set in a semicircular blind arch that visually continues upward the recess between the center two pilasters.

The main entrance (visible again now that the Victorian porch shown in the late 19th-century view, photo 1, has been removed) consists of an elliptical fanlight over a set of panelled double doors flanked by exquisite sidelights (this doorway was used by Clay Lancaster as the basis for his reconstruction drawing of the Matthew Kennedy House; see photo C3). Above the entrance is a triple window of the type sometimes called "Davisean" because of its frequent use by A. J. Davis, partner in the prominent New York architectural firm of Town and Davis. It also seems to have a favorite motif of Kennedy's, however, as several such windows also appear on the facade of the Transylvania University building as actually erected (see photo C2). All the major openings of the Breck house have simple grooved frames, with concentric cornerblocks of the late "Geometric" phase of the Federal style. The large windows have nine-over-six-pane sash. A long one-story rear ell extends at the east side of the main block. Several frame additions have been inserted between the main block and the ell (see photos 6 and 7).

(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 checked="" 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 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 1832-37

BUILDER/ARCHITECT attributed to Matthew Kennedy

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

INTRODUCTION

The imposing brick house, located on the south side of Richmond, was built circa 1832 by Judge Daniel Breck. Breck (1788-1871), a prominent lawyer, banker, and legislator, was chosen by Kentucky conservatives to meet with President Abraham Lincoln (Breck's wife's nephew-in-law) to dissuade him from appointing the radical abolitionist (and ironically his fellow Madison Countian) Cassius Clay as Secretary of War. Breck's son, who later owned the house, was a well-known Presbyterian divine, much involved with the separation of the church into Northern and Southern synods after the Civil War.

Architecturally, the building is one of a series of very similar early Greek Revival residences in the Bluegrass region of central Kentucky whose design is often and traditionally attributed to Gideon Shryock (1802-1880), precocious architect of Kentucky's Old State House (1825-30) and other important Greek Revival temple-form public structures including "Old Morrison," the main hall of Transylvania College (1830-34). Architectural historian Clay Lancaster has shown in his Ante Bellum Houses of the Blue Grass (1961), however, that the series derives from the house in Lexington designed for himself by Matthew Kennedy (dates unknown), architect of the earlier main buildings of Transylvania College. Kennedy's dwelling, the Breck House, and perhaps a dozen other residences in the Bluegrass are so strikingly similar that they seem surely to have been designed by the same person or at least imitated from the same model. Lancaster well describes the revolutionary quality of Kennedy's design: "The elements of its facade are powerfully organized by four tall brick pilasters rising to a broken cornice, a pediment placed above with a lunette concentric to a blind arch in the tympanum" (p. 71). These houses also often have fine semicircular or elliptical fanlights of late Federal pattern, instead of the square portals characteristic of the Grecian vogue. The exact dates and possible interrelationship of the owners of all these places have not yet been determined, but the question deserves further exploration. What seems clear, nevertheless, is that Shryock was not responsible for this particular transitional version of the Greek Revival.

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The interior is said to have exquisite woodwork including mantels and cupboards with carved fans. The panelled doors have original locks and brasses. The floors are ash in random widths. About 1890 "cathedral glass" was inserted in the window on the stairlanding and the front-door sidelights and fanlight. Otherwise, the interior of the house is believed to be largely intact.

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HISTORY

An 1874 biography of the recently-deceased Daniel Breck, for whom the house was built -- eulogistic in tone but surely based on accurate information and probably supplied by his son, the Reverend Robert L. Breck -- was given by Richard Collins in his revision of his father Lewis Collins' 1847 History of Kentucky:

Judge DANIEL BRECK was born in Topsfield, Mass., Feb. 12, 1788, and died at Richmond, Ky., Feb. 4, 1871 -- aged 83. His father, Rev. Daniel Breck, was a chaplain in the war of the Revolution, and as such was with Montgomery and Arnold in the assault upon Quebec, and wintered with the army in Canada; was afterwards pastor first in Massachusetts, then in Vermont, and lived to be nearly 100 years of age. The son, after many struggles in obtaining his education, alternately teaching and attending school, graduated in 1812 at Dartmouth College, and out of a large and brilliant class was selected to deliver the Philosophical Oration. He came to Richmond, Ky., Dec., 1814, and began the practice of law, rapidly achieving success and fame, as one of the ablest lawyers in the state; was chosen a representative in the Ky. legislature in 1824, '25, '26, '27, and '34 -- during which he originated the system of internal improvements, the Northern Bank, and other important measures; was appointed to the court of appeals bench, April 7, 1843, retiring in 1849 to run for congress, where he served two years, 1849-51, the intimate friend and counselor there, in the memorable struggle over the Compromise Measures, and through life, of Henry Clay and John J. Crittenden, and enjoying also the confidence and highest regard of Daniel Webster. He is pronounced by the profession one of the profoundest and most learned of the court of appeals bench. His death was noticed in a special message to the legislature, of marked appropriateness and discrimination, by Gov. Stevenson -- his last act before retiring from the gubernatorial chair; and in eloquent addresses in the Ky. senate and house of representatives. In private life, he was eminently active and useful; he was exempted from the infirmities of age; his history at length would be a history of Madison county -- from his intimate connection with its courts, its

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HISTORY continued

schools, its banks, its roads, its politics, and every other interest. He had singular self-reliance, balance, evenness of temper, and tenacity of purpose. In learning and mental discipline, he was equaled by few of the public men of his day; in great practical wisdom and almost unerring judgment, surpassed by none. He was a firm believer in the Christian religion, and died established in its hopes. He was married in 1819 to Miss Jane B. Todd, a daughter of Gen. Levi Todd, of Fayette county, one of the early pioneers of Kentucky, and one of the founders of Lexington in 1779.

Judge Breck was also president of the Richmond Branch of the State Bank of Kentucky. In an 1878 biography Breck was also described: "He was eminently successful as a lawyer, and was distinguished for his learning, almost unerring judgement, great tenacity and self-reliance, and finely organized character" (Armstrong, 1878, p. 471).

Although Breck retired from public office in 1851, he was chosen by a small group of Kentucky conservatives in 1860 to meet with President-elect Abraham Lincoln. Breck's purpose was to dissuade Lincoln from appointing the Kentuckian Cassius M. Clay, as Secretary of War. Curiously, Clay was a native of Madison County (see the National Register form on White Hall, his country home outside Richmond, listed March 11, 1971). Clay's outspoken views opposing slavery had antagonized many conservative Kentuckians.

The meeting between Breck and Lincoln is interestingly described by David W. Smily in his 1969 biography of Clay, Lion of White Hall:

Kentucky conservatives, who had opposed Clay's unconventional career from the first, were frightened by the prospect of a national administration with him in a prominent position. On November 16, their spokesman, the aging Daniel Breck, journeyed to Springfield to consult with the President-elect. Breck was an old-line Whig with whom Cassius had worked in 1840, and he had married an aunt of Mrs. Lincoln; he was, therefore, a well-chosen representative of Kentucky moderates.

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The old man advised the President-elect that, to save the Union in the mounting wave of secession-fever, he should surround himself with conservative men. One or more of his cabinet, Breck insisted, should be southern non-Republicans. If Lincoln followed such a course, the Kentuckian assured him, then his native state would remain in the Union. But, Breck warned, if the President-elect should choose an "obnoxious" man, like Cassius M. Clay, Kentuckians would regard it as a "declaration of war against the state."

Patiently, Lincoln heard Breck for two hours before making a direct response. Then, when the old Judge had finished his plea for a cosmopolitan cabinet of moderate northerners and proslavery southerners as the price of union, Lincoln slowly replied, "Does any man think that I will take to my bosom an enemy?" Though he thus rejected Breck's request for putting anti-Republicans in the cabinet, the President-elect accepted the Kentuckian's estimate of public sentiment concerning Cassius M. Clay. Clay's consistent pugnacity had associated him with the radical wing of the party and rendered him unacceptable as a member of the administration. At a time when the South was seething with confused fears, Clay was not the southern man Lincoln wanted for his cabinet.

Lincoln eventually selected Simon Cameron, a native of Pennsylvania, as Secretary of War, and later Edwin Stanton. In spite of Lincoln's immediate response to Breck's political petition, the president does seem to have accommodated the judge's petitions at least twice during the later stages of the Civil War. Two letters connecting them have been published in Basler's Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln:

" Judge D. Breck
Richmond, Ky.

Executive Mansion
Washington, March 2, 1864

I have directed the officer at Knoxville to allow Mrs. Ramsey to come to you.

A. Lincoln."

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HISTORY continued

1 ALS RPB. Judge Daniel Breck wrote Representative William H. Randall on February 22, 1864: "My daughter, Anna Marie Ramsey, the wife of Dr. F.A. Ramsey, with her six daughters, . . . is now at his residence in Knoxville, Ten. Her husband is a Medical Director their only son an officer in the Rebel Army. She has been ordered to leave with her children & go South with- in the Rebel lines, having failed to take the oath. . . . I think the most desirable and natural shelter for her and her children under the circumstances is her father's roof - and indeed the safest for the Union cause, as you know her father is a Union man.

"December 12, 1864

At the request of Hon. Mr. Randall of Ky, it is ordered that Thomas Rice prisoner of War at Rock-Island, and Reuben Turner, prisoner of war at Johnson's Island, be discharged, on taking the oath of Dec. 8, 1863.

A. Lincoln."

1 Aes, owned by R.E. Burdick, New York City. Although written at the request of Representative William H. Randall, Lincoln's endorsement appears on a letter from Daniel Breck, December 5, 1864, introducing "my friend, Mr. Billingsley," of Richmond, Kentucky.

The property, located on Lancaster Avenue among other fine 19th-century houses, midway between downtown Richmond and what is now Eastern Kentucky University, is shown on the 1876 Atlas of Madison County as belonging to the Reverend Robert L. Breck, presumably a son of Judge Breck (other members of the Breck family also lived in the area at that time). The Reverend William Breck acted as moderator of the controversial assembly held at Henderson, Kentucky, in October 1866 that effected the division of the Synod of Kentucky into northern and southern groups (Collins, I, pp. 469-70). He is also listed as a member of one of the two Boards of Trustees of Centre College in Danville that resulted from this schism (Collins, I, pp. 177-78).

In 1880 the house was sold to D.M. Bright. It is illustrated and described as be- longing to Bright's widow, Mrs. Laura Field Bright, in 1905 (see photo 1).

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ARCHITECTURE

Lancaster calls Matthew Kennedy, of whose life few facts are known, "the first local [i. e. central Kentucky] man to declare himself an architect, as opposed to any of various designations used for mere builders, such as housewright, house-joiner, or carpenter" (Ante Bellum Houses of the Blue Grass, p. 69). Kennedy entered practice in Lexington as a carpenter, and presumably also as a designer of buildings, in 1812. His most important commission was a new main building for Transylvania College on Gratz Park in Lexington, to replace the original 1792 structure. It was apparently here, in Kennedy's original elevation (see photo¹), that he introduced the concept of a wide gable or pediment across the front of a building over a pilastrade, or illusory porch of pilasters, suggesting without literally recreating a classical temple portico. The building as erected (see photo²) was considerably more conventional, lacking the pilasters but still retaining a wide gable with a semicircular window (lunette) in the center; otherwise, with its elegant but fussy cupola and multiple arched windows it was still essentially a Federal, or even Georgian, building in architectural conception.

In 1827 (after Shryock's design for the State House in Frankfort introduced the full-scale temple form to Kentucky in 1825), Kennedy constructed and probably designed another building for Transylvania, the Medical Hall, which had two-story colossal pilasters. It is conceivable that the younger architect had some influence on the older man.

Kennedy owned a lot in downtown Lexington on which he was living by 1831, although he gained sole ownership of the property in 1815 and may have constructed his dwelling there shortly after. It was probably just before that date that he built for himself the mansion still standing, although in considerably altered form (see the Matthew Kennedy House, Fayette County, listed on the National Register on June 19, 1973; see photos³ and 4). It was this design, almost identical to that of the Breck house in Richmond and others in the Bluegrass region, that probably established the type. It may also have been the first Greek Revival residence in the state (Shryock's Orlando Brown House in Frankfort, with a gable-pediment across all five bays of the facade and a fine small Ionic porch, nevertheless lacks the colossal pilasters or columns that mark the full-blown Greek Revival; moreover, it was built in 1835, perhaps as much as twenty years after Kennedy's house; see the National Register nomination form for the Corner in Celebrities Historic District, Franklin County, listed on March 11, 1971).

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ARCHITECTURE continued

Among the houses similar to Kennedy's are the slightly larger and more elaborate Grassland, also in Fayette County, built in 1823 for Major Thomas Hart Shelby (see photos 5 and 6); The Meadows, built during the early 1830s for Dr. Elisha Warfield in Fayette County (razed); a country house in adjacent Woodford County, said to have been built by 1825 for Samuel Wallace; one near Midway in Woodford County; Bucknore in Bourbon County, inscribed "W. Buckner 1841" over the entrance, and its near mate, Auvergne, erected in 1837; the Breck house in Richmond dated 1832-37; and others in Madison, Woodford, Franklin, Marion, and Nelson counties, also in the Bluegrass, "although these have not the remarkable parallelisms that link the buildings named above" (Lancaster, pp. 72-74). Thus, it appears that the archetype for all these houses was Matthew Kennedy's own, whether or not he actually designed and/or built all of them, and that the traditional attribution of several of them to Gideon Shryock must be revised (it is highly unlikely that Shryock would have resorted to imitation of the older architect's approach to the Greek Revival, as the Orlando Brown House -- a quite different solution -- indicates).

Lancaster sums up effectively the essential attributes of the facades of all these buildings:

The Kennedy-house type -- reproduced faithfully at least six times in Fayette and adjoining counties -- although indebted to classicism for the basic design of its front elevation, was in no wise accountable to classic architecture for its individual parts. Pilasters were composed of shaft, necking, and a topmost molding that could answer for an echinus (fig. 97 [photo 3]), but there was no base and no abacus. Above, there was no full entablature, but only a simple cornice. The cornice responded to the pilasters by jutting forward over each of them. Despite archeological imperfections, as pure design the form is complete. Raking cornices identical with the horizontal one describe a pediment embracing the range of pilasters, and with a blind arch encircling a lunette pushing up into the tympanum, the superimposed triangle and supporting rectangular shapes are successfully coordinated into a unified design. Satisfactory effect justifies the abbreviation of parts.

The Breck house with its fine late Federal trim and prominent setting is a well-preserved example of this important transitional phase of Greek Revival architecture.

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Todd Family. Copied from "Kittochtinny Magazine," 1905, also from MSS. papers of Mrs. Emily Todd Helm, copied and compiled by Nina Visschi, 1939.

Additional information from Mrs. Charles C. Combs, Madison County Representative of the Kentucky Heritage Commission, and the owner Joseph G. Bosley.