

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**DATA SHEET**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED NOV 7 1975  
DATE ENTERED MAR 16 1976

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
James Ellis Stone Tavern  
AND/OR COMMON  
Stone Tavern

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
U.S. Hwy. 68  
CITY, TOWN  
Ellisville  
STATE  
Kentucky

VICINITY OF  
07

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
07

COUNTY  
Nicholas

CODE  
181

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: <u>Vacant</u>

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
Mr. John Soper, Jr.  
STREET & NUMBER  
Rt. # 3  
CITY, TOWN  
Carlisle,  
STATE  
Kentucky

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
Nicholas County Courthouse  
STREET & NUMBER  
Carlisle  
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  
CITY, TOWN  
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 type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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

The James Ellis Stone Tavern is located against a hillside in a rural area in northeast Kentucky along highway 68 approximately six miles northeast of Carlisle, the county seat of Nicholas County. The house faces open fields to the east across the highway and has a modern residence to the south, not readily visible from the road.

The building was constructed of undressed but roughly rectangular courses of stone with walls thirty inches thick laid up without mortar (photo 5). The thickness of the end walls leaves a good deal of solid stone surface to the ends of the facade, contributing to the sense of stability. The far right end attachment is the log kitchen, which at one time was semi-detached from the main part of the house with an open passageway between. The kitchen fireplace with its huge exterior chimney remains. The kitchen has since been clapboarded and the passway enclosed (photos 1 and 3).

The exterior of the stone facade reveals regularly spaced windows, two on either side of the central door and five above on the second level (photo 2). The windows are fairly square and at the upper story are set directly under the cornice with its refined moldings. The main entrance also has a wide door, with a four-light transom over. A one-story Victorian porch -- a late 19th-century addition replacing, very likely, one much plainer in design -- runs the full length of the main block. The large stone chimneys are not centered on the end walls, but placed slightly forward (photos 3 and 4). They protrude slightly from the wall and are corbelled inward just below the gable ends which -- unusual for early Kentucky stone architecture -- are of frame construction covered with horizontal siding, some of which is beaded.

The fairly steep slope back from the road allows the rear wall of the stone portion and an open porch along the back of the kitchen wing to be set partially into the hillside (photo 4). The main story of the front, on the other hand, is raised high above ground level, with openings into the cellar rooms now hidden by the porch. (According to local tradition, wagons once drove up under the porch to deliver goods to the cellar.)

The exterior trim is plain, of an early type, with pegged corners.

The interior of the tavern consists of two large rooms on each floor with smaller rooms at the back (see sketchplan). The two outside walls in the front room are plastered; the interior walls are paneled with wide beaded boards (photos 7 and 8). The survival of these board partitions is perhaps the most extraordinary feature of the interior. All partitions appear to be intact; and similar beaded boards still form much of the ceilings, the dividers of the stairs, and even some of the doors. Chair-railing also exists throughout, except where a mantel has been removed in the upstairs front bedroom.

The surviving mantels in both first-floor rooms are large, of an unembellished early type with separate shelf and frame for the openings (photos 9 and 10). Those in the main block have been partially filled in, but the kitchen fireplace (in poor condition) reveals the stone construction. Another interesting feature is the lattice pass-through window located on the west wall to the

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

SPECIFIC DATES ca. 1807

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Now somewhat forlorn and abandoned in appearance, the James Ellis Stone Tavern once presided over the promising community of Ellisville, the county seat of Nicholas County from 1804-1816. The town was favorably located along Smith's Wagon Road, an important early road connecting Maysville (formerly Limestone) on the Ohio River, with Lexington in the Bluegrass area. It was also one link in the mail stage-coach line which ran from Zanesville, Ohio, to Florence, Alabama (via Maysville and Lexington). The Ellis tavern, built about 1807 by one of the town's early settlers and namesake, was a stopping point along this route. The structure survives, virtually intact both inside and out, as an outstanding example of the arrangement and craftsmanship that made such early inns as much public buildings as private commercial establishments.

The first regular stage-coach line in central Kentucky was established shortly after the beginning of the 19th century -- the period of the construction of the Ellis tavern. This mode of travel reached its height from 1835-1852, after which the railroad, faster and more convenient, became more commonly used (Coleman, Stage-coach Days, p.9).

The first inns or taverns along the older roads in Kentucky were mostly log, with a few of stone (for an example of the former, see the National Register nomination form for "The Old Wash Place," Anderson County, Kentucky, approved June 11, 1975). Many were ordinary wilderness cabins "rendered professionally hospitable by stress of circumstance." With the improvement of roads and the advent of stage-wagons and coaches, log buildings were soon replaced by more comfortable inns, which were erected in the settlements, at country crossroads, and at frequent intervals inbetween these points (Coleman, Stage-coach Days, p.53).

From the large number of inns and taverns in the Bluegrass, it is evident they were a vital part of the everyday life of the people, as well as havens for travellers. They became the civic center from which radiated much of the political, social, and intellectual activities of the community. The Ellis tavern no doubt played a similar role in the life of Ellisville, or Nicholasville as it came temporarily to be known. Fortescue Cuming notes passing the tavern on July 21, 1807, on his way from Maysville to Lexington: "At about two miles from Blue Licks we passed a tavern, a double log gaol and a court house in a very solitary situation, dignified with the name of Nicholasville, it being the seat of the county courts of Nicholas county" (Thwaites, p.176). "There were but one or two houses in the next six miles," Cuming reveals, "which are through a stoney defile between barren hills." Coming back through at a later date, Cuming writes of some amount of activity around the old inn. "I left Paris, and passing Millersburgh...I spurred my horse past Nicholasville court house and tavern, where I counted above a hundred horses, fastened under trees. I was induced to hasten past this place, as the voters in that sterile part of the country did not appear quite so peaceable and orderly as those

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ITEM NUMBER 7

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left of the staircase (photo 7). The floors are of random-width ash. The doors are board-and-batten with drop locks.

On the second floor, one interior wall has been added to create a hall and two large bedrooms; again, there are smaller compartments to the rear. There is evidence that a fireplace was once located on the north wall.

The stair continues from the south bedroom to the attic, which is high though unfloored. It contains an old handhewn loom that seems to have been erected in situ (photo 11).

Construction members are of poplar, all handhewn with pegged rafters visible in the attic. Throughout the years few alterations have been made; the porch and clapboarding of the kitchen wing are the principal changes. One floor has been relaid in the north front room. There are no bathrooms, modern kitchen, or heating systems to alter the original appearance.

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ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

I had seen in the morning at Paris, and I was not sure but some of them might have been moved by the spirit of whiskey to challenge me to run a race with them, or to amuse the company with a game of rough and tumble, at both which the 'backwoods Virginians are very dexterous' (Thwaites, p.199).

The land on which the courthouse and jail were built was purchased from James Ellis, suggesting he had much to do with the relocation of the county seat to Ellisville. It is recorded in the 1805 Nicholas County Order Book that court was held in the Ellis house in May 1805, while the court house was under construction (Order Book A, p.343). Subsequently in these early records Ellis is found giving deeds for public buildings and town blocks in the short-lived town, which consists now, as apparently in the past, of only a few isolated farm dwellings.

Little is known of Ellis, except that he is believed to have settled on the tavern site about 1778 and constructed a log building there known as Ellis Station. He is also thought to have operated a tavern in that house previous to the time the stone structure was built (Order Book A, page 52 -- October 1800 lists the first of many annual applications by Ellis for a license "to keep a tavern at his house").

At first Ellisville appeared to prosper. "Stores were opened and shops built, and Ellisville became quite a place," wrote Robert Peter in his history of Nicholas County. But when in 1816, the county seat was moved for the fourth time "the glory of Ellisville departed forever... It had been laid out with much care upon an eligible site, but the removal of the county seat to Carlisle killed it" (Peter, p.439). (Carlisle, approximately six miles east of the Ellis tavern, remains the county seat.)

Little is known of the history of the building in the late 19th century. It is known the property was sold in 1828 to the Hooker family and thereafter owned by the McClanahans and Galbraiths. The old tavern was purchased by the family of the present owners in 1934.

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Lathrop, Elise. Early American Inns and Taverns. New York: Robert M. McBride & Co., 1926.

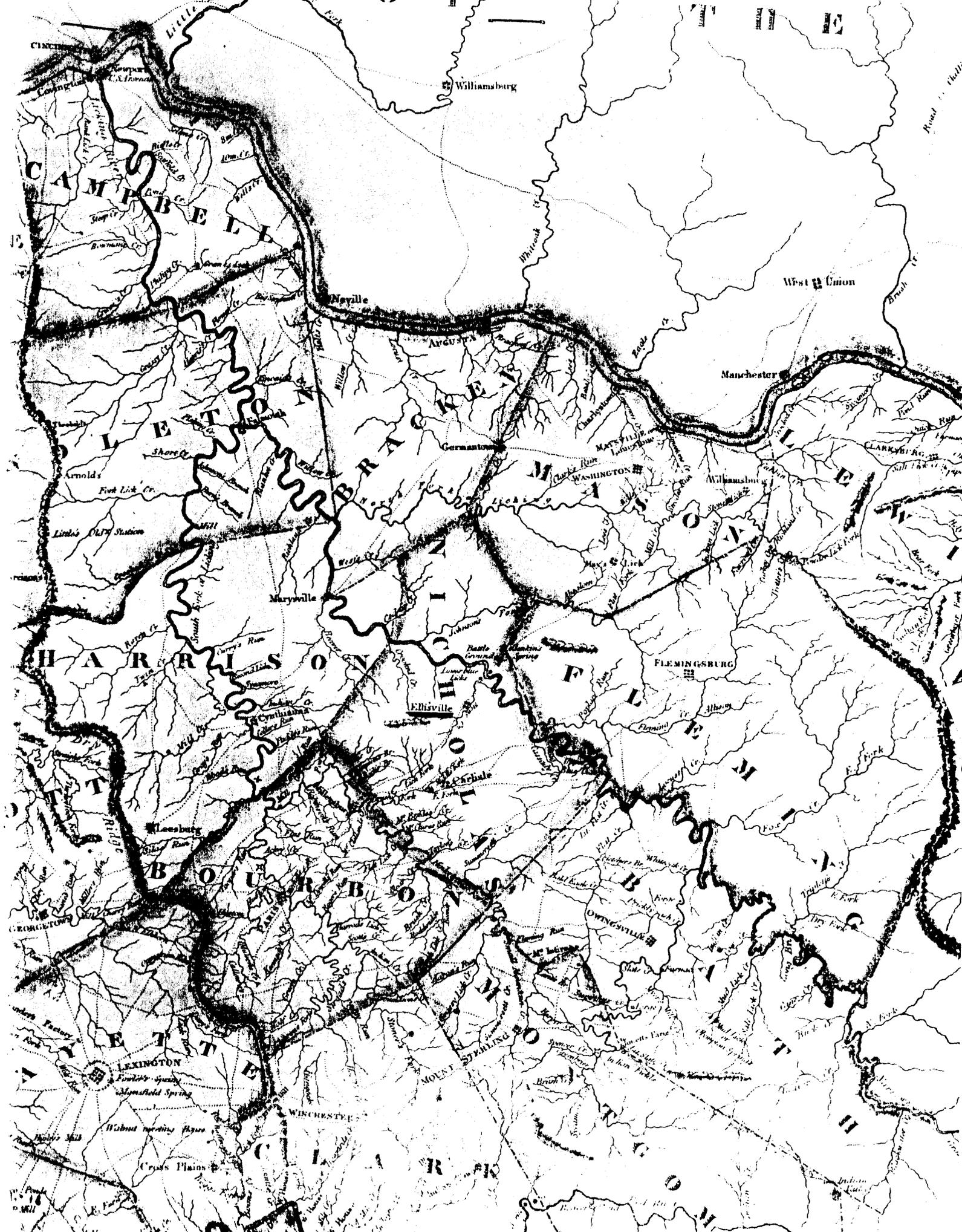
Nicholas County, Kentucky, Will Book B, p.463; Order Book B, p.147; Deed Book A, p.52, 288.

Perrin, W.H.; Battle, J.H.; Kniffin, G.C. Kentucky, A History of the State. Louisville: F.A. Battey and Co., 1887, pp.631-32.

Peter, Robert. A History of Bourbon, Scott, Harrison and Nicholas Counties, Kentucky. Edited by William H. Perrin. Cincinnati: Art Guild Reprint, 1882. pp.352,439.

"Roads and Highways," file at Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky.

Thwaites, Reuben Gold, ed. Early Western Travels 1748-1846, Vol. IV. Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1904, pp.176,199.



CINCINNATI

Williamsburg

CAMPBELL

Neville

West Union

LETTON

BRACKEN

Manchester

HARRISON

BRACKEN

WASHINGTON

BOONE

BOONE

FLEMINGSBURG

LEXINGTON

BOONE

WINCHESTER

MOORE

CAMPBELL

Scale: 1/2 inch = 1 mile

Form No. 10-301  
(Rev. 10-74)

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AND/OR COMMON

Stone Tavern

**2 LOCATION**

CITY, TOWN

Ellisville

U.S. Hwy. 68

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Nicholas

STATE

Kentuc ky

**3 MAP REFERENCE**

SOURCE Compiled and published by H. Anderson of Philadelphia (identical to Luke Munsell's  
"A Map of the State of Kentucky," 1813).

SCALE

No legend shown

DATE 1817

**4 REQUIREMENTS**

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW



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**2 LOCATION**

U.S. Hwy. 68

CITY, TOWN

Ellisville

\_\_\_\_VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Nicholas

STATE

Kentucky

**3 MAP REFERENCE**

SOURCE "A New Map of Kentucky with the Roads and Distances from Place to Place along the Stage and Steam Boat Routes" by S. Augustus Mitchell, Philadelphia, 1847.

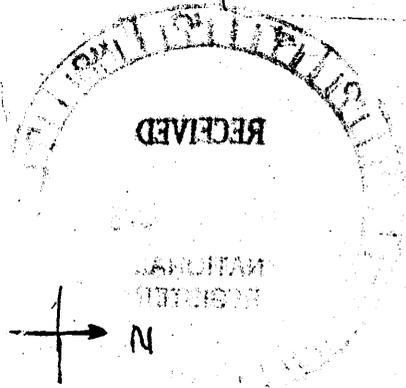
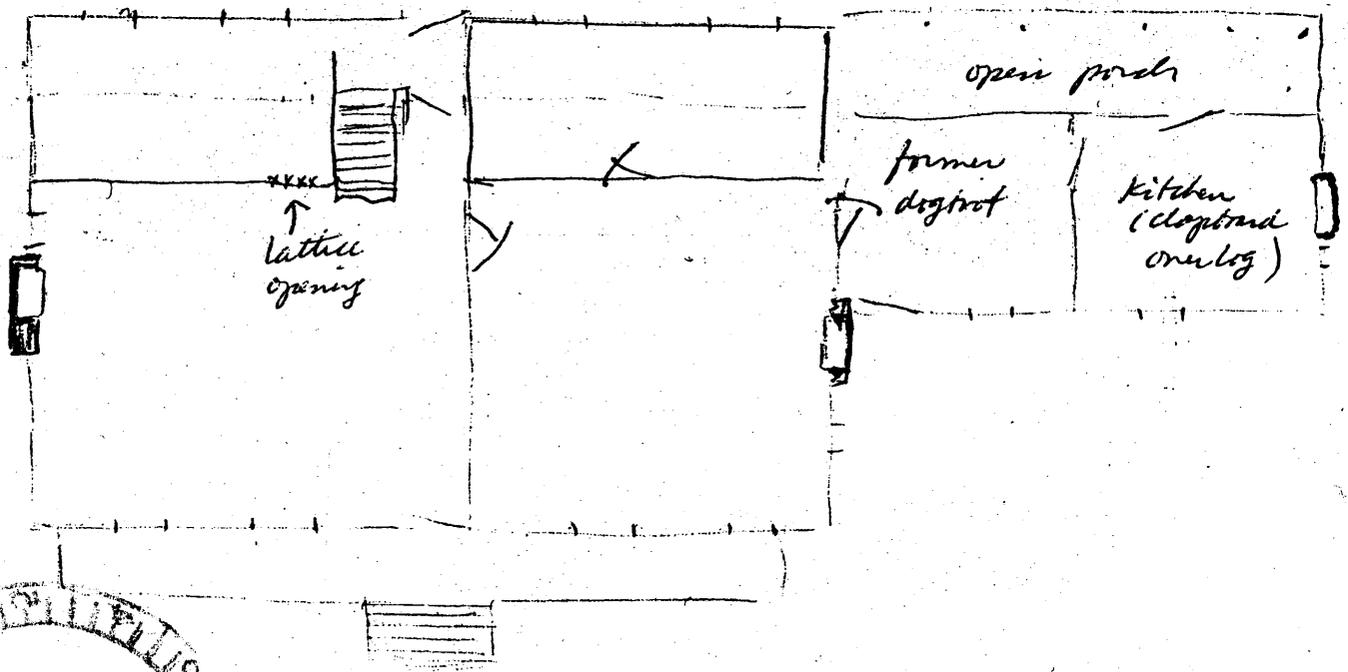
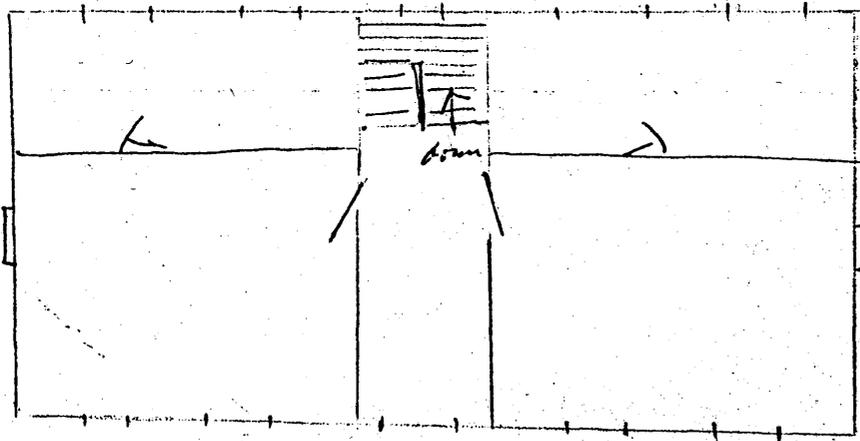
SCALE No legend shown

DATE 1847

**4 REQUIREMENTS**

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES



*all interior partitions  
are beaded boards*

Sketch Map of Stone Tavern,  
Ellisville, Nicholas County  
by Gloria Mills (no scale)