

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received JUN 18 1984

date entered JUL 19 1984

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Morganfield Commercial District

and/or common

2. Location *Main Court, and Morgan Sts.*

street & number Multiple - see continuation sheet not for publication

city, town Morganfield vicinity of

state KY code county Union code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> na in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> na being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple - see continuation sheet

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Union County Courthouse

street & number Main Street

city, town Morganfield state Kentucky

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1981 federal state county local

depository for survey records Kentucky Heritage Council

city, town Frankfort state Kentucky

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" 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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Union County, Kentucky is located in the far western section of the state, and is situated at the edge of the western coal fields. The county is bordered on the north by thirty-six miles of the Ohio River, and the Tradewater River forms the county's western boundary. Other county neighbors include, Webster, Henderson and Crittenden Counties.

Union is a rural area, with four-fifths of the county's 357 square miles classified as farmland. Corn and tobacco are the two major agricultural projects produced by the county.

Coal, oil and gas are the three major mineral resources possessed by the county, and Union exports more than one million tons of coal annually.

Morganfield, the centrally located county seat, has a present population of about 3,700. The Morganfield Commercial District occupies about four blocks of the community's central business area. Directly east, south and west of the boundaries, lie 19th Century residential neighborhoods. The area north of the district (along Morgan St.) becomes a 20th Century commercial strip. Downtown Morganfield is a vital area; and although a new shopping center on the north side of town provides competition, the historic business area is still viable.

Few intrusions break the flow of the district, with one exception, a large empty lot at the corner of Court and Main Streets interrupts the pattern briefly. Fire destroyed the structure which stood on the site. There are thirty-five structures within the nominated area. Thirty of those contribute to the district, five are structured intrusions, and there are two empty lots. Compared to the historic buildings, the intrusions are not out of form or scale. They mainly consist of concrete block, or brick buildings that do not meet the age criteria.

The district encompasses two and one-half blocks of Morgan Street (U.S. Hwy. 60), and two blocks of Main Street. The Union County Courthouse, previously listed on the National Register, sits at the center of the area, and is the hub for the district (see photo 7). The business section is a very cohesive one, and its significance lies largely in its continuity.

The buildings within the district are vernacular in style, and reflect the architectural trends popular during the late 19th Century. The majority were constructed within the period between 1870 and 1930. The basic form of late 19th and early 20th Century commercial buildings is relatively simple. They consisted of a one or two story rectangular, masonry block, with decorative stone or terra cotta details. Cast iron cornices and store fronts were purchased from a foundry and added to the main block. Due to the community's proximity to Evansville, Indiana, it is safe to suppose that several Mesker iron fronts adorned some local buildings.¹

¹The George Mesker Foundry was responsible for many of the iron fronts on Kentucky buildings.

(see continuation sheet)

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 type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" 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 1872

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Morganfield Commercial District is a cohesive group of late 19th and early 20th Century commercial structures. Although most are vernacular in style, together the buildings form a tightly knit collection, which is impressive in its variety. The historic commercial area came to maturity during the period between 1870 and 1930, a time of significant growth and development in Union County. This collection of buildings is representative of that important point in time.

Present day Union County is a 357 square mile area in the far western part of Kentucky. The county was officially organized with its separation from Henderson County in 1811. The county's establishment was given impetus by a member of the Kentucky House of Representatives, one Presley O'Bannon. Mr. O'Bannon owned several large tracts of land in the proposed county, and it is safe to say he benefited from the separation.

A local commission was formed to determine the most feasible location for the county seat. Three areas were taken into consideration; Caseyville, in the western part of the county; Uniontown, in the north; and Morgan's field, a centrally located tract of land. Although Uniontown and Caseyville had the advantage of Ohio River locations, Morgan's field was chosen. It so happened that Presley O'Bannon held title to the 1,000 acre tract, through his marriage to General Daniel Morgan's niece.¹ He generously donated 50 acres to the new county for the public square.

There were two springs located on O'Bannon's property, and they became the determining factor in the location of the public square. The connecting streets were named for those individuals consequential to the establishment of the county seat. O'Bannon, Morgan, McElroy, Delaney, Townsend, and Hughes, most members of the commission, were honored with avenues bearing their name.

Several events marked Morganfield's development during the next fifty years. Although growth was slow at first, during the 1840s and 1850s the population increase was more marked. The events which sparked this change occurred in agriculture and the coal industry. The 1840s saw an important increase in corn production, a product of which Union has always been a large producer. Also during that decade, the development of coal mining as a major industry was beginning.²

Only one structure within the commercial district represents this period in Morganfield's development. The Adam Hanger Building, located on the south side of Main Street, was probably constructed during the first half of the 19th Century. Although the first floor openings have been altered, the second level fenestration is original. The openings have 6/6 lights and are capped by plain wood lintels. The wood cornice has a deep overhang, and is decorated with dentils.

(see continuation sheet)

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 6

Quadrangle name Morganfield

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	1 6	4 1 9 0 6 0	4 1 7 1 0 8 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	1 6	4 1 9 2 4 0	4 1 7 0 9 4 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	1 6	4 1 9 2 0 0	4 1 7 0 8 2 0
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D	1 6	4 1 9 0 8 0	4 1 7 0 8 4 0
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E	1 6	4 1 9 0 4 0	4 1 7 0 8 8 0
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F	1 6	4 1 9 0 0 0	4 1 7 0 9 8 0
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G			
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H			
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Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jayne C. Henderson, Preservation Specialist

organization Green River Area Development District date _____

street & number 3860 U.S. Highway 60 West telephone (502)926-4433

city or town Owensboro 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 Mary James Appel

title State Historic Preservation Officer date May 24, 1984

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register Entered in the National Register

for Allene Byers Keeper of the National Register date 7/19/84

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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Morganfield, Kentucky
Continuation sheet Morganfield Commercial Dist. Item number 2 & 4

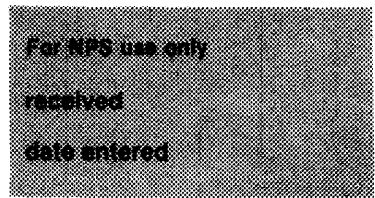
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Unless otherwise stated, all properties are in Morganfield.

<u>OWNER</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>PROPERTY</u>
Sidney Hulette, Sr.	416 S. Morgan	107-111 Main
Union Bank & Trust Co.	101 E. Main	Main & Morgan
Ross Buchanan	113 E. McElroy	109 W. Morgan
Charlene W. Cobb	6666 Bealwell Way, #20 San Diego, CA	117 N. Morgan
James L. Wathen	225 E. Spalding	100 E. Main
Martin S. Thomas	311 E. Spalding	102 E. Main
George Kurtz	Route #2, Sturgis, KY	104 E. Main
Chester A. Rudd	714 Southgate Dr.	106 E. Main
Alice Berry Young	124 E. Geiger St.	108 E. Main
Mrs. F. E. Vaughn	213 W. Main	213 W. Main 160 E. Main
Hubert Nally	215 E. Young St.	112 E. Main
Wester Auto c/o Earl Bohenkamp	116 E. Main	116 E. Main
A. B. Davis	306 S. Morgan	Old Jail and 108 Truitt St.
Morganfield National Bank	125 N. Court	Court St. drive-in window
John W. Reburn	325 E. Geiger	109 W. Main
Mason-Dyer Co.	114 W. O'Bannon	107 W. Main
Thomas A. Danhauer	523 S. Morgan	103 W. Main
Robert Lilly	326 S. Morgan	101 W. Main
Don T. Fritts	303 Valleyview Rd.	111 W. Main
John J. Hite	323 S. Church	113 W. Main
Joe B. Markham	319 W. Main St.	Court St.
Morganfield F. & AM Lodge c/o Dr. Arnold Hill	113 E. O'Bannon St.	101 N. Court
Jane M. Shipley	921 Washington Sturgis, KY	216 W. Main

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Morganfield, Kentucky

Continuation sheet Morganfield Commercial Dist. Item number 2 & 4

Unless otherwise stated, all properties are in Morganfield.

<u>OWNER</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>PROPERTY</u>
Munford Publishing Co.	212-214 W. Main	212 W. Main
S. R. Norris	Route #3, Box 157	208 W. Main
James Rakestraw	211 N. Brady St.	206 W. Main
Humane Lodge IOOF c/o Harold Franks	402 E. Geiger Morganfield, KY	202 W. Main
City of Morganfield	128 E. Main	Corner of Main & Court
Thomas R. Holt	Route #1, Box 250 Sturgis, KY	207 W. Main
D. J. B. Ware	3209 Camellia Circle Temple, TX	209 W. Main
Morganfield National Bank Trustees/ Stockton Building Trust	125 N. Court St.	211 W. Main
Veatch Furniture	217 W. Main	215-217 W. Main

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Most of Morganfield's structures are two stories in height, and they have retained an unusual percentage of their upper story details. However, few original cast iron store fronts are evident, as they were usually the first element to be altered. Some of the buildings presently sport metal awnings in place of the more tasteful cloth type, popular at the turn of the century.

One of the more significant structures within the district is the J. K. Waller Building. This elaborately detailed two and one-half story structure sits on the north side of Main Street, opposite the county courthouse (see photo 9). The building displays a variety of imaginative terra cotta trim, and proudly boasts its name and 1886 construction date near the cornice. The metal cornice is the most fanciful element, with a false pediment which contains a decorative motif in the tympanum.

East of the Waller Building stands the old National Bank of Union County building, originally established in 1869 (see photo 10). Constructed during the first quarter of the 20th Century, the bank building has retained much of its original integrity. Of special interest is the cornice, which has fine terra cotta details.

At the western end of Main Street is the Needlecraft House, one of the most impressive structures within the district. Possibly constructed as a residence, the structure resembles the town house form, more popularly found in larger cities. Few alterations have been performed on this building, which displays a fanciful pedimented cornice, with original finials at the crest. The window openings, capped by rough cut stone lintels, are set in recessed panels, decorated with brick corbeling. The attic vents were given special attention with elaborate iron grillwork. In all, this is one of the most architecturally significant buildings within the district.

Special mention should be made of the Union County Courthouse, which serves as the hub for the business area. Listed on the Register in 1978, the structure is impressive in its form (see photo 7). Constructed in 1872, the courthouse displays many classical details such as, pilasters, a stone string-course, and a denticulated and modillioned cornice. Although the structure was altered in the 1930s, the additions are sympathetic to the original.

The boundaries of the Morganfield Commercial District are very clear. Along the east, south and west edges of the district, the nature abruptly changes to residential; along the north end of Morgan Street, the area remains commercial, but contains no 19th Century buildings. The north end of Court Street, although commercial, was not included. The buildings in that area do not meet the age criteria.

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The Hanger Building is the earliest structure within the commercial district, and one of the most unique (see photos 14 & 17).

Although Union County is a heavily agricultural area and produces large amounts of corn and tobacco; coal has always been the mainstay of the economy. The county is located at the edge of the bountiful western coal fields, and also has veins of high quality cannel coal.³ Union produces over one million tons of bituminous coal annually, and is known as one of the top producers in the state.

One other factor in the county's mid-century growth must be mentioned. During this period, the slave population in Union County reached its peak. The county had one of the largest percentages of slaves in the state, and in 1860, 3,105 of the 12,791 Union Countians, were slaves. This ratio of three whites to one slave was greater than even the state percentage.

After slow beginnings during the 1840s, the maturation of the coal industry was steady for the next three decades. The Ohio River, the main source of transportation, was heavily utilized. However, not until the 1880s did the industry really develop.

In 1885, Dr. Percival Kelsey, owner of a large mining operation near the town of Curlew, helped organize the Ohio Valley Railroad Company. This line, which later became part of the Illinois-Central system, became the force behind the massive growth of the mining industry. Between 1880 and 1935, there occurred a boom in the industry, which had an effect on all of Union County.

The only setback in all this expansion occurred in 1871. During that year, a local movement to have the county seat moved from Morganfield to Uniontown, developed. So fierce did the competition between the two factions become, that the local election of a member to the State House of Representatives focused on this issue. When the final vote was tallied, Morganfield's candidate was sent to the state legislature and their title as county seat was retained.

After this in fray, to exemplify the solidity of the county seat, a new courthouse was built in 1872 (see photo 8). This imposing structure was the third of its type to sit on the public square, the first two having become obsolete. The new one best signified the new attitude of enlightenment within the community. An imposing structure, the courthouse combined the classic Revival and Italianate styles in its well executed form. The public square, on which the courthouse was constructed, was originally the physical and psychological center of the community. In Morganfield's case, one hundred years has not changed this attitude.

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Toward the end of the 19th Century, Morganfield experienced a period of expansion that coincided with the great gains made in the coal industry. In 1869 the Bank of Union County, the first in the area, opened its doors to the public. The local telephone company began serving Morganfield customers in 1885, and the town was served by electricity the following year. The public waterworks was constructed some years later in 1892.

At this point mention must be made of Mayor J. K. Waller, an element which all these previously mentioned events have in common. Mr. Waller, a local entrepreneur, had a hand in the establishment of all these local public institutions. Together with Mr. T. B. Young in 1905, Waller also organized the Morganfield and Atlanta, which later became a subsidiary of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. Although it was the second line through Union County, the Morganfield and Atlanta provided needed transportation routes for the coal industry.

Mr. Waller's drug store, constructed in 1886 (the same year he was elected mayor of Morganfield), still stands on the north side of Main Street, opposite the courthouse (see photo 9). It was, and remains, one of the most significant commercial buildings in downtown Morganfield. Although the original store front was replaced by a carrara glass front, the building is an impressive example of late 19th Century commercial architecture.

In the two decades after the opening of the first railroad line, Morganfield saw the largest population increase. In 1880, the town claimed 744 citizens. By 1910 that number had jumped to a pre 1940 high of 2,725. Seventy-five percent of Morganfield's historic commercial district developed during this period. The architecture of late 19th Century commercial buildings consists of elaborate cast iron cornices and store fronts, and some terra cotta and store trim. The Morganfield Commercial District is unusual in its variety of structures and details.

One of the more interesting buildings is the Needlecraft House located at 208 W. Main Street (see photo 3). Constructed circa 1880, this structure displays an exceptional assortment of details, made more significant by their originality. Attention is given to the upper level by fanciful attic vents, below a pedimented metal cornice. The tympanum is given emphasis by a diamond shaped pattern, and the whole effect is capped by an elaborate finial at the pediments peak.

Another key structure is the J. S. Bugg building, constructed in 1897 (see photos 16 & 17). Although slightly less fanciful than some neighboring structures, the Bugg building occupies a key site at the southeast corner of Main and Morgan Streets. Many of the original second level openings have been enclosed, but the upper floor is given emphasis by round arched, stone trimmed openings, with keystones. The openings are pulled together into a single composition by connecting stone blocks, topped by a decorative terra cotta boarder. Decorated simply with egg and dart molding, the cornice displays some Moorish style finials.

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The mining industry, which had always been the strength behind Union County's economy, continued to grow after the turn of the century. In 1902, two new mining operations opened near Morganfield. However, the boom experienced during the 1880s slowed and this was reflected in the growth of the county seat. In 1924 a double blow was dealt the mining industry. A lessening in demand for coal, and a miners' strike almost spelled disaster. Mines closed down all throughout the county, and by the 1930s coal was no longer the major force which shaped the area.

In the last fifty years, great gains have been made in the livestock industry, and Union County's economy has become centered around agriculture and livestock development. Present day Union County, with a population of around 18,000, is mainly composed of small farms averaging 135 acres in size. The livestock farms tend to be slightly larger.

Present day Morganfield has a population around 3,700. A new shopping center on the north end of town has drawn some attention from Main Street, but it continues to be a vital area. The Morganfield Commercial District is a tightly knit, viable part of the community. Although there are individual buildings of importance, the district's larger significance lies in its cohesiveness and integrity.

¹General Morgan was a Revolutionary War hero. Another account of the relationship states that O'Bannon's wife was the granddaughter of General Morgan.

²John Tyler, tenth President of the United States, had a hand in the opening up of the coal industry in Union County. In 1846 he helped organize the Kentucky Coal Company on land he owned in Union. It operated for about fourteen years.

³Cannel coal is heavy with oil, and when refined, produced a fine, clear flame. During the first part of the 19th Century, demand for this type of coal was very great in Europe.

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Unigraphic, Incorporated. A History of Union County, Kentucky. Evansville
Indiana: Courier Company, Printers, Binders, and Engravers, 1886

Workers of Kentucky Writers Project of the W.P.A. Union County Past
and Present. Louisville: 1941

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Beginning at a point on the northeast corner of the property directly east of the Morganfield Post Office (northeast corner of Main and Poplar); the boundary line runs southeast along the rear property lines of the buildings on the north side of Main for 180 feet; the line then turns southwest for 100 feet; then southeast 150 feet to encompass the empty lot at the northwest corner of Court and Main Streets, to a point on the east side of Court Street; the line then turns northeast along the east side of Court for 125 feet; the line then turns southeast along the north property line of the building at the northeast corner of Court and Short Streets, for 120 feet; then southwest 40 feet to a point on the north side of Short Street; the boundary then turns southeast along the north side of Short, for 150 feet, to a point on the east side of Morgan Street; the boundary then turns northeast along that side for 130 feet; the line then turns southeast along the north property line of the third building north of Main Street for 75 feet; it then turns southwest 40 feet; then southeast again 90 feet to encompass that structure; the line turns southwest 50 feet; then southeast 20 feet; then southwest again 200 feet, to a point on the north side of Main Street; the line then turns south along the north side of Main for 65 feet; the line then turns southwest for 200 feet along the east property line of the structure directly west of the Morganfield Municipal Building; the line then turns northeast along the rear property lines of the buildings on the south side of Main for 75 feet; the line turns northeast 40 feet; then northwest again 280 feet to a point on the west side of Morgan Street; the line then turns southwest along that side for 200 feet to a point at the southwest corner of the old jail building; the line turns northwest for 75 feet along the rear property line; the line then turns southwest 50 feet; then northwest again for 100 feet to a point on the east side of Court Street; the line then turns northeast along that side for 225 feet; the boundary then turns northwest 260 feet to encompass the buildings on the south side of Main Street; the line then turns northeast along the west property line of the commercial building at Main Street for 180 feet to a point on the north side of Main; the line then turns northwest along that side for 75 feet; the line then turns northeast 220 feet back to the point of beginning.