

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JUN 25 1980
DATE ENTERED OCT 3

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC *Mt. Sterling*
Mt. Sterling Commercial District
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER *U.S. 60*
CITY, TOWN *Sp...* VICINITY OF *Mt. Sterling* COUNTY *Montgomery* CODE *173*
STATE *Kentucky* CODE *021* COUNTY *Montgomery* CODE *173*

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"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" 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 *Multiple*
STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN VICINITY OF STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. *Montgomery County Courthouse*
STREET & NUMBER *Courthouse Square*

CITY, TOWN STATE *Mt. Sterling Kentucky*

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE *Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky*
DATE

1977-78 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS *Kentucky Heritage Commission*

CITY, TOWN STATE *Frankfort Kentucky*

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located on the northeast edge of the central Bluegrass region, Mt. Sterling (pop. 5083, 1970 census) serves as the seat of government for Montgomery County, Kentucky. Montgomery County is situated in the piedmont section of northcentral Kentucky, wedged between the foothills of eastern Kentucky and the Bluegrass counties of Clark and Bourbon to the west. Mt. Sterling is thirty miles east of Lexington.

The Mt. Sterling Commercial District encompasses the historic core of the downtown including portions of Maysville and Main streets and all of Broadway and Court Street. The district is composed of two- and three-story, load-bearing, masonry structures erected during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Of the sixty-three buildings within the district, fifty-one are contributing structures. There are two intrusive buildings, five vacant and/or parking lots, and the facade of one building destroyed by fire, totalling eight intrusions; another four buildings are non-contributing.¹

Constructed in 1959, the present pseudo-colonial courthouse (see photo 1) is the sixth such building to occupy this site, replacing an elegant 1890 Romanesque brick structure. The courthouse square is surrounded by High Street to the north, North Maysville Street on the east (see photo 2), Court Street on the south (see photo 3), and Broadway on the west (see photo 4). All government buildings were formerly located on the square until the turn of the century when the new Post Office was erected on West Main Street.

The oldest surviving structure in the district is the Montgomery County jail at the northeast corner of High and North Maysville streets (see photo 5). Built in 1815, the original jail was a two-story, four-bay brick structure laid in Flemish bond. The heavy stone section was added to the rear in 1884, and ca. 1895 a three-bay brick section was appended to the south. The detention facilities are still in use.

South of the jail, facing the square, is the Redmond building constructed in 1890 as the town's first office structure (see photos 6, 7, 8). Built in the Romanesque style, the rough-faced stone facade is punctured by flat, segmental, and rounded-arch openings. The entrance consists of a massive round arch supported by squat marble columns with foliated capitals.

The streetscape on the west side of the square is interrupted by the vacant lot at 10-12 Broadway and the remaining facade of the burned structure at 46 Broadway (see photo 10). Key buildings on this block are the municipal building constructed in 1897 and the 1878 Episcopal Church of the Ascension (listed in the National Register July 10, 1979). The municipal building is a two-story brick structure with a square tower and elaborate cornices (see photos 11 & 12). Rough-cut stone hood molds surmount the various shaped openings. Originally containing the fire department, city court facilities, and the library, the building now houses the police department and the offices of the city council (see photos 13 & 14).

¹Montgomery County and the town of Mt. Sterling were comprehensively surveyed by the Kentucky Heritage Commission in the fall and winter of 1977-78.

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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Mt. Sterling is unique in that it possesses one of the finest late nineteenth century commercial districts of any town its size in Kentucky. On the whole, downtown Mt. Sterling retains a density and compactness reflective of its nineteenth century prosperity with few modern intrusions puncturing the streetscape. Furthermore, the district contains a high concentration of distinctive commercial structures, notable for their quality of design, abundance of architectural detail, and variety of materials and surface textures. Structures such as the Redmond building, the I.O.O.F. building, the municipal building, the old Farmer's Bank, the Baumont Hotel, the D. & B. building, the Post Office, and the Newberry building on South Maysville Street provide the city with an unusual number of landmark buildings; but beyond this, Mt. Sterling is distinguished from other Kentucky county seat towns, even those that dot the inner Bluegrass region, by the standard of architectural richness and the variety found in the main stock of the town's commercial structures.

Serving as the seat of Montgomery County, Mt. Sterling was established in 1793 on land belonging to Enoch Smith, one of the area's first explorers and surveyors.¹ Although Smith and others had been in the region since the early 1780s, the constant threat of Indian attack had prevented any earlier permanent settlement.² Tradition maintains that Smith and another early settler, Hugh Forbes, are responsible for naming the town. Because of the existence of numerous Indian burial mounds in the area and one prominent mound on the site of the town, Smith favored calling the community "Little Mountain Town"; Forbes, however, argued for naming the town Stirling after the city in his native Scotland. The present name evolved as a compromise.

Mt. Sterling's location relative to the mountains of eastern Kentucky and to the central Bluegrass region of the state has been the key factor in the town's growth. During the Civil War, Mt. Sterling was strategic to both the Union and Confederate forces. As an outer Bluegrass community on the edge of the mountainous region of southeastern Kentucky, the Confederates sought to acquire Mt. Sterling as a foothold into central Kentucky; conversely the Union troops seized the town as a supply depot and garrison to prevent such an invasion. However, its location played a more lasting role in Mt. Sterling's growth during the post Civil War era when the town began to prosper from the development of the coal and timber resources of the eastern mountains. Again, because it was situated in close proximity to the yet untapped coal fields and timber forests of Appalachia while at the same time lying on the outskirts of the Bluegrass, Mt. Sterling was to become known as the "Gate City",³ serving as the major market for most

continued

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Collins, Lewis and Richard. History of Kentucky. 2 Vols. Reprint Ed.
Berea: Kentucke Imprints, 1976.

Garr, Elisabeth Headley. The History of Kentucky Courthouses. National
Society of the Colonial Dames of America, 1972.

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Approx. 2 acres

UTM NOT VERIFIED

QUADRANGLE NAME Mount Sterling Quadrangle

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A | 1, 6 | 2 4 1 8 6 5 | 4 2 1 6 0 9 0

B | 1, 6 | 2 4 1 8 9 0 | 4 2 1 6 0 1 0

ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C | 1, 6 | 2 4 1 9 9 5 | 4 2 1 6 0 3 0

ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D | 1, 6 | 2 4 2 0 1 0 | 4 2 1 6 0 0 0

E | 1, 6 | 2 4 1 9 8 0 | 4 2 1 5 9 9 0

F | 1, 6 | 2 4 1 9 8 0 | 4 2 1 5 9 4 0

G | 1, 6 | 2 4 1 9 2 0 | 4 2 1 5 9 3 0

H | 1, 6 | 2 4 1 9 4 0 | 4 2 1 5 8 4 0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Boundaries are outlined in red on the Montgomery County Property Identification Map M-7, including all or portions of lots 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, and 17.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Charlotte Schneider/Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Kentucky Heritage Commission

DATE

June 1980

STREET & NUMBER

104 Bridge Street

TELEPHONE

(502) 564-3741

CITY OR TOWN

Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Donna C. Hopkins

TITLE

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer 6-17-80

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

10/3/80

ATTEST:

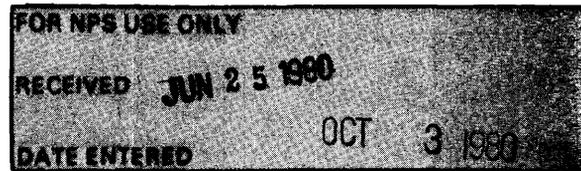
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE

9/29/80

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Main Street, Mt. Sterling's east-west artery, displays the highest concentration and greatest variety of facades within the district (see photos 15 & 16). Highlights of the north side of East Main are No. 15-21 and the J. C. Penny building. Both are 2½-story buildings with semi-circular gables, brick corbelling, and rough-cut stone trim around the windows. At the extreme eastern end of the block is the Methodist Episcopal Church South, an 1883 Gothic Revival structure displaying pointed arch windows, recessed surfaces, and corbelled brickwork. The church spire has been removed from the square tower at the southwest corner of the church (see photo 17).

The south side of this block is perhaps the most visually pleasing streetscape within the district (see photos 18 & 19). The Baumont Hotel (see photo 20) at 24-30 East Main is a triple arrangement displaying rounded-arch windows, an oriel window, brick corbelling, and an elaborate corbelled parapet terminating the central section. The three stone facades at 16, 14, and 8 East Main are rare for a town this size. The three-story Baum building at 16 E. Main reveals segmental arch windows with stone vouissers, stone pilasters, and a projecting bracketed cornice. No. 14, the D. & B. building, exhibits a less cluttered facade with two wide segmental arch windows and a narrower central bay. A gabled pediment completes the facade. The Oddfellows building (see photo 21) at 8 East Main reveals a wide arched entrance spanning the entire width of the building. Squat stone columns support the arch. Rounded buttresses terminating in conical pinnacles visually strengthen the building, while an elaborate metal gable surmounts the structure.

At the western edge of the district on the north side of West Main is the First United Presbyterian Church. Erected in 1883, the brick structure, like the Methodist Church, adheres to a fairly standard late-nineteenth century evangelical scheme with the predominant mode being Gothic (see photo 22).

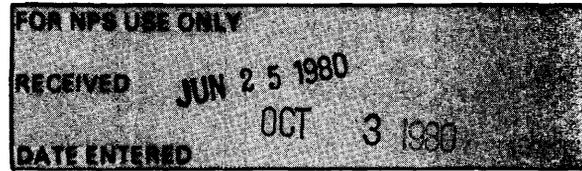
Across the street from the First United Presbyterian Church and obscured by a 1920s addition is the old Presbyterian church. Embodying the nave plan, the gable-end structure was four bays deep (see photo 23).

On the north side of West Main adjacent to the First United Presbyterian Church is the 1911 yellow brick Post Office designed by James Knox Taylor in the Classical Revival style (see photo 24). The slightly recessed entrance is dominated by Roman Doric columns. All openings are round headed. An elaborate entablature with wide eaves and a bracketed cornice complete the design. The hipped roof is composed of green tiles.

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On the southwest corner of West Main and Bank Streets is the Farmer's Bank (see photos 25 & 26). The two-story, three-bay brick building is faced with stone and highlighted by pilaster strips. A polychromatic slate mansard roof gives the building a Second Empire quality.

With the exception of the slipcover facade on the Newberry building at the southwest corner of Main and Maysville streets, the south side of West Main between Maysville and Bank streets presents a lively streetscape (see photo 27). Of particular note is the Mt. Sterling National Bank, constructed in 1971 to duplicate while enlarging the original structure. Such sensitivity and the high quality of design are extremely rare. Composed of brick with concrete and stone trim, the facade of the two-story building is characterized by four engaged Tuscan columns. A false parapet surmounts the building.

Nos. 18-20 West Main Street are two buildings constructed as one unit. The brick structure displays stone quoins and elaborate arched semi-circular gables and cornices. No. 20 retains the original cast iron storefront (see photo 28).

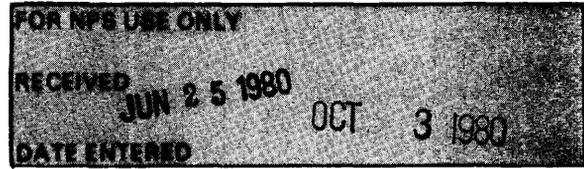
South Maysville between Main and Locust exhibits equally rich and visually stimulating qualities to the pedestrian (see photos 29, 30, & 31). On the west side, Nos. 36-38 and 52 are important buildings due to the retention of the elegant cast iron storefronts (see photos 32 & 33). Furthermore, the second stories have not been altered and thus retain the original cast iron hood molds. No. 36-38 also has an elaborate iron cornice and semi-circular gable. The pilasters are all that remain of the original storefront at No. 32-34, but the cast iron hood molds and cornice have been retained. The building has a mansard roof with patterned slates and a hip-roofed dormer (see photo 34). The Newberry building at 14 South Maysville, constructed in 1886, is a three-story brick structure composed of two units. Recessed surfaces, brick corbelling, and an intricate cornice with a balustrade and pedimented gable are the major features (see photo 35).

While downtown Mt. Sterling is fortunate in possessing an abundance of unusually outstanding and well-preserved commercial buildings, it is the overall, composite streetscape and the pleasing manner in which the structures interrelate that distinguish this from any other small late nineteenth century town center. On the whole, most of the buildings have not been seriously altered in the twentieth century with the result that much of the intricate architectural detail has been preserved. Buildings with original cast iron storefronts intact (see photo 36), elaborate cast iron hood molds and cornices, brick corbelling, stone trim (see photos 37 & 38), and a variety of window treatments (see photo 39) characterize the district. One interest-

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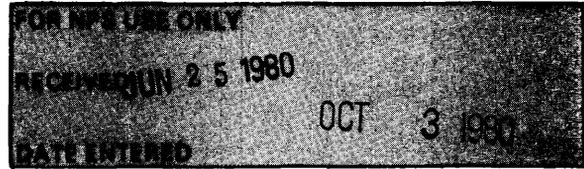
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PAGE

ing element that is represented throughout the district is the use of the semi-circular gable to adorn many of the buildings, giving even the smaller scaled structures an unusual degree of sophistication. All in all, Mt. Sterling is one of the best preserved small town centers in Kentucky.

The nominated acreage includes the historic core of the downtown business section of Mt. Sterling which encompasses the heaviest concentration of contributing structures.

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LIST OF INTRUSIONS

NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS

Grocery, Northwest Corner of N. Wilson
& E. Main Sts.

Exchange Bank, Northeast Corner of
Maysville & Main Sts.

Trader's Bank Annex, 33 N. Maysville

Newberry's, Southwest Corner of Main
& Maysville

INTRUSIONS

Goodyear Lot, Southeast Corner
of S. Maysville & Locust

Lot, 22-24 S..Maysville

Lot, 40-42 S. Maysville

Lot, 58 S. Maysville

Belk-Simpson Store, Southeast
Corner Bank & West Main

Lot, 10-12 Broadway

Facade, 46 Broadway

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Mt. Sterling Commercial District
Montgomery County
Kentucky

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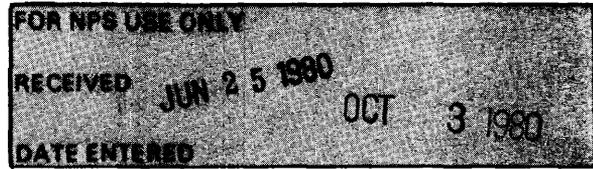
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- 1) Mt. Sterling is properly spelled and recognized as Mt. Sterling; it is not Mount Sterling.
- 2) The intrusions on the west side of South Maysville are two vacant lots where buildings have been recently demolished. These are shown in photos 29 and 30. The intrusion on the northeast corner of South Maysville and East Locust is the Goodyear building and lot. The building is shown in photos 29 and 31. South Maysville is extended to its logical terminus at Locust as these intrusions do not seriously detract from the overall cohesiveness of the block. Please note Item #7, paragraph 2 and the List of Intrusions.
- 3) The property identification map has been amended to indicate the direction from which key streetscapes were taken.

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of eastern Kentucky.

As early as 1861, reports of the coal deposits in the mountains of eastern Montgomery County (present-day Menifee County) were published, and small amounts of coal were already being mined in the area.⁴ In 1872, the Elizabethtown, Lexington, and Big Sandy Railroad was completed to Mt. Sterling, linking the town to Lexington and thereby opening the way for Mt. Sterling to become the principal trade center for the coal interests of eastern Kentucky. An 1878 geological study cited the nearness to market as an important factor in the consideration of the economic value of coal to the region.⁵ The first rail line eastward from Mt. Sterling into these coal fields was the Mt. Sterling Coal Road Company (later the Kentucky & South Atlantic Railroad), financed by Mt. Sterling merchant Adam Baum. This was a narrow gauge line running approximately twelve miles from Mt. Sterling to Rothwell, six miles west of Frenchburg in Menifee County.

Although this initial venture tapped only the thinner coal veins along the western fringe of the vast coal fields, by 1878 this small railway was supplying central Kentucky with coal via the Mt. Sterling market. As the tremendous economic potential of the coal fields unfolded, businessmen began planning for a rail network throughout southeastern Kentucky to serve the industry. By the mid 1880s, the Elizabethtown, Lexington, and Big Sandy Railroad was completed eastward from Mt. Sterling to Ashland, and Mt. Sterling was clearly established as the principal town of eastern Kentucky. "No other town. . . has as much enterprise and general business. It is the distributing point for a large territory, and is increasing in size and importance very rapidly."⁶ Indeed by 1895, the town was so advanced as to have a local telephone exchange, and it was during this period, beginning in the mid eighties, that the majority of the town's impressive commercial buildings were erected. Several churches were built, the early nineteenth century jail was expanded in 1883, the Redmond building was completed in 1890, the D. & B. building and Oddfellows Hall in 1891, a new courthouse in 1892, and the municipal building in 1897.

By the early twentieth century, coal was firmly established as the primary industry in eastern Kentucky, and concurrent with its growth came the development and expansion of the railroad system to transport the valuable mineral from the heretofore inaccessible mountains of southeastern Kentucky. The smaller, independent railroads merged into larger systems such as the Chesapeake and Ohio and the Louisville and Nashville lines. Thus as the industry expanded, Mt. Sterling ceased to serve as pivotal a role

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as it had in the initial development of eastern Kentucky. Nevertheless, much of the physical impact of Mt. Sterling's former prominence remains visible today in the elegant commercial structures erected in the height of its prosperity.

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FOOTNOTES

¹National Register nomination for "Enoch Smith House," approved by State Review Board, 11 March 1980.

²National Register Nomination for "Ralph Morgan Stone House," (listed on National Register, April 10, 1980), Montgomery County, Kentucky.

³Headlight: Sights and Scenes Along the C. & O. Route, Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, (Cincinnati, Ohio, Headlight Souvenir Co.).

⁴Elmer G. Sulzer, "Kentucky's Abandoned Railroads, No. 7-Back in the Menifee Hills," The Kentucky Engineer, (n.p.), p. 11.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Kentucky State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1883-84, p. 501.

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Headlight: Sights and Scenes Along the C. & O. Route, Mt. Sterling, Kentucky.
Cincinnati, Ohio. Headlight Souvenir Co.

Kentucky State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1879-80; 1883-84; 1895-96.

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"Kentucky's Abandoned Railroads." The Kentucky Engineer. Elmer G. Sulzer.

Lipscomb, Alexander B. The Commercial History of The Southern States. Louisville:
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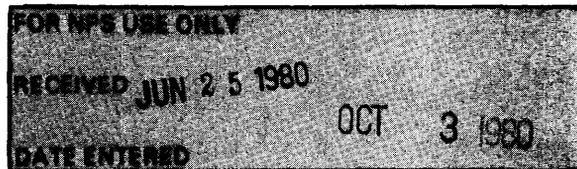
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20 June 1961, pp. 6-7.

"The First Presbyterian Church of Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, 1795-1955." Mt. Sterling,
Kentucky, 1955.

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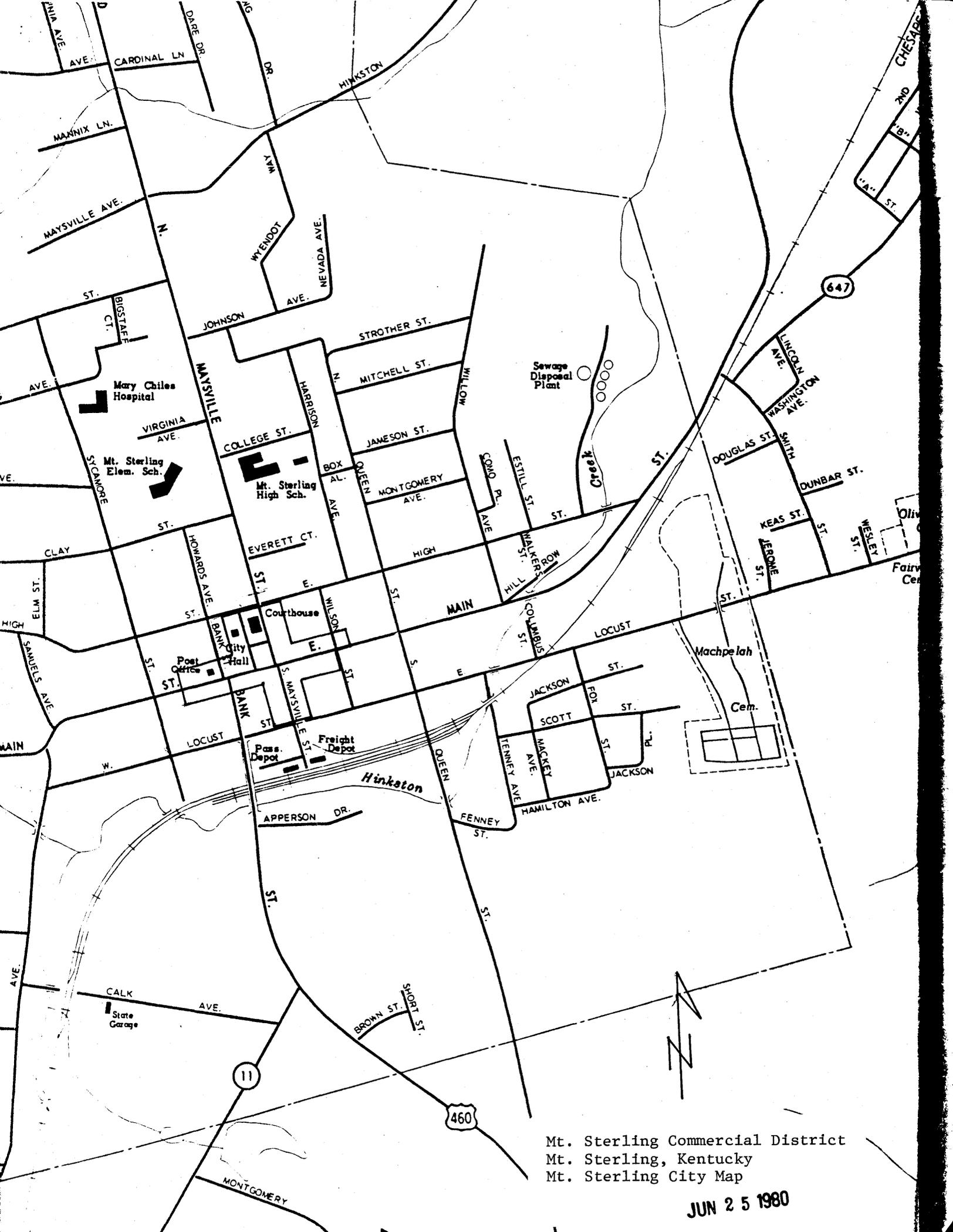
Mt. Sterling Commercial District
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UTM References continued: I. 16/241840/4215820
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K. 16/241630/4215860
L. 16/241620/4215900
M. 16/241680/4215920
N. 16/241670/4215950
O. 16/241760/4215980
P. 16/241740/4216060



Mt. Sterling Commercial District
Mt. Sterling, Kentucky
Mt. Sterling City Map

JUN 25 1980

Mt. Sterling Commercial District
Mt. Sterling, Kentucky
Property Identification Map
Ky. Department of Revenue
Map M-7

Blue numbers keyed to photo
numbers.

OCT 3 1980

Intrusions -- Brown JUN 25 1980

Non-contributing -- Orange

