

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**DATA SHEET**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUL 17 1975
DATE ENTERED	APR 2 1976

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

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

**\* \* \*** Constitution Square Historic District

AND/OR COMMON

Same

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Boundaries as shown on annexed USGS Map

—NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Danville

— VICINITY OF

06

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Kentucky

CODE

021

COUNTY

Boyle

CODE

021

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Multiple public and private

STREET & NUMBER

City of Danville

CITY, TOWN

Danville

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Boyle County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

West Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Danville

STATE

Kentucky

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky (Supplement)

DATE

1974

—FEDERAL  STATE —COUNTY —LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN

Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

---

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

The present historic district encompasses eight acres, more or less, focussed upon Constitution Square. The Square is a public park owned and maintained by the State. It includes replicas of the three original buildings on the Old Public Square in which were held the meetings that formed the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and the relocated and reconstructed original building that housed the first U. S. Post Office west of the Alleghenies (see Congressional Record, Thursday, October 11, 1951). The square is surrounded by nine structures which are important to city, state, and nation. These include log, frame, and brick construction. Among these are:

- c. 1786 - Grayson Tavern
- c. 1790 - The Apothecary Shop (previously listed on the National Register).
- c. 1790 - Ayres Silversmith Shop
- c. 1802 - Ephraim McDowell House (listed on the National Register prior to the National Preservation Act of 1966 as a National Historic Landmark).
- c. 1810 - Alban Gold Smith House
- c. 1816 - Fisher's Row Houses (Blue Row)
- c. 1816 - Watt-Bell House
- c. 1820 - Brick Schoolhouse
- c. 1820 - Brick Dependency

There are two intrusions in the district which are part of the Urban Renewal project. They are doctors' offices, constructed this year, located to the north and south of the Ephraim McDowell House.

#### Description of Boundaries of Historic District (see U. S. G. S. Map).

Bounded on the north by Main Street, on the east by rear property lines east of First Street. On the south by property lines north of Walnut Street, and on the west by rear property lines west of Second Street.

The original appearance is known on all the buildings mentioned above and quite a lot of the original woodwork is still intact.

# 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" 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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Constitution Square Historic District is significant, not only as the birthplace of Danville, but as the birthplace of the Commonwealth of Kentucky as well. In 1783, Kentucky was formed into a district and a court was established the same year. The first session was held in Harrodsburg, but it was later moved to Danville because of its more central location. Isaac Hite was instructed to build a courthouse for the district on two lots of land in Danville in 1785. The courthouse became the permanent quarters of the Supreme Court of Kentucky. The site of the courthouse became the public square, the center of Danville, and the center of political thought in the State.

The original public square laid out in 1785, was divided into two lots; the northern portion held the meeting house and the southern portion the courthouse. The first courthouse was constructed of logs and was the site of a series of constitutional conventions which took place between 1785-1792 when a constitution was planned and adopted. These conventions led to Kentucky County's separation from Virginia. The climax was reached at the last convention in 1792, when a constitution was framed and adopted. A few years later a two-story brick courthouse was constructed on the site of the original building. The history of the square between the time of the dissolution of the District Court in 1792 and 1817, is uncertain. Since the buildings on the public square no longer served the purpose of the citizens of Danville, the trustees of the town decided in 1817 to sell part of the land which composed the square and use the money to build Danville Academy. The western third of the square (now fronting Second Street) was sold for this purpose. Upon this land a market house was constructed. Apparently the idea of a Danville academy only worked out on paper, for there is no record of one ever being formed). In 1823, the town trustees sold the portion of the square fronting Main Street and several houses were erected.

In 1817, the trustees allowed the Masons to have free use of the courthouse building. In 1828 the lot and building were sold to the Masons. They in turn sold it to the Methodists in 1834, who sold it to Reverend J. Adams in 1835. Reverend Adams acquired two additional lots on the square and established a female academy. Shortly afterwards, the Danville Theological Seminary (founded in 1828) was located there until approximately 1878. (An 1870 map of Danville shows five buildings on the east portion of the square (now the State Park) which composed the Danville Theological Seminary. These buildings are no longer in existence with perhaps the exception of the brick dependency (see #8, page 3). In 1937, Emma Weisinger deeded the land to the Commonwealth of Kentucky in memory of her brother John G. Weisinger. At this time, the original two-thirds of the public square (on east side) became a State Park.

(continued)

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Cherry, Thomas Crittenden. Kentucky, The Pioneer State. D. C. Heath & Co., New York, 1923.  
 Clark, Thomas D.. Kentucky: Land of Contrast, Harper & Row Co., New York, 1968.  
 Collins, Richard H.. Historical Sketches of Kentucky, Louisville, 1877.  
 Fackler, Calvin Morgan. Early Days in Danville, The Standard Printing Co., Louisville, 1941.  
 Polk, Dr. Jefferson, Autobiography of Dr. J. J. Polk: Occasional Writings and Biographies of Worthy Men & Women of Boyle County, Kentucky, Louisville: John P. Morton & Co., 1867.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approx. 8 acres

UTM REFERENCES

		610			
D A	1,6	6,9,6	2,6,0	4,1,6,8	6,2,0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING	
B C	1,6	6,9,6	7,8,0	4,1,6,8	5,0,0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING	
A B	1,6	6,9,6	7,8,0	4,1,6,8	6,2,0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING	
C D	1,6	6,9,6	6,2,0	4,1,6,8	5,0,0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING	

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Mrs. Joe A. Wallace and George Grider

MC:WEL

ORGANIZATION

Danville & Boyle County Foundation for Historic Preservation

DATE

6-30-71

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Danville

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.

SIGNATURE

*Clared W. Melton*

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

7-14-75

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

*Acting*

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

4/2/78

ATTEST:

*Robert B. Ketting*  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

3-29-76

*Acting*

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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Constitution Square Historic District

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

The early town of Danville developed around the Public Square, thus these buildings in the proposed district represent the oldest in Danville. They include all phases of early Danville life. There are several houses which belonged to prominent members of the Danville community along with a tavern, a schoolhouse, and a silversmith's shop. All these structures along with Constitution Square combine to form an integral part of Danville's early history and the early political history of the State of Kentucky. Of these buildings, three of them have been funded by H. U. D. for historic restoration (one of which is famed Grayson Tavern). These and others are on property under contract for purchase by the Kentucky Department of Parks from the local Urban Renewal Historic District. Numerous buildings in the District will be used and restored by either the Kentucky Department of Parks the American Association of University Women in conjunction with the Board of Education; or purchased and restored by the Danville and Boyle County Foundation for Historic Preservation for adaptive usage through resale or lease.

The Ayres Silversmith Shop is a two-story frame structure which has been recently restored. It is located on the northwest corner of the proposed district. The shop faces north, fronting on Main Street. The front entrance is located in the center of the facade. The front door has five horizontal panels and a three-light transom above (see photo 1). The Ayres Silversmith shop is probably the oldest building on Main Street, perhaps dating prior to 1790. The Ayres brothers, Thomas, a silversmith, and Samuel, a dentist, purchased the house in 1833 from Dr. Jefferson Polk (see Alban Gold Smith House, #8, page 3). Thomas Ayres made most of the old silver in and around Danville. He later moved to Iowa, but silversmith George Sharp kept up the business. The building is presently used as an office for a real estate agency. To the east of the silversmith shop, a new one-story doctor's office has been constructed (isolating the house from the proposed district).

Fisher's Row Houses are located on the northeast corner of the proposed district. They face west, looking onto Constitutional Square. They consist of two, two-story brick structures joined together by a common wall. The brick is laid in Flemish bond and rests on field stone foundations (see photo 4). They are presently being restored. The row houses were constructed by Jeremiah Fisher in 1817. They were built for the purpose of renting and were popular residences at that time. Fisher sold the houses in 1850 and their use after that date is uncertain.

The Watt-Bell House is adjacent to Fisher's Row Houses and also faces west looking onto Constitution Square. It is a two-story brick structure with the bricks laid in Flemish bond, with queen closers at the ends. The house is asymmetrical (see photo 4). Originally the house appears to have had a public use. Off the entrance hall to the left is one large room downstairs and upstairs. In the back of the entrance hall is an original outside door with

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four horizontal panels over two vertical ones. In many places the original chair railing remains along with the original wattle-and-daub plaster. The Watt-Bell House is also in the process of being restored. The house was built in 1816 by William Watts. A year later it was purchased by David Bell, a leading Danville merchant. His son, Joshua Fry Bell (1811-1870) lived many years here. Joshua Bell was a distinguished lawyer and politician. In 1845 he was elected to Congress. He served as Secretary of State under Governor Crittenden in 1850 and in 1859 he ran for Governor, but was defeated. The last office he held was as member of the Kentucky legislature, 1864-1867. It was at Bell's house that the first meeting of the Danville Literary and Social Club was held in 1839. Most of the original members were Centre College faculty.

A few hundred feet south of the Watt-Bell House is a building known as the brick schoolhouse. This structure also faces west, looking onto Constitutional Square. It is a one-story, two-room brick structure. The bricks are laid in common bond on a field-stone foundation. The front door is off-center and has a one-light transom above (see photo 7). Very little is known about the construction date of the schoolhouse or its early history. It is, however, an early building and according to local tradition it is believed to have been operated as a private school.

The school is situated a few yards to the rear of Grayson Tavern. The tavern is located on the southeast corner of the proposed district. It faces south, fronting East Walnut Street. Constitution Square is to the west side of the tavern. It is a two-story ell-shaped frame building. The tavern has two entrances, one in the front and one to the side. The floor plan is asymmetrical. The front door has three horizontal panels at the top and two vertical panels at the bottom. There is a five-light transom above (see photo 8). The side door is identical to the front with the exception of the absence of the transom and the addition of four sidelights. The tavern was built circa 1785 by Benjamin Grayson. It was operated as a tavern for a number of years and was a popular gathering place for those who attended the constitutional conventions.

The Danville Political Club frequently met here for their discussions and meals. The Political Club was formed in 1786 by leading men in the area and their purpose was to discuss the political issues of the day. The club was important in molding the political sentiment of the area.

To the west of Grayson's Tavern, is a small one-story brick dependency that faces west (see photo 11). It is on the southern portion of Constitution Square. The brick is laid in common bond on a field stone foundation. It has interior chimneys at each end and a cornice of three rows of corbelled brick. There are two front entrances side-by-side in the center of the facade. The construction date and original use of the building is uncertain, but is an old building and it is probable that it was constructed as part of the Danville Theological Seminary.

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It is presently used as the caretaker's cottage of Constitution Square.

The Alban Gold Smith House is located on the southwest corner of the proposed district and the original public square facing west on Second Street. The house is a story-and-a-half brick structure. The facade is laid in Flemish bond, while the side and back are laid in common. The front entrance is located in the center of the facade and has wooden panels on the sides and above. There are interior chimneys at each end with corbelled tops. Three gables and elongated windows were added to the facade of the house at a much later date (see photo 13). The house was built prior to 1820. For a number of years the house was the residence of Dr. Alban Gold Smith, a prominent surgeon and lecturer. Dr. Gold Smith was an assistant and a pupil of Dr. Ephraim McDowell. He assisted Dr. McDowell as he performed the first ovariectomy, a far-reaching step in medical and surgical history, on Jane Crawford in 1809. His connection with Dr. McDowell terminated around 1826. Dr. Gold Smith later moved to Louisville and in 1833 procured a charter for the "Medical Institute" which was the beginning of the University of Louisville Medical School. In 1837 he moved to New York and became a renowned surgeon and lecturer. After studying a few years in Europe, he learned the technique of lithotomy and was the first one to perform such surgery in Kentucky or in the United States. Dr. Jefferson Polk purchased Dr. Gold Smith's house in December 1827. Dr. J. J. Polk was born in Scott County, Kentucky in March 1802. He later moved to Lexington, Kentucky and worked for Thomas T. Skilman's printing company. Shortly after marrying Eliza Tod of Lexington, he moved to Danville, Kentucky in 1826. The same year Polk bought the Olive Branch, a Danville newspaper founded in 1820, by James Armstrong. During the cholera scourge in 1833, he developed an interest in the practice of medicine. In 1839, he attended medical school in Lexington. After a year of study he returned to Danville and began a full practice. In the fall of 1840, Dr. Polk moved ten miles west of Danville to Perryville, Kentucky.

Across the street from the Gold Smith House, facing east on Second Street is another new one-story doctor's office. The Dr. Ephraim McDowell House and Apothecary Shop is north of the new structure (see photo 14 and 15). The house faces Constitution Square. This two-story frame house and brick apothecary shop has already been listed on the National Register (prior to the National Preservation Act of 1966) and is a National Historic Landmark.

In the center of the proposed historic district is Constitution Square State Park established in 1937. The Square is a State owned and maintained park. On the park are replicas of three original buildings, one of which served as the first Kentucky district courthouse in 1785 (see photo 17). These buildings were the site of the constitutional conventions held in Danville between 1785-1792, that led to the formation of the State of Kentucky in 1792. To the north of the Square is the relocated original building which houses the First U. S. Post Office west of the Alleghenies (see photo 18).

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No documentation of the locations of the original courthouse, jail, and meeting house exists. Although the replicas of the three original buildings in the square were not constructed on the original foundations, an attempt was made to locate them as authentically as possible. The recollections of the oldest citizens in Danville, at the time, were a major source of information in constructing the three buildings.



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Historic Archaeology

A preliminary archaeological survey was conducted at Constitution Square, primarily to observe the quantity and types of artifacts present on the surface. Numerous artifacts were recovered and will be discussed briefly in major categories.

The earliest ceramics collected were various sherds of pearlware, in green shell-edged, blue and brown banded, monochrome blue, and undecorated. Ironstone was present in blue monochrome, a rim sherd with a thin gold band, and two sherds of undecorated from England. These latter sherds were from John Maddock & Sons (post 1891) and Johnson Brothers (post 1883).

Stoneware was discovered in forms of brown and white salt-glazed, some with white exterior and brown interior and a single sherd with a sky blue, painted interior.

Miscellaneous earthenwares consisted of a Rockingham-type rim sherd, yellow wares, a "dark" yellow ware with a linear relief design in brown, and sherds of the flow blue type.

Porcelain was collected in forms of underglazed blue designs, a platter sherd with a border decoration in a grey green, as well as undecorated. Other artifacts of a ceramic nature recovered at Constitution Square were a bisque doll's head and a molded, glazed bowl fragment of a clay smoking pipe. A vestige of a foot or "heel" is present on the base of the bowl, however no maker's mark is present on the fragment. Although various works on smoking pipes were consulted, none illustrated were similar in design to that found. General characteristics indicate that it is likely of 19th century origin.

Glass artifacts collected from the surface included a fragment of flat sheet glass measuring only  $\frac{1}{32}$ " in thickness, five fragments of sun colored amethyst glass (c. 1880-1914), a heavy dark brown fragment from a bottle with embossing "NNAT" (probably Cincinnati), and a post 1929 medicinal bottle from the Owens-Illinois glass works plant number 9.

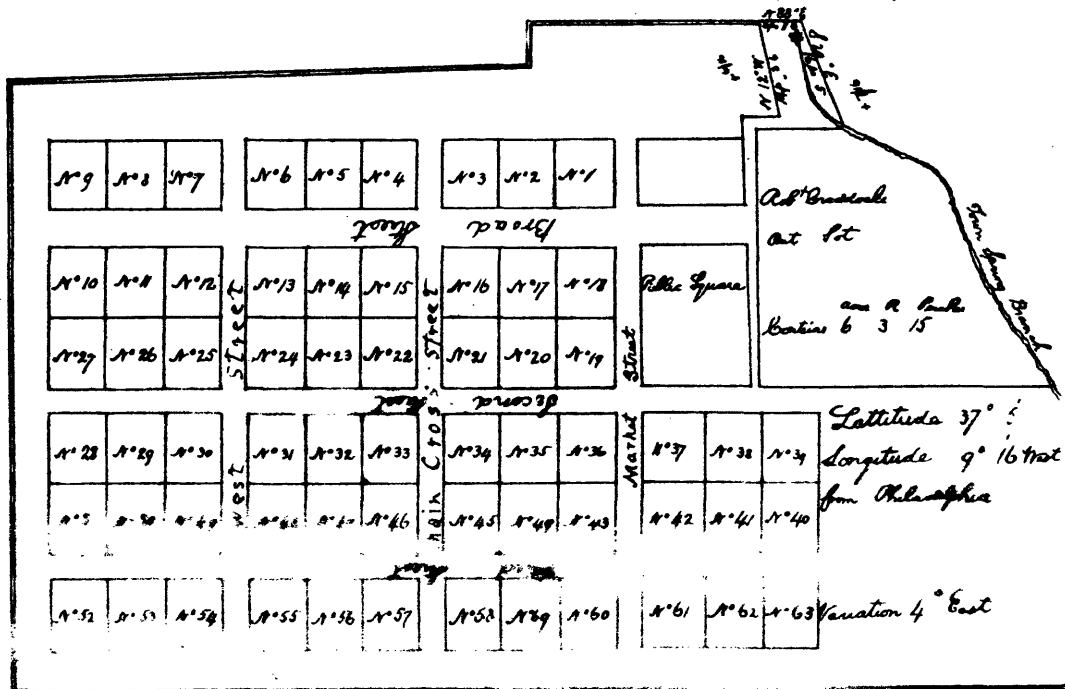
Also found was a bone-handled toothbrush with "(H.) E. Samuel Danville, KY" inscribed on its handle. All artifacts collected are currently stored at the archaeological facilities of the Kentucky Heritage Commission in Frankfort.

As viewed from the standpoint of historical archaeology, Constitution Square appears quite rich and could be researched and developed extensively in this vein.

Copied from *Inventory*

Early Days in Danville, by L'Abine Morgan Frazier  
published: Knoxville, The Standard Printing Co - 1941

A Plan of the Town of Danville  
Laid off the 14<sup>th</sup> day of September Anno Domini 1785 and re-surveyed by order of the  
Commissioners appointed by the Board of Trustees by John Thomas P.M.C.  
June 7<sup>th</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> 1797



ORIGINAL PLAT OF DANVILLE, N.C.



N

First Street

MAIN STREET

~

front facade

Ayres  
1  
silvermine

new  
doctor's  
office  
2

Apothecary  
Shop

11

10  
E. McDowell  
House

new  
doctor's  
office  
9

SECOND STREET

16

Intrusion  
to be  
demo.

12

relocated  
P.O.

13

replica of  
meeting house

14

replica of  
original  
jail

15

replica of  
courthouse

8

Dr. Alban  
Goldsmith House

Brick  
depot  
7

First Street (closed off)

3  
4

Fisher's  
Row  
Houses  
Wells-  
Bell  
House

5

Brick Schoolhouse

6  
6A

Grayson's  
Tavern  
four facade

Walnut Street

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Legend of the Sketch Map

1. Ayres Silversmith Shop (photo 1).
2. A new one-story doctor's office.
3. Fisher's Row Houses (Blue Row) (photo 4).
4. ~~Alban Gold Smith House (photo 6).~~ *Watts-Bell House*
5. Brick Schoolhouse (photo 7).
6. Grayson Tavern (photo 8).
- 6 A. The reconstructed kitchen for Grayson Tavern (photo 8).
7. Brick Dependency (photo 11).
8. The Dr. Alban Goldsmith House (photo 13).
9. A new one-story doctor's office.
10. The Ephraim McDowell House (photo 14).
11. The Apothecary Shop (photo 15).
12. The relocated original building that housed the first U.S. Post Office west of the Alleghenies (photo 18).
13. A replica of the first meeting house circa 1784.
14. A replica of the original jail (photo 16).
15. A replica of the courthouse used by the Supreme Court of District of Kentucky and by the Constitutional Convention (photo 17).
16. An intrusion which is to be torn down in the near future.