city, town

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms

For NPS use only SEP 1 9 1556 received date entered

OCT 1 6 1986 Type all entries—complete applicable sections Name HOWARD BROTHERS' STORE historic **Howardstown Store or Head Grocery** and or common Location General Delivery (Post Office in Store) street & number not for publication Howardstown vicinity of city, town Kentucky 021 Nelson state code county code Classification Status Category Ownership **Present Use** X occupied district _ public agriculture museum X private X building(s) X commercial _ unoccupied park structure both __ work in progress educational private residence Public Acquisition _ site Accessible entertainment religious _ object in process _ yes: restricted government scientific NA being considered _ yes: unrestricted industrial _ transportation no military other: Owner of Property name Charles W. Bell, Jr., and Marie E. Bell street & number General Delivery (Telephone: 502/549-3513) Howardstown vicinity of city, town Kentucky 40028 **Location of Legal Description** Nelson County Office & Records Annex (Deedbook #233, pp. 66-68) courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. 113 East Stephen Foster Avenue street & number Bardstown Kentucky 40004 state city, town Representation in Existing Surveys 6. KY Historic Resources Inventory (#NE-159) has this property been determined eligible? title **Spring**, 1978 federal county date Kentucky Heritage Council depository for survey records **Frankfort** Kentucky 40601

state

7. Description Condition excellent deteriorated Check one X unaltered X original site

moved

date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

ruins

_ unexposed

good

fair

altered

The Howard Brothers' Store is a four-bay building of two-and-one-half stories constructed of weatherboarded frame. Although it has undergone several minor changes since initial construction in 1899, such as shed-porch roof section applied to right side (facing) and, more recently, addition of the post office entrance where original show windows filled that section between pilasters, the primary facade remains remarkably intact. It is a unique case of survival for this large, multi-function commercial building in a small rural town. In addition, it is remarkable among turn-of-the-century commercial buildings in its design, (photo 5), the primary facade emulating castiron storefronts, but constructed in wood, and the rear gable end pierced by windows to allow additional light into the long, narrow interior divisions of the building (photos 13 and 16).

The store is located at Howardstown, a remote, cross-roads community in southern Nelson County, which geologically lies at the westernmost extreme of the Outer Bluegrass Region of Kentucky, approximately fifty miles south of Louisville. The Howardstown area is located in a physiographic region known as the Kentucky "Knobs," conical hills of shale, rising 300 - 400 feet above the valleys. The Knobs are often called "The Little Smokies" by residents and Howardstown is located in the valley of the Rolling Fork River. Arable, level ground constitutes about one-third of the total, and farming is confined to the valley floor, while most steep hills are covered in hardwood timber. Famous for its richness and yield when first cleared by the pioneers, the Rolling Fork Valley remains a high producer of corn, tobacco, and other grain crops. The level floor of the serpentine main valley varies from one-half to approximately one mile wide in the Howardstown area.

The cross-roads village is located at the extreme, eastern side of the valley more than one-half mile from the Rolling Fork, that southernmost branch of the extensive Salt River system. It is characteristic of late 19th century rural Kentucky villages. Howardstown is made physically remote by distance and terrain, lying eight miles from the nearest county town, New Haven, and more than 21 miles from the county seat, Bardstown, Kentucky. In recent years, a new bridge and highway made it possible to reach White City, four miles distant, and the county seat of neighboring Larue County, Hodgenville, about nine miles, due west, previously inaccessible because of the river.

The store structure is rectangular, 54' wide by 75' long, two-and-one-half stories in height. Built of native wood, the frame structure incorporated an earlier store, 24' by 50'. This smaller building had been moved in 1899 from a location one-half mile from the present site. An extensive addition resulted in this single free-standing building, under a gabled, tin cover roof. The roof peak runs lengthwise and is capped with a decorative ridge displaying a reticulated heart motif. The entire building is sheathed with native poplar clapboard, five inches show. The decorative storefronts, pilasters, brackets, moldings, cornices, doors, shutters, window trim, and sashes are also fashioned of tulip poplar (photos 21 thru 24).

The older section on the north side (right facing) has produced a curious imbalance in the eaves and interior levels. The north eave is built approximately five feet lower than the south eave. Even the ridge peak is out of center to the total width of the structure. This resultant, quasi-saltbox profile is very apparent on the gabled back wall of the store. It shows different window placement caused by higher ceilings in the addition on both first and second floors (photos 11 and 16). The ground floor has a 12 foot ceiling compared to nine feet in the original portion.

8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 1800–1899 1900–	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric archeology-historic agriculture X architecture art X commerce communications	community planning conservation conservation conomics condition co	landscape architectur law literature military music t politics/government	re religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	1880 - 1900	Builder/Architect Boo	ne C. Howard/Sam I. H	loward

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Howard Brothers' Store, finished to present form in 1900, 1 is certainly one of the finest rural, turn-of-the-century, wooden, commercial structures in all Kentucky. The architecture is remarkably successful while being unique and flamboyant. It falls under the general classification of late Victorian commercial design reflecting Eastlake and other innovators of the period. While the store facade takes something from furniture forms of the period, there is no known similar example with which to compare when analyzing the combination of design elements melded together to form this structure. 2

The evolution of this emporium created design problems, and according to the known facts and local oral attribution Sam I. Howard, one of the "Howard Brothers" was the masterful designer with the solution. The brother of Sam I. Howard was Boone C. Howard and is credited as a master carpenter and joiner who executed the special cabinets and shelves still extant inside the building. He is surely responsible for the exceptional work in the facade and may also have played a part in the store's design. Huge, even by modern standards, this design culmination has achieved so much, both subtle and functional, in a utilitarian building where the norm was standardly predictable.

The nucleus of the store was originally a two-story building, divided inside into two rooms deep,⁴ and first erected on the banks of the Rolling Fork about 1880. The Kentucky Standards' article of 1901 tells best about development of the store and other business interests:

"About two years ago Howard Brothers moved their store, a two-story building, 24 by 50 feet filled with goods, a distance of half a mile, on rollers, pulled by an engine. They sold goods the entire time, and it was an amusing site to see the people following the store across the fields while it was being carried forward by the propelling power of the steam. It now stands on the pike, near the center of the town, it now being three stories high and is 54 by 75 feet. It has been plastered, papered and repainted and now contains an elevator. They are prepared to carry on a general merchandise business. The store is very capably managed by Mr. F. M. Howard, one of the senior members of the firm, and Mr. Joe Willett, of Washington County, his efficient clerk. The members of the present firm of Howard Brothers are W. T. Howard, who has charge of all the vast farming operations; F. M. Howard, merchant; Sam I. Howard, who has charge of all the machinery and is general manager of the vast telephone interests; Boone C. Howard, miller and Wm. E. Bell, who married Miss Lila Howard, and is engaged in farming and stock trading. It is a very strong firm, leading the community in every branch of trade."

The design problem that resulted was how to mask this off-balance structure with a front facade which would unify the whole and make it appear equal in all elements, since the peak of the roof was not even centered to the total width. The major significance displayed by the designer's architectural success demands thorough analysis and study of the storefront.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Ge	ographical	Data						
Acreage of nomi Quadrangle nam UTM References	Howardstown	acre		Quadra	angle scale <u>1:24000</u>			
A 1 6 6 2 Zone Easti	4 3 3 0 4 1 5 9 Northing	1 0 0	B Zone	Easting	Northing			
C			D					
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			
11. For	m Prepare	d By						
	David H. Hall, Pres	servetion Coo	edinator		(JR)			
name/title		SCI VACIOII COO	dilator					
organization	City of Bardstown		d	late	March 12, 1986			
street & number	Box 368, 220 North	Fifth Street	to	elephone	502/348-5947			
city or town	Bardstown		s	state	Kentucky 40004			
12. Sta	te Historic	Prese	vation	Officer	Certification			
The evaluated sig	gnificance of this proper	ty within the stat	e is:					
	national X	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 Pro	eservation Officer signat	ure Jour	d []//	nzi				
title State I	Historic Preservation	Officer		date	September 12, 1986			
For NPS use only								
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register								
- Xuela-	National Register	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	Naj 1.1 fili 🥦	date	10-16-86			
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Attest: Chief of Regi	stration			date				

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Likewise, the second floor showroom has ten feet under the ceiling compared to eight feet in the original. Thus, the second floor has two different levels, the stairs ascending to the lower of the two, which is over the oldest portion. Then short steps ascend the transition to the upper third level, a finished room, 30' by 75', converted about 1938 from furniture showroom to skating rink, and unchanged from this date. The "rink" is lit by six-over-six, double-hung windows, two, front and back, plus four evenly spaced along the south wall. All side windows in the store are at the upper level providing maximum shelf space at ground level. The last or backside window in the rink has been closed. Stairs continue up from the second level giving access to partially floored, rough storage area at the fourth level. Remains of a weight-driven freight elevator are still in place which served the upper floors. Location is near the front in the older part of the store. Many original shelves including the "Pharmacy Section," specially built for the interior, remain in place. Unique hardware and original paint colors (standard, commercial gray) are on these cabinets and drawers (photo 12, interior shelves—no photos possible in "Pharmacy" because of storage use).

The front combines the two separate storefronts of unequal width at ground level under a short mansard section which separates the unequal divisions of the first floor from the balanced upper portion. Facing the building, the right side has show windows flanking double entrance doors, transom over, which served the oldest part of the structure which became the feed and farm equipment section after rebuilding, ca. 1899. These show windows and entrance comprise the 24' width of the original building. The remaining 30' forms the left side, main store entrance, and is balanced with double doors, transom over, centered between full-width show windows. Framing all of the entrances and windows is a system of pilasters and panels, with scrolled brackets on the architrave supporting the cornice section capped by the short mansard. Bold moldings create depth and relief between panel framings and pilasters. Interior of all panels is tongue and groove beadedboard angled at 45° for a texture change. The mansard, which has wrap around returns, is sheathed with fishscale shingles for added effect. The original sashes remain in the main store windows, each side being composed of six large, individual panes, thinly muntined in double-hung three over three. All front windows were equipped with paneled exterior shutters still in evidence on one section (photos 17, 18, 20 and 21).

At the second level, the four-bay fenestration is balanced across the facade. No shutters were fitted to these windows. Some sashes are damaged but still in place. Six-over-six, double hung are used throughout the store (photos 6 and 9).

The surprise feature of the pediment, a segmented, demi-lune, fanlight, although missing a muntin and lights, is still in place to light the fourth-level storage space, under the slant of the roof. Its shape and placement on the exterior, relieving the great expanse of clapboard between crown-molded gables, continues to delight the beholder with each viewing. Likewise, the pediment cap, composed of arched hood on a balustrade section, commands the attention and finishes the facade in a manner exceeding the possibilities offered by other potential decorations. Various sections of crown-mold edging are missing, with some of the brackets which cap pilasters. The mansard 'return' at the southeast corner has been eliminated and some deterioration of weatherboard is evident. Also the bracketed cornice return at northeast corner is missing (photos 5 thru 8). The entire building has now weathered to a natural, gray-brown tone and has only scant remains of any paint on the exterior. What survives may indicate the original color scheme,

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a buff-mustard yellow on siding and interior of panels, etc., and medium-dark green on trim and moldings. Doors and show-window shutters may have been a third color like dark brown or black-green. Inside the oldest part, (north side, rear) some doors and trim appear to have original paint scheme, two tones in contrast of light and dark gray-blue.

The building has taken a decided "lean" to the north, over the years, apparent to the naked eye both inside and out. This "out-of-plumb" list along the entire 75' length has variations front to back and from ground floor to second floor. The structure's movement is probably due to the interior space being, basically undivided chambers running full length, thus, no possible cross-bracing in the building. And the older section to the north side, having lower floor structure and lower eave-roof rafters, has encouraged the higher side to relieve stress in that direction, with high winds the motivator. Curiously, the back gable shows a unified lean to the north, top to bottom, while the front facade has a decided set on the ground level, with everything above the mansard appearing as true as the day finished (photos 5 and 11).

The major differences in appearance between present and original have been pointed out congruent to describing the present. But otherwise, the only difference would be in the pristine appearance the store must have presented when first finished and painted in the schemes used, circa 1900, to heighten the fine details and elaborate moldings. Also, there were probably signs painted on, or attached to the siding declaring the variety of products and services available. No Pepsi machine nor gasoline pumps cluttered the front. But the boardwalk was surely graced with crates and boxes, vegetables and produce, tools and equipment to catch the eye of neighbor and passer-by. Such was the everyday manner of storekeepers, weather permitting, when most Kentuckians bought a majority of goods from just such country emporiums as the Howard Brothers' Store.

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The facade at ground level is thoroughly described under Item #7, Page 2, and need not be repeated. But added analysis of the short mansard is justified. It plays a major part acting as both divider between the unequal lower elements and upper facade, plus giving some weather protection to the original form without the usual shed roof found on most country stores (the Howard Brothers' Store did finally suffer such addition on the right side facing, part of which is extant).

At the second level, the four-bay fenestration is balanced across the facade to mask the difference in floor levels and ceiling height behind the front caused by old and new sections being wed. Then, as the front rises into the peak of the gabled roof we find the crowning glory of the Howard Brothers' Store, a masterpiece of rural carpentry. The arched and balustraded cornice peak has no similar example in this reviewer's experience. The form is similar to furniture forms from Eastlake and others, usually found in headboards of beds and dressers; also the hood canopy of clocks and display cabinets in the era ca. 1880. But it appears the elaborate peak was dictated by more than desires to decorate. Close inspection reveals it surely was a necessity--and a most innovative solution to the off-balance ridge peak. The arched hood on a balustrade rail section, provides a mask on the facade completely hiding the fact that one side is an actual eve cornice section and the other side a matching, false front parapet wall, raised for balance to fill out the facade. Had the cornice cap been a peaked section instead of the demi-lune arch, the roofing mismatch would have shown from many angles. A final surprise is the segmented fanlight at the third level, breaking the great expanse of weatherboard flowing between the massive-angled cornice sections. It exactly emulates the hooded peak and compliments this unique commercial structure's crowning glory. The skill of designer and carpenter combined in this building gives us a clear example of just how good were the craftsmen of that point in time when the 20th century began for rural Kentucky. There is no record to indicate where and how Sam I. Howard developed his knowledge and skills. But family oral history credits St. Mary's College, near Lebanon, Kentucky, as the final schooling for all the Howard Brothers, including Boone C. Howard.

The first settlement at Howardstown was made about the close of the 18th century when the land where the community is situated was homesteaded by James Nourse and George Jaynes. Nourse later 'bought out' Janes and sold 1,000 acres to Joseph Howard about the year 1831. Joe Howard was a son of William Howard, one of the Maryland Catholic League who had come to Kentucky in 1786, settling first near Holy Cross. The six Howard Brothers, including William, would make a large contribution to the central Kentucky Catholic settlements. And, the second generation, through the efforts of Joe Howard and his sons, would leave a lasting impression on the Rolling Fork Valley.

The Kentucky Standard, May 23, 1901, printed these observations about the early days:

"All the land was heavily timbered with black walnut, some of the trees having a diameter of from four to six feet, and growing as high as 60 feet without a branch. So little were these trees valued that in clearing the land they were cut and thrown in the river, or piled in heaps and burned.

The land is so fertile that crops grow with little cultivation and the same soil will produce a good crop of corn year after year. One field cleared by Lusk has grown excellent

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crops of corn every year for the past one hundred years. It is now owned by Howard Brothers. In early years the people put their sheep up to keep the wolves from destroying them, while it was a common sight to see twenty deer or droves of wild turkeys at a time."

Joe Howard built the first treadmill to accommodate the neighborhood, then converted to waterpower in a few years. The new mill washed away in 1854, another burned in 1861 and the last erected by George Elliott, was moved to a higher place about 1880 and converted to steampower after purchase by the Howard Brothers. Sam Howard is credited with "making" most of the new machinery, including "machines for sawing all kinds of timber . . . in conjunction with the flour mill . . . in a three-story building . . . one of the most complete . . . in the State."

Howardstown was first called Lunar and was located along the river dating from ca. 1850s. The community received its first post office in 1884. In 1889, the post office was re-established and this function was housed in the Howard Brothers' General Store. The name of the community was changed to Howardstown June, 1883, and soon thereafter the village was moved northward to its present location. The store, which began as two rooms on the river, has been the focus of the community from the beginning.

The size of this structure and care exercised in planning, execution, and fitting the emporium, indicates the importance such commercial houses played through the end of World War II, in the daily existence of many Kentucky citizens. It was the social and commercial center of life for this isolated cross-roads community, like so many others all over the Commonwealth. The local people received and sent mail, made all manner of purchases, bartered produce for goods, traded news and views, and created entertainment. Visitors would make the store a mandatory first stop to ask instructions or meet a local for business. It was the center for most everything except school and church.

The undertaking service, large stock of caskets and pharmacy function were unusual services offered by the Howard Brothers, unlike the average Kentucky rural store but dictated by need created through isolation. Nearby residents of Larue County, west of the Rolling Fork, forded the River when the flow permitted and crossed on foot by pedestrian swinging bridge during high water to make purchases at Howardstown.⁸ The store was the commercial center for a large area governed by physical boundaries rather than political divisions. In truth, one can scarcely imagine the myriad importance such rural commercial houses assumed in everyday life unless having actually experienced that era. In recent years, new owners of the Howardstown Store proposed to paint the exterior to create a "new look." But the local residents were up in arms, all but insulted by the idea.⁹ Many senior citizens had never seen the store look other than the natural, weathered condition which is unique for a commercial building in constant daily use for more than eight decades. The local community felt the venerable, old store was truly "theirs" since it has always been the prime landmark of their world. They collectively felt aroused to take action least someone tamper with a cherished visual friend. The idea to paint was quickly and quitely dropped.

As the 20th century developed, some changes evolved for the Howardstown community. But, unlike some other parts of Nelson County, Howardstown thrived during the prohibition days of the 1920s thru early 1930s. A multitude of illegal operators had replaced the small, legal distillery

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of the 1880s. The store resold ready-to-use, ground grains supplied by a Bardstown Mill operation and hauled in daily by wagon. At one time, fourteen separate customers took daily delivery of large orders. Again, it was Howardstown's isolation making the business "boom" possible.

About 1931, the store changed hands. Wayne Ennis, a relative by marriage (brother-in-law) purchased the business from Chester Howard, son of F. Milburn Howard. Better roads, increased use of motor vehicles and repeal of prohibition probably aided the decision to convert the major showroom on the third level to a skating rink, late in the 1930s. It was no longer feasible to continue the multitude of services and products once offered by the Howard Brothers. But it was the period following World War II which brought sweeping changes in the everyday life of rural Kentuckians, including Howardstown residents.

In November, 1948, F. M. Head purchased the business from Wayne Ennis. He has also served as Postmaster since that date and continues to this day. Mr. Head sold the business to Joseph Hutchins in June, 1981, who, in turn conveyed it to the present owners, Charles W. Bell, Jr., and his wife, Marie E. Bell, on November 1, 1984. The Bells hope to restore certain features of the store while continuing to operate a rural retail outlet, although local residents no longer find it necessary to do most purchasing close to home and farm. Only the post office function has allowed the Howard Brothers' Store to survive. Although still the gathering place to visit, exchange views, and catch up on the latest, the volume of merchandise stocked and sold is a bare remnant when compared to the past panoply of necessities and delights once housed and exchanged in the cavernous 5,000 square feet of floor space.

¹See Howardstown, Interesting History, The Kentucky Standard, May 23, 1901.

²The Nahm Building, Bowling Green, Kentucky, has an arched cornice vaguely similar to the Howard Brothers' Store (Arch of Warren County, Kentucky, 1790-1940, p. 255).

³Personal interviews with residents of Howardstown, including Paul Howard and F. M. Head, postmaster, orally attribute store design to Sam Howard, with probability (from Paul Howard) that Boone Howard also contributed.

⁴The Kentucky Standard, May 23, 1901.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Smith's History Nelson, p. 244.

⁷The Kentucky Standard, 1901.

⁸Oral history related by Paul Howard, grandson of F. M. Howard.

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⁹Oral history related by F. M. Head and corrab. by other residents, including present operator, Marie Bell.

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¹⁰Oral history by Paul Howard, relating events of 1929-30, including names and numbers of "shine" operations. Paul Howard is the son of Chester Howard, grandson of F. M. Howard, and was born and raised in the storekeeper's cottage.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Nelson-Spencer Atlas, page 27, published by D. J. Lake & Co., Philadelphia, PA., 1882.

The Kentucky Standard, published Bardstown, KY., May 23, 1901, Howardstown, Interesting History.

Architecture of Warren County 1790-1840, page 255, published by Landmark Association, Row.-Gn. & Warren.

Historic Nelson County, page 244, by Sarah Smith, published by Gateway Press, Louisville, KY., 1971.

State Gazetter, page 354-355.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description & Justification

(Nelson County, Kentucky, Deed Book 233, Pages 66-68) Beginning at Point A, as designated on the boundary map attached, at the northeast corner, 30 feet from C/L of Kentucky 247, being the right of way of Kentucky 247 and corner to Alice Boone, proceed north 71W, 125 feet along the property line to a point approximately 25 feet at rear of Howard Brothers' Store; thence south by southwest approximately 140 feet to the C/L of Lunar Creek, in such manner as to leave approximately 25 feet of open space behind the rear gable wall of the Store, but excluding the dwelling house just west of the back line already described; thence up C/L of Lunar Creek north 75-41E, approximately 130 feet to the right of way of Kentucky 247; thence with right of way of Kentucky 247, north 19-E, 110 feet to the point of beginning, containing approximately .40 or 4/10s acre.

This boundary was chosen to correspond to existing property lines, so far as possible, and to include the original area about the store structure. The dwelling house long used by store owners is much modified and would not contribute. The Howard Brothers' Store is the only structure within the described, nominated property boundary.

Boundary MAP, SITE PLAN and Exterior PHOTOGRAPHIC KEY

Scale APPRX: 1"= 22 25"



