



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name The Darby House

other names/site number HK-D-32

2. Location

street & number 301 West Arcadia Avenue

N/A not for publication

city or town Dawson Springs

N/A vicinity

state Kentucky

code KY

county Hopkins

code 107

zip code 42408

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

David L. Morgan, SHPO and

Executive Director 7-1-97

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Edson H. Beall

Date of Action

8/15/97

The Darby House
Name of Property

Hopkins County, KY
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC-hotel

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business
WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th CENTURY/Georgian Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone/brick
walls wood/weatherboard
roof tin
other wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheet

The Darby House
Name of Property

Hopkins County, KY
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1890-1930

Significant Dates

1900

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Dawson Springs Museum and Art Center

The Darby House
Name of Property

Hopkins County, KY
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than two acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

16	4	3	8	4	2	0	4	1	1	3	3	8	0
Zone	Easting			Northing									

3

Zone	Easting			Northing									

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Larry Morrisey

organization _____ date December 3, 1996

street & number 2001 Rockcreek Drive, Apt. 6F telephone (502) 842-5524

city or town Bowling Green state KY zip code 42101-3678

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Preserve Darby House, Inc.

street & number 301 West Arcadia Avenue telephone (502) 797-2235

city or town Dawson Springs state KY zip code 42408

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**The Darby House
Dawson Springs, KY**

Description

The Darby House (KD-D-32) is a two-and-a-half story frame structure built in the Georgian Revival style. It was built in the mid-to late-1880s by Dr. A. G. Darby and functioned as a boarding house and private residence for the Darby family until 1992. The house has twelve rooms along with a kitchen and dining area in the basement. The house is located on the western edge of Dawson Springs, facing north and adjacent to one of the town's main roads, which formerly served as the railroad right-of-way through the town.

The building is found on the western edge of Dawson Spring's central business district. Across the street from the house are the fire department and municipal building for the town. There is an empty lot on its eastern side, separating it from a group of businesses. The western edge of the property abuts a property with a small, turn of the century frame house, which sits farther back from the road from the Darby House.

The house has a roughly square plan, approximately 33 feet by 33 feet. The foundation is composed of stone from the ground to approximately four feet, with the additional three feet finished off in brick. The building is sheathed in weatherboard siding.

The hipped, tin roof of the Darby House has dormers projecting from it on its north, south and east sides which illuminate the third floor rooms. There are brick chimneys on the east and west sides of the house, which once was the source of heat to the majority of the rooms. Decorative wooden mantles adorn the northeastern rooms on the first and second floor.

The structure is extended in front and in the rear by two-tier, wooden porches; they both run the width of the building. The original wood floor of the ground level section of the front porch has

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The Darby House
Dawson Springs, KY

Description (continued)

been replaced by poured concrete, but the rest of the structure is wooden. The back porch is entirely wooden and features bathrooms (approximately 6 by 10 feet) on the eastern side of both levels. These were installed in the mid 1910s. Beneath the back porch is an enclosed area that serves as an exterior room to the furnace room and kitchen in the basement. It is approximately 7 feet by 31 feet with 7-8 feet of headroom and has a series of four pane windows across its width. There also is a rear door entry for the basement.

In the basement there is a substantial kitchen area (17 feet square) which is connected to the former dining room by a large doorway approximately six feet wide and a small service counter opening. Adjacent to these two rooms is a narrow storage room where the furnace is located. The furnace supplies heat only to the rooms that Elizabeth Hess, the last private owner, used as her living space, which were the basement kitchen and the two rooms on the west side of the first floor. The remaining rooms had individual heating sources.

Central passageways, approximately seven feet wide, run the entire length of the house on the first and second floor. The first floor has four rooms. The front two are of equal size, approximately 13 feet by 14 feet, the back two rooms both around 13 feet by 17 feet in size. The second floor has six rooms, with similar sized rooms immediately across the hallway from each other. The front rooms both measure 14 feet by 13 feet, the smaller middle rooms measure 9 feet by 13 feet, and the rear rooms are 13 feet by 9 feet.

The third floor has a different plan, due to its rooms being illuminated by large dormers. There is a room in the north and south section of the floor as well as an open space between the two rooms where the large eastern chimney passes through.

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**The Darby House
Dawson Springs, KY**

Description (continued)

Integrity/Restoration Efforts

Due to the continuous usage of the building as a boarding house, the Darby House looks much the way that it did when it was built in the 1880s. The essential structure has not been altered in any significant way, although there have been some minor changes made to the interior and exterior appearance of the house. Changes made by the Darby family during their ownership of the house were done primarily to support the boarding house business, while the changes made since 1992 by the Preserve Darby House group have been enacted in order to present the house as a historically significant property.

Changes made to the house by the Darbys include linoleum placed over the original wood flooring, wooden paneling and ceiling tiles covering original plaster surfaces in several of the rooms, replacement ornamental windows on the third floor, and aluminum siding being placed on the house's eastern facade. In an interview in 1988, Elizabeth Hess, the last person in the Darby family to own the house, explained that she had had the linoleum installed because it was "not half as hard to fool with and keep clean" as the wooden floors were (Hess 1988). The other changes can be seen in this light. Due to the large amount of work the boarding house entailed and small amount of money it brought in (Ms. Hess was renting rooms for \$25 a week in 1988), changes that cut down on work would make the most sense for the business. While the modifications made after 1946 might not reflect the original condition of the house, these modifications served Ms. Hess's needs as a businessperson.

Changes were also made by a group of Dawson Springs residents that bought the house after Hess's death in 1992. This group wants to preserve the house's identity with the mineral water

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The Darby House
Dawson Springs, KY

Description (continued)

resort era of Dawson Springs. They replaced the original front porch, which was in poor condition, in December of 1993 with a new one that replicates the Victorian style of the original porch. Work on the interior was also done at this time. On the first floor, the linoleum in the hallway was removed and the wooden floor refinished. The floors in the rooms on the first floor were not in as good of shape as the hallway, therefore they were covered with carpeting. Walls were repainted on much of the main floor as well, making way for the rooms to be used as meeting and office space for local organizations.

Due to the large size of the building, the second, third floor, and basement have remained untouched by restoration efforts. Most of these areas in the house remain as they were when Ms. Hess lived and ran her business in the home.

Statement of Significance

The Darby House (HK-D-32) meets National Register Criterion A and is significant within the historic context of the water boarder era (1890-1930) of Dawson Springs, Kentucky. It was one of several boarding houses built by private individuals in the town during the late nineteenth century and it functioned as this type of business throughout the resort era of the town. The period of significance of 1890 to 1930 has been selected for the house due to this being the era when most of the businesses in the town were catering to the tourist market. Even though the mineral water resort era was largely over by the 1930s, the Darby House continued to be operated as a boarding house until 1992. Due to the building being used for the same purpose for this length of time, the Darby House had maintained its structural integrity. It is now the only surviving example of this type of combination commercial/private structure that was once common in Dawson Springs.

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The Darby House
Dawson Springs, KY

Statement of Significance (continued)

Historical Context: The Water Boarder Era of Dawson Springs, Kentucky, 1890-1930

Dawson Springs is located at the southwestern edge of Hopkins County. The area of the town was originally home to a Native American trading village called Big Bend, located along the Tradewater River which flows around the outskirts of the current town. The earliest documented Anglo-American settlement in the area was in 1807. Eventually a small community developed called Chalklevel. The community remained small and remote until a railroad connecting Paducah and Elizabethtown was built through the town in the early 1870s. By 1872, trains were stopping in the town, bringing many newcomers to the area. One of the most significant of these people was Washington Hamby, often referred to as "the Father of Dawson Springs."

In July of 1881, while drilling a well for a new house, Hamby hit a strong vein of iron-impregnated water. He was going to fill in the well, but was persuaded by a number of Irish laborers from the railroad to keep it open. They had drunk water from the well and believed that it had medicinal value. In 1893, while digging another well for his newly built hotel, Hamby hit another vein of highly mineralized water. This new well produced what was thought to be an inexhaustible supply of this special water.

Word spread about the curing power of the water in Dawson Springs, spurred on by endorsements from doctors and chemical analysis of the water secured by Hamby. During the early 1890s Hamby began to bottle and sell his water, as well as offer it to visitors to Dawson Springs. Others began to drill wells to service the increasing numbers of people who started coming to Dawson to take the water cure. The water boarder era of the town was in full swing by 1898 when the town's name was changed from Dawson City to Dawson Springs

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**The Darby House
Dawson Springs, KY**

Statement of Significance (continued)

(a misnomer since the water came from wells rather than springs).

In order to house the increasing number of summer visitors, a number of hotels and boarding houses were built between 1890 and 1910. At its busiest point in the early 1900s, Dawson Springs had 52 hotels (including boarding houses). But the large numbers of visitors often outgrew these businesses. A 1903 history of the town noted that "nearly every house becomes a boarding house during the season" (Tabor 1903:2). While a few of these businesses were large, luxurious hotels that catered to elite visitors with electric lighting and ballroom dancing, the majority of them were smaller, plain structures run by individual families that provided clean rooms, hot meals, and reasonable rates.

The Darby House During the Mineral Water Era

One of the people who became involved in this type of small business was Dr. A. G. Darby. A native of neighboring Caldwell County, Dr. Darby came to Dawson in 1871, becoming the first practicing physician in the community. While the date of the construction of his house is unknown, oral history and deeds for the land suggest that it was built between 1886 and 1888. There have been some writings that hypothesize Darby originally built the structure to house his practice and family but did not intend it as a hotel. However, its proximity to the railroad tracks and thus the incoming visitors, along with the general layout of the building lend credence to the the view that it was originally conceived of as a boarding house.

Although the building is small by today's hotel standards, the building was listed as "The Dawson Hotel" in a 1915 brochure on Dawson Springs. This publication lists a number of the

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**The Darby House
Dawson Springs, KY**

Statement of Significance (continued)

hotels in the town, along with their rates and capacity. The rates and size listed for Dr. Darby's house rank it in the company of a number of other small, medium priced boarding houses.

The ubiquity of this type and size of structure can be seen in a turn-of-the-century photograph taken from the railroad tracks approaching town. The Darby House is difficult to pick out from the three nearly identical boarding houses that sat adjacent to it on the south side of the tracks.

Although Dr. Darby died in 1918, the business continued to be operated by his widow Ruth and his daughter Willie. In 1922, Darby's son Frank returned to Dawson Springs to help with the business and was accompanied by his wife Mary Hess Darby and her daughter, Elizabeth Hess. Elizabeth was eventually responsible for maintaining the business until her death 1992.

End of the Mineral Spa Era

Dawson Springs enjoyed growth and financial prosperity throughout the era of the water boarders, but this success would be limited. Business slowly fell off during the 1920s and with the onset of the Depression, business at the hotels dropped off dramatically and never returned. While the Depression is usually given as the reason behind the end of this business, there are some suggestions that many regular visitors stopped coming when a large Army veterans hospital was opened on the outskirts of Dawson Springs in 1922. The largest portion of this hospital's population were tuberculosis patients. Fearing this disease, many regular visitors are to have said to have stopped visiting the city. While there were some small conventions held in Dawson Springs during the 1940s, the appeal of the mineral water was gone. When the New Century Hotel, one of the luxury hotels of the water era, was gutted by fire in March of 1960, any hopes of revival of the resort business were dashed. The town's identity as a resort was finally gone.

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**The Darby House
Dawson Springs, KY**

Statement of Significance (continued)

Even though the large crowds of visitors diminished to a trickle, the Darby family persisted at the boarding house business. Although Ruth Darby died in 1936, her daughter Willie and son Frank kept the business going. They continued to have some seasonal visitors, but more of their income was derived from long-term boarders, including employees of Outwood, the veterans hospital, which was one of the largest employers in the area until its closure in 1962. After the deaths of the Darby children, the business was taken over by Elizabeth Hess, Frank's step-daughter. While she eventually discontinued serving meals to her boarders, Ms. Hess kept roomers until an illness in 1992 forced the removal of her last tenant. Her death in July of 1992 brought an end to a family business that lasted over 100 years.

Out of the many boarding houses built alongside the railroad tracks and back streets of Dawson Springs, the Darby House is the last to remain. It was not one of the glamorous hotels that catered to celebrities and the elite. As found in a 1922 advertisement for the house, the Darbys stressed reasonable rates and "kind and courteous treatment" (*Souvenir Booklet* 1922:36). The Darby House is the sole reminder of these plain structures that served thousands of the visitors to Dawson Springs and provided a steady income for many of its families.

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The Darby House
Dawson Springs, KY

Bibliography

"A Few Pointers About Dawson Springs, KY." Booklet issued by the Dawson Salts and Water Company, 1915.

"Dawson Springs History Has a Rich, Colorful Past." *The Dawson Springs Progress*, July 25, 1974, Section Two, pp. 2-11.

Hess, Elizabeth. Interview with Claude Holeman, September 15, 1988.

Souvenir Booklet of U.S. Veterans Hospital No. 79, 1922, p. 36.

Tabor, M. W. *The Story of Dawson Springs*. Dawson Springs, Oracle Print, 1903. Reprinted in 1992 by the Dawson Springs Museum and Art Center.

Welcome to Dawson Springs, Kentucky, "The City of Health." Centennial Celebration Booklet, 1974.

Verbal Boundary Description

Parcel Number: Dawson Springs-2-11-7.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The acreage that has been nominated is the acreage that has been historically associated with the property.