

932

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 Sulphur Well Historic District

other names/site number NA

2. Location

Roughly bounded by the Wister Wallace Rd. and the South Fork of the Little street & number Barren River on the south, Mitchell-Edwards Rd. on the  not for publication N/A north and on the east by farmland and forest, and on the west by open land. city or town Sulphur Well  vicinity N/A

state Kentucky code KY county Metcalfe code 169 zip code 42129

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 Executive Director, KHC 6-3-98  
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 certifying 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

Date of Action

Patricia Andrews

8/14/98

**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	
37	17	buildings
5	1	sites
1	8	structures
1		objects
44	26	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**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

- DOMESTIC/hotel
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/outdoor recreation
- DOMESTIC/single dwelling
- RELIGION/religious facility
- GOVERNMENT/post office
- COMMERCE/TRADE/department store
- TRANSPORTATION/road-related (vehicular)
- COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

- RECREATION AND CULTURE/outdoor recreation
- DOMESTIC/single dwelling
- FUNERARY/cemetery
- RELIGION/religious facility
- RELIGION/church-related residence
- AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/processing
- AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/outbuilding
- COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

- LATE-19TH AND EARLY-20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Bungalow/Craftsman

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation STONE
- walls WOOD/weatherboard
- SYNTHETICS/vinyl
- roof ASPHALT
- other

**Narrative Description**

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

**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)

Community Planning and Development

**Period of Significance**

1860-1949

**Significant Dates**

1860

1903

1949

**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:

Kentucky Heritage Council  
300 Washington Street  
Frankfort, KY 40601

Sulphur Well Historic District  
Name of Property

Metcalfe County, Kentucky  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreege of Property 81 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

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[ ] 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 Donna G. Logsdon, Historic Preservation Consultant

organization Logsdon & Logsdon Architects date 3/11/98

street & number P.O. Box 177 telephone (502) 528-4698

city or town Hardyville state Kentucky zip code 42746-0177

**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 \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**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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**Sulphur Well Historic District**

**Metcalf County, Kentucky**

**6. Function or Use-continued**

**Historic Functions**

DOMESTIC/secondary structure  
FUNERARY/cemetery  
EDUCATION/education-related  
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/processing  
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/outbuilding

**Current Functions**

TRANSPORTATION/road-related  
GOVERNMENT/post office  
SOCIAL/clubhouse  
COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

**7. Description-continued**

**Architectural Classification**

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY  
REVIVALS/Colonial Revival, Classical Revival,  
Commercial  
MID-19TH CENTURY/Greek Revival, Gothic  
Revival  
LATE VICTORIAN/Romanesque

**Materials**

**foundation:** CONCRETE  
WOOD  
**walls:** BRICK  
**roof:** METAL

**Narrative Description**

The **Sulphur Well Historic District**, located in Metcalf County, Kentucky, is composed of 26 properties which contain 19 primary buildings, 18 secondary buildings, one structure, one object, and six sites that contribute to the district's sense of place and time, and ten primary buildings, seven secondary buildings and eight structures that do not. Buildings and structures designated as non-contributing were less than 50 years old or were moved onto a site within the last fifty years. One site that does not contribute contains ruins from a historic hotel that was torn down in the 1980s. The total number of buildings in this district is 54 with nine structures, one object, and five sites. Sulphur Well's historic district is primarily comprised of one- and two-story wood-frame buildings constructed between the mid- to late-1800s through the mid-1900s on various size lots. The district covers 81 acres.

**Sulphur Well Historic District Boundaries**

The **Sulphur Well Historic District**, in general, covers part of four lots and all of 22 lots located on both sides of State Route 70, one of the major transportation routes in Metcalf County, Kentucky. Specifically, the southern boundary of the historic district begins

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along the south side of Wister Wallace Road and includes two homes and several outbuildings on farm land that was historically owned by the Beula Villa Hotel that is situated on the north side of the road. The western boundary travels northward just behind the complex of four Beula Villa Hotel buildings and does not include the heavily timbered area or adjacent farmland behind the hotel east to the river. The land immediately west of State Route 70, at the intersection of Wister Wallace Road and Sulphur Well-Center Road, includes another portion of land historically owned by C.W. Thompson. This site includes the C.W. Thompson monument, situated inside a small fenced cemetery, and the low lying land on the south side of the South Fork of the Little Barren River that was historically part of "The Grove."

Historically, the heart of the district historically focused on a complex of buildings known as the Beula Villa Hotel and "The Grove," on the south side of the river and sulphur well where mineral water was discovered in 1845 on the north bank of the river. Today, the **Sulphur Well Historic District** includes a cohesive group of residential, religious and commercial buildings located on various size lots, strung out on both the north and south sides of State Route 70 and the South Fork of the Little Barren River, with the majority of historic resources inside the loop made by Mitchell-Edwards Road. The continued viability of this cohesive but diverse group of historic resources has been an asset to Sulphur Well since the decline in interest in visiting mineral water resorts during the 1920s and 1930s. Therefore, Sulphur Well is a good example of a small rural mineral water town in western Kentucky that developed between 1860 and 1949.

**Building Characteristics**

The **Sulphur Well Historic District** is the most cohesive group of commercial, residential, and religious buildings that formed Metcalf County's only mineral water town that continues to thrive today. Of the 19 primary buildings that contribute to the district, only one, or 5%, date prior to 1900; eleven, or 58%, date between 1901 and 1920; and seven, or 37%, date between 1921 and 1949, the end of the period of significance. Most of these are primarily one- and two-story wood-frame buildings with a combination of front and side gabled roofs on residential buildings with low sloping or flat roofs behind parapet walls on commercial buildings.

The majority of these historic resources have remained intact for over 70 years and are exemplified by the fact that this cohesive collection of early-20th century buildings reflects elements from a variety of styles based on popular trends in residential, commercial, and religious architecture. The most common elements found throughout this

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historic district include the retention of their character defining features as well as original materials such as weatherboard siding. Although the commercial buildings are sited close to the road they face, the residential buildings sit further back and are usually surrounded by large shade trees and low foliage.

One group of four buildings, the Beula Villa Hotel (MC-6-9) situated on the south side of the South Fork of the Little Barren River and to the east of State Route 70, including the sulphur well, on the north side of the river in Sulphur Well Park (MC-350), formed the focal point of the district. This complex of buildings, including the mineral water spout, represent the physical reasons why the town became a popular place to visit during the height of the mineral water era, between 1890 and 1930. "The Grove" (MC-5), a wide flat area of land on the south side of the river, links these two important historic resources together and continues to offer a spacious recreational area for visitors.

**Integrity**

The **Sulphur Well Historic District** meets Criterion A for its association with the early 20th century health resort complex at Sulphur Well in the area of Community Planning and Development. The district has been identified as an area that conveys a strong sense of its historic environment through its historic buildings, structures, objects, and sites. It reveals much information about the development of the town from its earliest days to 1949 when the last historic structure in the district was constructed.

This district is distinguished from other mineral water towns in western Kentucky by the high density of closely related buildings and their close proximity to a major transportation route, State Route 70; their setting in rural farmland along a river; the design of the buildings within the district in terms of their relationship to each other; materials such as wood, brick, and concrete; the association of the buildings, sites, structures and objects to each other, and the feeling they convey as a cohesive unit representing the period of significance from 1860 to 1949. Therefore, it has been determined that the integrity of location, setting, design, materials, feeling, and association are the most important aspects of integrity necessary to convey the historic significance of this district.

The integrity of the district's 26 properties, as determined by the criteria outlined below, is fairly high. Twenty-one, or 80 percent, are considered contributing properties. All five non-contributing properties are sites that contain buildings that were constructed after the period of significance, 1949.

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**Sulphur Well Historic District**

**Metcalf County, Kentucky**

All of the historic resources in the district have integrity of location except for one historic building that was moved on to site in 1973. Their setting provides an accurate picture of the historic character of the town with commercial buildings situated close to the main transportation corridors and residential buildings sitting further back, raised above street level with on-site parking. Large shade trees and low foliage surround most buildings in a grassy landscape. All of the buildings except one, face Mitchell-Edwards Road which was State Route 70, historically.

Integrity of design in this district is fairly high considering their scale, massing and materials that have been maintained. Integrity of design will exist for a building when it has retained the original scale, materials, patterns of fenestration and proportion. Additions that use similar materials, are in scale with the original structure, and are compatible in design and character with the original building form, also allow a building to retain its contributing status. Integrity of materials in the district is extremely high because the majority of building exteriors have retained their original building materials and character-defining features that reflect the period of historic significance. The appearance of the **Sulphur Well Historic District** today conveys the feeling of what it was like to live in a mineral water town that catered to wealthy and prosperous people at the turn-of-the-century in association with the historical events that took place that enticed visitors to return annually.

All 29 principal historic buildings, 25 secondary buildings, nine structures, six sites, and one object in the district have been reviewed using the criteria outlined below for evaluating registration requirements.

**Alterations**

Common alterations to historic buildings generally fall into four categories: alterations to the exterior fabric including original weatherboard siding covered with vinyl or aluminum siding, or other non-historic materials; alterations to original window and/or door openings including the installation of new windows in existing openings, infilling existing openings, or making new openings in the exterior walls; porch alterations involving the replacement of original elements such as columns, enclosing an open porch, or complete removal of the feature; and additions to the buildings keeping in scale and using similar materials with the principal building.

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## Sulphur Well Historic District

## Metcalfe County, Kentucky

In Sulphur Well, for buildings significant in terms of Criterion A, it has been determined that changes can generally exist in two or possibly three of the four categories outlined above without compromising the overall integrity of design for the building. Many combinations exist based on the four typical alterations listed above. Once the nature and extent of the alteration is determined, then it is analyzed and evaluated based on when the alteration took place, whether the alteration can be easily removed, reversed or should be considered a part of the history of the building. Alterations reflecting popular building trends or building code requirements as well as the number of buildings that have similar alterations, and the impact on the overall character of the historic district, is taken into consideration. Between the 1950s and 1970s in the United States, vinyl and aluminum siding were promoted to cover weatherboard siding because it is believed to reduce the amount of owner maintenance, since it did not require painting. Also, historic wood sash windows were often replaced with aluminum windows that were energy efficient. Examples of individual buildings displaying changes within the four categories are discussed below.

Of the 19 primary contributing buildings in the district, seven or 37 percent, have little or no changes; four or 21 percent, have one alteration; seven or 37 percent have two alterations; and one or 5 percent have three alterations. The following examples of buildings display each of the four categories.

Two buildings retaining the highest degree of integrity in the district are the Edward Clark Residence (MC-335) # 11 and Brown's Grocery (MC-2) # 7. None of the exterior character-defining features of the Edward Clark Residence have been altered. This one-story wood-frame residence has kept the same building configuration, T-Plan, since it was constructed in 1911. Retaining its original white painted weatherboard siding, turned porch columns, and metal roof make this an excellent example of the Craftsman style in the district. Brown's Grocery, constructed circa 1924, is a one-story rectangular building covered with painted weatherboards. A series of large paned wood frame and glass storefront windows pierce the front facade in between glass and wood framed doors. A flat parapet wall extends above the overhanging canopy that shelters customers from the elements. All of the original materials remain intact, making this one of the outstanding commercial buildings in the district.

Examples of buildings with one alteration in the district are the Ray and Pauline Kinnaird Residence (MC-339) # 20 and the Ray Kinnaird Store (MC-342) # 21. The Kinnaird Residence, built in the 1920s, is a classic example of a one-and-a-half-story wood-frame Bungalow. Covered with weatherboards, it has an open front porch, central entry, and

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**Sulphur Well Historic District**

**Metcalf County, Kentucky**

a stepped front gabled metal roof with exposed rafter ends dotting the eaves. The only alteration to the residence is the small one-story, wood-frame rear addition built with similar materials and is in scale with the residence. The Kinnaird Store, built circa 1925 as a general merchandise store on State Route 70, is a one-story, wood-frame, rectangular store building with a low sloping roof. A series of wood frame and glass multilight windows and doors pierce the front facade. A concrete block addition, similar in height and depth as the existing building, was added to the west end in the 1940s.

Only one building in the district, was constructed with the front facade turned ninety degrees perpendicular to the street: the Taylor Bailey Residence (MC-346) # 10, built in 1920. Displaying three changes to the exterior, these alterations represent the popular trends in altering residential buildings and therefore do not change its contributing status. Vinyl siding, similar in dimension as the existing weatherboard siding, now covers the original weatherboards; a rear addition has been added similar in materials and scale with the residence; and new windows with aluminum awnings have infilled existing openings. Although this residence has three alterations, the original building configuration is still visible, despite the small addition to the rear.

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Sulphur Well Historic District

Metcalfe County, Kentucky

List of Resources

SULPHUR WELL																
Code	Address	Stories				Materials						Alter		Date	Eval.	
		1	1.5	2	2.5	WD	BR	BV	ST	CB	PC	Y	N		C	NC
1	245 WISTER WALLACE		X			X						X		1920	X	
2	WISTER WALLACE ROAD			X		X						X		1908	X	
3	SUL.WELL/U.M.CHURCH	X				X						X		1913	X	
4	SUL.WELL/U.M.CHURCH			X		X							X	1903	X	
5	SUL.WELL/CENTER RD.	X		X		X	X		X			X		1903	X	
6	1516SUL.WELL/KNOB			X		X				X		X		1904	X	
7	RT. 70	X				X							X	1924	X	
8	RT. 70	X								X			X	1966		X
9	MITCHELL-EDWARDS RD	X							X			X		1898		X
10	MITCHELL-EDWARDS RD	X				X						X		1920	X	
11	MITCHELL-EDWARDS RD	X				X							X	1911	X	
12	MITCHELL-EDWARDS RD			X		X							X	1860	X	
13	MITCHELL-EDWARDS RD	X				X							X	1912	X	
14	MITCHELL-EDWARDS RD	X				X							X	1968		X
15	MITCHELL-EDWARDS RD	X				X							X	1930s	X	
16	MITCHELL-EDWARDS RD		C	E	M	E	T	E	R	Y				1898	X	
17	MITCHELL-EDWARDS RD	X				X						X		c1900	X	

WD=WOOD, BR=BRICK, BV= BRICK VENEER, ST=STONE, CB=CONCRETE BLOCK, PC=POURED CONCRETE; Y=YES, N=NO; C=CONTRIBUTING, NC=NON-CONTRIBUTING

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Sulphur Well Historic District Metcalfe County, Kentucky

List of Resources

SULPHUR WELL																		
Code	Address	Stories				Materials						Alter		Date	Eval.			
		1	1.5	2	2.5	WD	BR	BV	ST	CB	PC	Y	N		C	NC		
18	MITCHELL-EDWARDS RD	X				X							X		1950s		X	
19	MITCHELL-EDWARDS RD	X				X						X			1928	X		
20	MITCHELL-EDWARDS RD		X			X							X		1920s	X		
21	RT. 70	X				X				X		X			1925	X		
22	RT. 70	X				X		X					X		1976		X	
23	RT. 70	X								X			X		1948	X		
24	RT. 70			X		X						X			c1900		X	
25	RT. 70	X				X							X		1964	X		
26	RT. 70		V	A	C	A	N	T		L	O	T	X		1880S	X		
27	RT. 70		X			X						X			1920s	X		
28	RT. 70	S	U	L	P	H	U	R		W	E	L	L		X	1845	X	
29	RT. 70	B	R	I	D	G	E					X	X		1949	X		

WD=WOOD, BR=BRICK, BV= BRICK VENEER, ST=STONE, CB=CONCRETE BLOCK, PC=POURED CONCRETE; Y=YES, N=NO; C=CONTRIBUTING, NC=NON-CONTRIBUTING

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Sulphur Well Historic District

Metcalf County, Kentucky

## 8. Statement of Significance

The **Sulphur Well Historic District** meets National Register Criterion A for its association with the early 20th century health resort complex at Sulphur Well and is significant in the area of Community Planning and Development because it reveals the gradual trends of changes in patterns of siting, building types and styles often associated with a mineral water resort. Sulphur Well represents the best example of small health resort town that developed around a sulphur water well in a rural landscape in western Kentucky.

A number of key events affected the town's history including the formation of the county in 1860; the discovery of sulphur water in 1845; the establishment of Sulphur Well as a post office in 1879; the construction of the Beula Villa Hotel complex in 1903; the construction of a new concrete bridge across the river and the widening of State Route 70 in 1949; the closing of the Beula Villa Hotel complex in 1968; the development of Sulphur Well State Park in the 1950s and its transformation into a county park in the 1980s; and the growth and development of Sulphur Well into a small 20th century mineral water town that continues to thrive in western Kentucky. These key events will be discussed as "The Planning and Development of Sulphur Well, A Mineral Water Town: 1860-1949," a part of the historic context of evaluation.

This district was evaluated within seven sub-themes: Transportation, Commerce, Agriculture, Education, Religion, Ethnic Heritage: African-Americans, and Domestic Architecture. These sub-themes were developed as part of a survey project of the historic district completed in 1998. They are included in the "Sulphur Well Historic Resources Survey and National Register Nomination Final Survey Summary Report" on file at the Kentucky Heritage Council in Frankfort, Kentucky.

The proposed historic district encompasses a twenty-six block area of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century buildings that were constructed as a direct result of the discovery of sulphur water on the banks of the South Fork of the Little Barren River and the development of the mineral water resort complex of buildings known as the Beula Villa Hotel. The transformation of a dirt road between Sulphur Well and Edmonton into State Route 70 that bisected this small community, was a major factor in the continued growth and development of Sulphur Well because it provided easy access and increased visitation to this health resort.

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National Park Service

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### **Sulphur Well Historic District**

### **Metcalf County, Kentucky**

Architecturally, the district's distinctive character is defined by the majority of two-story wood-frame buildings with simple craftsman details that remain intact. These buildings, as seen together with the matrix of open farmland, winding streets, and blocks on which they are located, provide an excellent picture of the development of Sulphur Well from 1860 to 1949, when the last historic structure in the district was constructed. In terms of Criterion A, it is significant in the area of Community Planning and Development for the excellent way the streets and buildings in this district developed on an undulating landscape divided by a State Highway and river and grew from a tiny 19th-century settlement around a sulphur well into a small 20th-century mineral water town that continues to thrive.

The building, sites, structures and objects in this setting are extremely significant in the history and development of Sulphur Well and Metcalf County. They also provide excellent documentation and a valuable comparison to the several other mineral water towns that developed during the same time period in western Kentucky. Common elements for the establishment of a mineral water town include: mineral water wells or springs; hotels and/or boarding houses for annual visitors; the development of a town plan in relationship to a major transportation route; and the construction of a residential neighborhood surrounding the commercial district.

The following elements were used to compare Sulphur Well with other mineral water towns that developed during the same time period in western Kentucky: the development of the town plan based on a major transportation route; a cohesive group of commercial and residential buildings that remain intact; visual evidence of mineral water wells; and the continued viability of the town despite adverse conditions such as fires and floods.

The Planning and Development of Sulphur Well from 1860 through 1949 is the best framework for discussing the significance of the towns' cohesive group of historic resources in relationship to the mineral water well, State Route 70, the river, farmland, streets, and blocks on which they are located. The juxtaposition of these buildings, sites, structures, and objects in this setting and their close proximity to the main highway, State Route 70, and the South Fork of the Little Barren River are extremely significant in the history and development of Sulphur Well and Metcalf County. Therefore, the history Late-19th and Early-20th Century Mineral Water Towns in Western Kentucky will discuss the development of health resorts that grew around mineral water wells or springs and compare several mineral water towns in western Kentucky to Sulphur Well.

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Sulphur Well Historic District

Metcalf County, Kentucky

## Late-19th and Early-20th Century Mineral Water Towns in Western Kentucky

Mineral water towns first began as watering places sometimes known as "licks," where pre-historic animals grazed and licked the salt-encrusted earth. Early pioneers realized the medicinal qualities of these springs and came to use them (Coleman, 11). A number of health resorts were established near watering places and mineral springs that were modeled after those in Europe and the "Springs" of Old Virginia (Coleman, 12).

In the early-1800s, interest in partaking mineral water for its medicinal value led to the development of resorts. Access to the springs often required long-distance travel by riverboats and stage coaches approaching the resort through a main entrance from a road. At least one building, a hotel or boarding house, was constructed, usually shaded by lofty trees on a grassy lawn where a resort developed. Resort owners eventually built smaller private cabins or cottages that were rented by families for the summer (Coleman, 22). Bath-houses often bordered the main creek near the springs similar to those at Big Bone Lick in the early-1800s (Coleman, 63). At Greenville Springs, a series of buildings including a dining-room, hotel, ballroom, bowling saloon, stables, ice-house (Coleman 68-74) were constructed in response to the demand of accommodating numerous visitors.

One of the reasons health resorts flourished was because mineral water was believed to cure a wide range of illnesses, including cholera, which reached epidemic proportions in Kentucky in 1833 and 1849 (Kleber, 840). Also, physicians specialized in the practice of hydropathy prescribed mineral water as a cure and sent their patients to a resort to recuperate and get well (Coleman, 13). These resorts catered not only to sick individuals but planters and prosperous businessmen of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, the Carolinas, Tennessee, and Arkansas. People came north with their families for social reasons as well as relief and safety from the malarial months of the years, from late-May through early-September (Coleman, 35), and to escape the heat and grime of the cities. Riding stables, bowling alleys, dance halls, game rooms, fishing, hunting, dancing, music, and socializing (Kleber, 840) enticed people to leave the drudgery of work, forget their troubles, and enjoy themselves. The popularity of spas peaked in the 1840s and began to decline in the 1850s with many closing during the Civil War (Coleman, 67).

During the Civil War, some deserted resorts were used as encampments and recruiting stations such as Estill Springs in Estill County. Others were the site of skirmishes between Federal and Confederate troops, as in Allen Springs in Allen County in August of 1862 and at Olympian Springs in Bath County in October 1864 (Coleman, 81). After the Civil War, Graham Springs remained dormant since the main building and cottages were burned

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

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### Sulphur Well Historic District

### Metcalf County, Kentucky

and the ground was turned over to pasturage (Coleman, 85).

After the war, there was a resurgence of watering places and a number of new resorts came into existence. Spa revival was tied in part to the expansion of the rail systems throughout the state. Resort towns located on or close to railroad stops prospered from the ticket sales the railroad promoted. The railroad also prospered because they owned hotels in at least one health resort town, Dawson Springs (Coleman a, 67).

Although the land at Graham Springs was eventually subdivided and a portion was sold as an addition to the town in 1887 (Coleman, 85), towns did not always develop as the direct result of a mineral water resort. At least 55 mineral water towns in Kentucky were operational during the same time period as Sulphur Well in Metcalfe County, between 1890 and 1930. Of these 55, there were twenty-four in western Kentucky and thirty-one in eastern Kentucky. See Figures 1 & 2 for their location. Written information about mineral water spas in Kentucky was limited, therefore, only five of the twenty-four towns were found to have documentation that could be compared with Sulphur Well: Grayson Springs in Grayson County; Diamond Springs in Logan County; Chalybeate Springs in Edmonson County; Kirkwood Springs and Dawson Springs in Hopkins County.

In general, all of these towns began around the discovery of a mineral water spring or well. Interest in this free-flowing mineral water enticed people from all over the Kentucky and neighboring states to travel long distances just to partake of the "liquid gold." To accommodate the throngs of visitors, local inhabitants developed an enclave of buildings that addressed the guests' desires for rest and relaxation. The survival of the mineral water resort depended on its location, near a major transportation route, and the growth and development of the surrounding community or town. The following information on five springs in western Kentucky describes the growth and development of each mineral water resort, and will be used in comparing them with Sulphur Well.

Grayson Springs was one of the largest and best-known watering places in the 1850s in Kentucky (Coleman b, 67-68), with approximately 100 white sulphur springs located on a quarter acre parcel of land (Collins, 293). Originally known to white settlers as Sulphur Springs (Rennick, 124), a small two-story hotel was built prior to 1836 (Coleman b, 67-68) and was owned and operated by Manoah P. Clarkson. Dr. William Barret, a hydropathic physician, offered visitors his services on site (Coleman b, 59). Although the springs closed during the Civil War, it later re-opened and expanded under new ownership in 1868. In 1872, the Elizabethtown and Paducah Railroad replaced stage coach lines and by 1900 the resort boomed with increased patronage. A new swimming pool with mineral

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### Sulphur Well Historic District

### Metcalf County, Kentucky

water, golf course, electric lights, telegraph and long distance telephone service were installed (National Register Nomination, 1976). When the resort was sold at the height of its popularity in 1900 to the Mercke Brothers of Louisville, it consisted of a four large wood-frame buildings known as the "New Orleans Block," the "Louisville Block," the Main Building, and "Morality Hall" which contained the pool and billiard tables as well as private gambling rooms (Coleman b, 94). A separate bowling alley and numerous cabins for the servants were located on the site with a natural amphitheater that contained the springs in a carefully landscaped setting within a maze of well-kept paths (Boisvert, 68).

The spa flourished until 1909 when fire destroyed the four main structures. The land was sold and a small two-story hotel was built. The resort continued on a reduced scale until 1930 when the hotel burned down, bringing the resort era of Grayson Springs to a close. As of 1984, visitors came to drink the water from about twenty springs which still flowed (Boisvert, 68). Today, all that remains is the smell of sulphur water and one old hotel structure in deteriorated condition (Foster interview).

Diamond Springs, located four miles north of Lewisburg and just two miles east of U.S. Highway 431, was developed in an isolated picturesque timbered area fed by springs of "iron water" (Rennick, 82). In 1892, James C. Sneed bought the land and developed the resort in 1893 by constructing an entrance road (Coffman, 277), a 33 room hotel, and large dining hall that was owned and operated by the Sneed family until 1946. Four permanently flowing springs, connected by gravel walks, were situated in the adjacent wooded area. The resort was served by the Louisville and Nashville Railroad which had a depot two miles from the hotel. Diamond Springs was the most popular in a series of small resorts in the area and its attraction was due to its rail accessibility, its comparatively modern facilities, and its location in a cool secluded environment. After the hotel closed in 1962, it began to deteriorate and half of it was dismantled in 1972 when the springs closed (Boisvert, 73).

Chalybeate Springs is a hamlet that lies at the junction of KY 101 and 1659, four miles south-southeast of Brownsville. This late-nineteenth century health resort consisted of a hotel, mineral water baths, a race track, bowling alley, and dance hall. The chalybeate water, made up of nine different minerals, was shipped to other states (McCombs interview). The Chalybeate Springs post office, established in 1888, dropped the name Springs in 1895 and was discontinued in 1931 (Rennick, 56). Likewise, in the early 1930s, the hotel closed and a residential neighborhood with grocery stores has gradually developed on the site. In recent years, the restaurant closed (Pat McCombs interview).

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### Sulphur Well Historic District

### Metcalf County, Kentucky

Kirkwood Springs, located between KY 70 and 1220, northwest of Dawson Springs, was named for James L. Kirkwood, who developed this late-19th century health resort around a flowing spring which had a reputed medicinal value. By the early-1900s, there were two hotels, three stores, twenty houses, a church, and school at the site. With the passing of the resort era in the 1920s and 1930s, the community declined and virtually no buildings or other significant structures remain intact (Rennick, 161).

Dawson Springs, historically advertised as "The Health Resort of the Upper South," began as a tiny railroad town in 1872. Ten years later, the town was incorporated as Dawson City and renamed Dawson Springs in 1898 (Welcome, 5). Early town development occurred along the north and south sides of the railroad tracks, eventually Railroad Avenue, and North and South Main Streets, consisted of substantial rows of one- and two-story brick and wood-frame commercial buildings. Mineral water, discovered by Washington I. Hamby in 1881 and again in 1893, changed the course of the city's history (Business, 7). Because physicians recommended their patients to partake of the waters to cure all types of illnesses, people came by train from all over Kentucky and neighboring states to reach mineral water resort destinations. Thus, numerous hotels, boarding houses, and commercial buildings were constructed in Dawson Springs, between the late-1800s and 1930, to accommodate the influx of annual visitors, and eventually permanent residents.

Commercial development continued despite several major changes: the railroad tracks relocated south of town in 1917; an overall decline in railroad transportation in the 1930s; the destruction of the New Century Hotel by fire in 1960; and waning interest in visiting mineral water resort towns. Of the five mineral water towns examined in western Kentucky, Dawson Springs is the only example of a highly planned, fully developed, incorporated turn-of-the-century mineral water town that centered its physical growth and development around the railroad and mineral water wells.

In conclusion, similarities that exist in all of these mineral water resorts are: development around mineral water springs or wells; their location near major transportation routes; and a series of buildings constructed on site to accommodate visitors. In terms of their decline in accommodating visitors, three resorts, Chalybeate Springs, Kirkwood Springs, and Grayson Springs, closed during the 1930s while only two resorts, Dawson Springs and Diamond Springs, continued to receive visitors well into the 1960s.

As far as town development is concerned, although there were many substantial buildings at Grayson Springs during its peak, in 1900, after the fires in 1909 and 1930, it closed

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### Sulphur Well Historic District

### Metcalf County, Kentucky

with no other commercial or residential development surrounding the site. Likewise, after the hotels closed, in 1930 at Chalybeate Springs and in 1962 at Diamond Springs, no physical development of a town is visible today. Although a small community developed around Kirkwood Springs during its heyday, after the resort declined in the 1930s, the town slowly vanished. Dawson Springs has, however, continued to grow and develop since 1881, despite the fire of 1902 and the decline of the resort in the late-1960s. Today, this town has the most cohesive group of downtown commercial buildings surrounded by several residential neighborhoods.

Comparatively, of the five mineral water resorts in western Kentucky, only Dawson Springs compares with Sulphur Well, although at a much larger scale. Similarities between the two resorts exist in that both towns were bisected by a major transportation corridor; numerous accommodations for visitors in boarding houses or hotels were available during their heyday; a commercial area developed along the transportation route; a residential neighborhood surrounded the resort; and natural disasters such as floods and fires, they have both continued to grow and thrive.

In retrospect, Sulphur Well's development along a major transportation route, State Route 70, was similar to Dawson Springs, however, the only railroad that possibly boosted Sulphur Well's visitation was several miles away in Horse Cave. Taxi service by horse, buggy and eventually car transported visitors to Sulphur Well once a week. The town was also bisected by the South Fork of the Little Barren River where sulphur water flowed, unlike any of the other five towns. In 1949, State Route 70 was widened into a two lane highway and straightened. Although road construction destroyed a portion of "The Grove," it provided a fast and easily accessible route to the Beula Villa Hotel. This complex of buildings, constructed in 1903, was one of the main tourist destinations in Sulphur Well, as well as other boarding houses, hotels, and "The Grove" where tents were raised.

Commercial, religious, educational, governmental, and residential buildings were also constructed along State Route 70 between 1860 and 1949. Only a few historic resources have vanished from the landscape due to fires, floods, and neglect with a similar amount being built after the end of the period of significance, 1949. Today, Sulphur Well reflects its historic appearance as small rural mineral water resort that was prevalent in western Kentucky between 1860 and 1949.

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Sulphur Well Historic District

Metcalf County, Kentucky

## The Planning and Development of Sulphur Well, A Mineral Water Town: 1860-1949

Metcalf County, located in the southcentral part of the state, was formed in 1860 from a portion of Barren County and small sections from Hart, Green, Adair, Cumberland and Monroe counties. Covering 296 square miles (Metcalf, 5), the county was named in honor of Kentucky's tenth governor, Thomas Metcalf. Serving as governor between 1828 and 1832, he also served in the Kentucky House from 1812 to 1816; was a U.S. representative between 1819 and 1828; a state senator between 1834 and 1838; and a delegate to the Whig national convention in 1839 (Harbison, 630).

Edmonton, the county seat, is located just ten miles north of Sulphur Well. Sulphur Well's growth and development is linked to its location in Metcalf County. Situated at the intersection of State Route 70 and the Mitchell-Edwards Road, it is bisected by the South Fork of the Little Barren River where Indians camped and General John Hunt Morgan trained his soldiers and drilled his home guard (Sulphur, 5).

### Early Town Planning: 1845

The initial growth and development of Sulphur Well was sparked not only by the discovery of sulphur water in 1845, but by the early transportation route that developed into a major State highway. After Ezekiel Neal discovered the mineral water on the north side of the river, he opened his home and eventually expanded it into a hotel to accommodate visitors and sight seers who came to partake of the mineral water (Sulphur, 4). Although Neal's residence has vanished from the landscape, sulphur water continues to flow at the river's edge from a concrete arch in Sulphur Well Park (MC-350) # 28.

Because many physicians prescribed mineral water as a cure for a variety of illnesses, they sent their patients to health resorts like Sulphur Well to recuperate. Since the South Fork of the Little Barren River was not navigable waterway (Harbison, 631), visitors traveled over dirt roads between Edmonton and Sulphur Well (Metcalf, 88) on horseback or by buggy. A taxi service also brought out-of-town visitors from the train station in Horse Cave once a week (Sulphur, 10). As dirt roads were covered with hard surface paving, and automobile travel increased, Highway 70 that bisects Sulphur Well, became a major transportation route in Metcalf County.

This major artery provided easier access to the mineral water resort, thus promoting the growth and development of the town through the construction of not only boarding houses, hotels, and commercial buildings, but churches and schools for the inhabitants as

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National Park Service

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Section number 8 Page 9

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### Sulphur Well Historic District

### Metcalfe County, Kentucky

evidenced by the 1924 map of Sulphur Well. See Figure 3. Although the majority of individual buildings appear sporadically scattered along the old single lane State Route 70, similar to a "string town", a tight cluster of buildings marks the location of a central business district on the north side of the river. This district was comprised of a grocery store, hotel, private residence, cream station, dry goods and a post office (Sulphur, 9).

In 1949, the historical pathway of State Route 70 was changed. Veering away from the tight knit group of health resort buildings on the south side of the river, the Beula Villa Hotel, it highway curved northward from the intersection of State Route 869 and spanned across the river. See Figure 4. This highway change has been beneficial to the proposed historic district because traffic flow has been reduced around private residences, farms, churches, schools and hotels that dot the landscape. A sensitive approach used in rerouting this highway resulted in non-threatening development and the preservation of historic buildings in a rural landscape.

Although, the majority of the historic resources within the district have retained their integrity of location, as seen on the 1953 U.S.G.S. map, the strong cluster at the core of the district had somewhat dissipated by that time and a few new buildings appeared along the new State Route 70. See Figure 5. In comparison to the 1973 U.S.G.S. topographic map, only a few new buildings have appeared. See Figure 6.

In retrospect, Sulphur Well is an good example of a town that developed around a mineral water spring, however, this type of town is considered a "string town" because buildings were constructed along a single lane road without a definite plan. Although, block sizes vary from individual lots of 25' by 78' to multi-acre farms with mixed uses, Sulphur Well has developed into a community filled with historic resources that surround a recreational park that continues to offer sulphur water while retaining the historic appearance of a mineral water town dating between 1860 and 1949.

Today, the entire historic district still covers a 26-block area with buildings facing State Route 70, Sulphur Well-Methodist Church Road, Wister Wallace Road and the Mitchell-Edwards Road. The majority of buildings within the district are two-story wood-frame buildings and have an extremely high level of integrity in terms of design and materials. The level of integrity in terms of location and setting in relationship to community planning and development is relatively high because the town continued to grow and prosper around these buildings despite the waning popularity in visiting mineral water towns for their medicinal value or social reasons.

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**Sulphur Well Historic District**

**Metcalf County, Kentucky**

The continued growth, development and prosperity of Sulphur Well depended on a combination of factors: access to the mineral water resort by State Route 70; ample visitor accommodations in local boarding houses and hotels; commercial development supported by a thriving business; and inhabitants who supported their rural community lifestyle by building churches and schools. Although only a few buildings have disappeared over the years, the **Sulphur Well Historic District** continues to reflect the appearance of a mineral water town during the period of significance 1860-1949.

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Sulphur Well Historic District

Metcalf County, Kentucky

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Sulphur Well Historic District

Metcalf County, Kentucky

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• Volunteers

Judge/Executive Richard Froedge  
Cora Emma Jessie  
Kay Harbison  
Jenny Hodges

Terry Edwards  
Charlie Downs  
Lynn Foster  
Pat McCombs

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**Sulphur Well Historic District**

**Metcalf County, Kentucky**

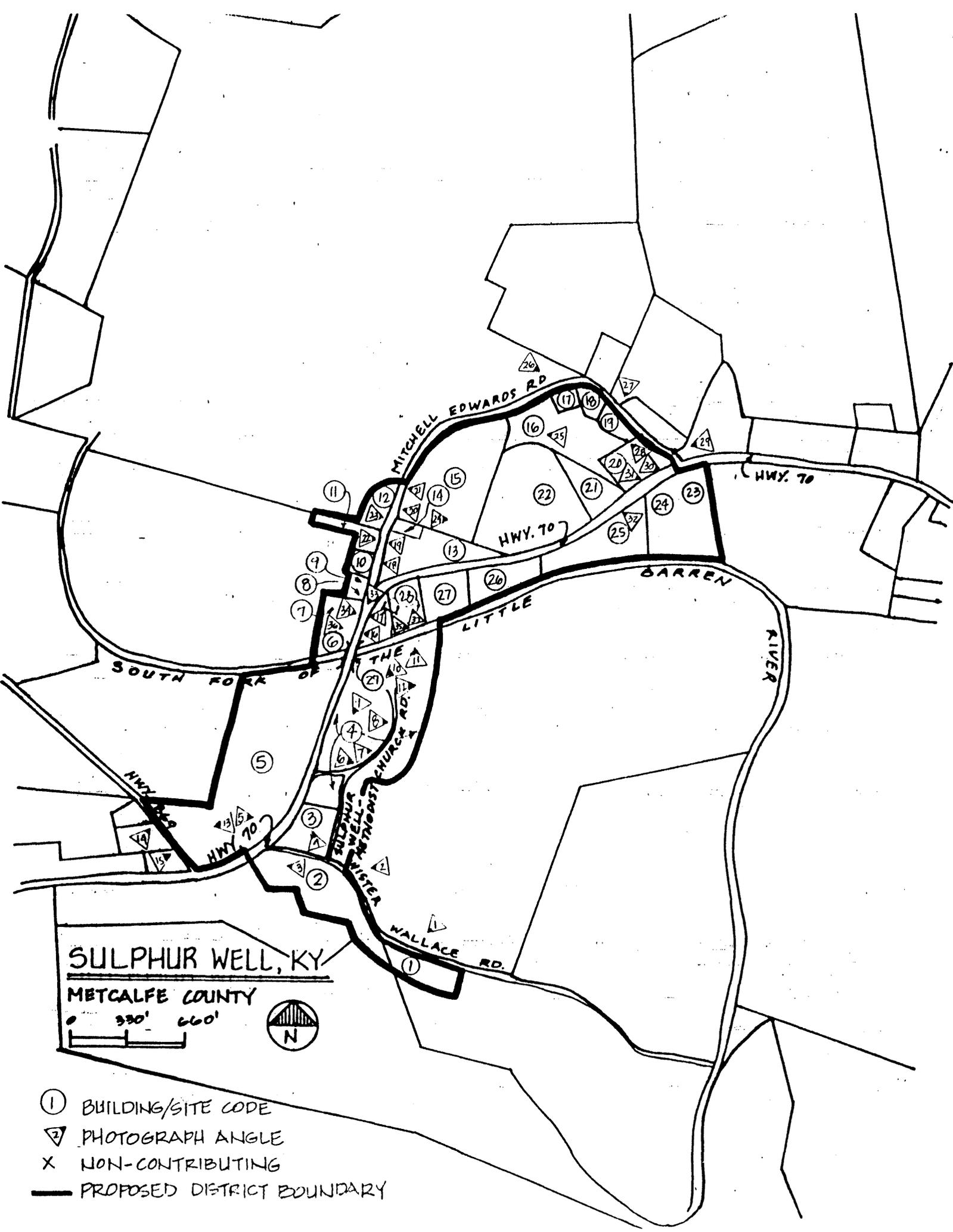
**10. Verbal Boundary Description**

The historic district boundaries of Sulphur Well are as follows: bounded on the south by Wister Wallace Road and the South Fork of the Little Barren River, on the north by the Mitchell-Edwards Road, on the east by farmland and forest, and on the west by open land. The site is delineated on Property Identification Map # 44, blocks 1-4, 8, 9, 46 and part of blocks 45 and 47; Map # 33, blocks 5, 6, 40-44, 44.01, 46.01, 46.02, 45, 48, 62, & 63 and part of block 36; and Map # 34, part of block 11.02 as recorded in the Metcalfe County Property Valuation Office in Edmonton, Kentucky. The district consists of approximately 81 acres.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the Sulphur Well Historic District were chosen to designate the most contiguous group of buildings that display the highest degree of architectural integrity and historical significance representing the period of significance from 1860 through 1949. This district covers 81 acres which includes part of four lots and all of 22 lots located on both sides of State Route 70.

The areas north of Mitchell-Edwards Road, south and east of Wister Wallace Road, and the areas north and south of highway 869, were not included in the district because they contain expansive farmland with no historic resources. Land east of Sulphur Well-Methodist Church Road was also not included in the district because it is primarily a dense forest with a portion of farmland along the rivers edge.



**SULPHUR WELL, KY**  
**METCALFE COUNTY**  
 0 330' 660'  
 N

- ① BUILDING/SITE CODE
- ▽ PHOTOGRAPH ANGLE
- X NON-CONTRIBUTING
- PROPOSED DISTRICT BOUNDARY

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Sulphur Well Historic District  
Photographs

Metcalf County, Kentucky

The following information is the same for all photographs.

3. Donna G. Logsdon
4. 8/97
5. Kentucky Heritage Council  
300 Washington Street  
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Photograph # 1

6. North (Front) facade of  
MC-330 # 1 Price Place

Photograph # 2

6. North & east facade of  
MC-328 # 2 Mary Boston  
Ball Residence

Photograph # 3

6. East facade of barns on  
MC-328 # 2 Mary Boston  
Ball Residence

Photograph # 4

6. East & South facades of  
MC-1 # 3 Sulphur Well  
United Methodist Church

Photograph # 5

6. West (front) facade of  
MC-1 # 3 Sulphur Well  
United Methodist Church  
parsonage.

Photograph # 6

6. West (Front) facade of  
MC-8 # 4 Beula Villa Hotel  
Cottage

Photograph # 7

6. South (side) facade of  
MC-6 # 4 Beula Villa Hotel

Photograph # 8

6. West (front) facade of  
MC-9 # 4 Beula Villa Hotel  
Bowling Alley

Photograph # 9

6. North (rear) facade of  
MC-7 # 4 Beula Villa Hotel  
Annex

Photograph # 10

6. View facing south of  
MC-5 # 4 The Grove of  
outdoor grill, pavilion and King  
Crenshaw Building (1968)  
(non-contributing)

Photograph # 11

6. View facing north of  
MC-350 # 28 Sulphur Well Park  
and the South Fork of the Little  
Barren River from The Grove

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**Sulphur Well Historic District  
Photographs**

**Metcalf County, Kentucky**

The following information is the same for all photographs.

3. Donna G. Logsdon

4. 8/97

5. Kentucky Heritage Council  
300 Washington Street  
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Photograph # 12

6. View facing northeast of  
(MC-5) # 4 The Grove  
playground equipment

Photograph # 18

6. East (side) facade of  
MC-346 # 10 Taylor  
Bailey Residence

Photograph # 13

6. View facing southwest of  
MC-349 # 5 C.W. Thompson  
Monument

Photograph # 19

6. East (front) facade of  
MC-335 # 11 Edward  
Clark Residence

Photograph # 14

6. Southwest (front) facades of  
MC-349 # 5 Dennis Caffee  
Residence barns and smokehouse

Photograph # 20

6. East (front) facade of  
MC-3 # 12 Harding-Mitchell  
Place barn & outbuildings

Photograph # 15

6. South (front) facade of  
MC-349 # 5 Dennis Caffee  
Residence (non-contributing)

Photograph # 21

6. East (front) facade of  
MC-3 # 12  
Harding-Mitchell Place

Photograph # 16

6. East (front) facade of  
MC- 332 # 6 Mary C.  
Hurt Residence

Photograph # 22

6. West (front) facade of  
MC-333 # 13  
J.B. Smith Store

Photograph # 17

6. East (front) facade of  
MC-2 # 7 Brown's Grocery

Photograph # 23

6. West (front) facade of  
MC-334 # 14  
Voting House

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

**Sulphur Well Historic District  
Photographs**

**Metcalf County, Kentucky**

The following information is the same for all photographs.

3. Donna G. Logsdon
4. 8/97
5. Kentucky Heritage Council  
300 Washington Street  
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Photograph # 24

6. West (front) facade of  
MC-351 # 15  
J.B. Smith Place barn

Photograph # 25

6. View looking southwest of  
MC-347 # 16  
Smith Cemetery

Photograph # 26

6. Northwest (front) facade of  
MC-337 # 17  
Avis O. Edwards Residence

Photograph # 27

6. North (front) facade of  
MC-338 # 19  
Sulphur Well Branch Church  
of Latter Day Saints

Photograph # 28

6. East ( side) facade of  
MC-338 # 19  
Sulphur Well Branch Church  
of Latter Day Saints

Photograph # 29

6. Northeast (front) facade of  
MC-339 # 20  
Ray & Pauline Kinnaird Residence

Photograph # 30

6. Northwest (front) facade of  
MC-340 # 23  
Williams & Tucker Auto Parts

Photograph # 31

6. Northwest (front) facade of  
MC-343 # 24  
L.T. Slinker Mill  
(non-contributing)

Photograph # 32

6. Southeast (front) facade of  
MC-342 # 21  
Ray Kinnaird Store

Photograph # 33

6. View looking south of  
MC- 341 # 29  
Bridge at State Route 70