

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received FEB 12 1986

date entered 1 28 1986

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Multiple Resources of Corbin, Kentucky

and/or common 1 District and 6 Individual Properties

2. Location

street & number Corporate Limits of Corbin, Kentucky not for publication

city, town Corbin vicinity of

state Kentucky code 021 county Whitley & Knox Counties code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>NA</u> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<u>NA</u> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple owners; see continuation sheet

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Whitley & Knox County Courthouses

street & number

city, town Williamsburg and Barbourville state Kentucky

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Kentucky Historic Resources Inventory has this property been determined eligible? \* yes  no

date 1985 federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Kentucky Heritage Council

city, town Frankfort state Kentucky

\*The East Main Street Bridge has been Determined Eligible.

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *moved date 1905
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		*East Main Street Bridge

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

#### Survey Methodology

In the summer of 1984, the city of Corbin received a matching grant from the Kentucky Heritage Council to complete the survey of architecturally and historically important buildings in the community. Prior to the survey, three buildings and one bridge had been surveyed in Corbin. To date, forty-nine buildings have been photographed and researched. Local contacts for the survey were Mayor Heath and Peggy Smith from the Corbin city government. Background information was gathered from the vertical files of the Corbin Library, Sanborn Insurance Maps, and interviews with local citizens. This nomination contains one district and six individual nominations.

#### Overview

The city of Corbin is located in Whitley County in the mountainous area of southeastern Kentucky. Whitley County was Kentucky's fifty-ninth county and was formed from sections of Knox County in 1818. It was named for William Whitley, one of Kentucky's early settlers. He also built the first brick house in the state which still stands near Crab Orchard in Lincoln County.

The 458 square miles of the county are drained by the Cumberland River and its tributaries. Seventy-five percent of the surface area of the county is covered in forest. The major products of the county are coal, oil, and lumber.

The settlement at Corbin has had three different names during its history. It was originally called Lynn Camp after William Lynn, a hunter from Bowling Green, Virginia, who explored the area in the late eighteenth century. The stream to the east of the present downtown is still called Lynn Camp Creek. In the late nineteenth century, the town was called Cummins Station because the post office was located in Nelson Cummins's home. The name "Cummins Station" was, however, similar to the name of another community in Kentucky, so the postal service requested a change. Jim Eaton, an agent for the L & N railroad, renamed the town "Corbin." The town's new name was the middle name of James Floyd, the pastor of the First Christian Church. Other early settlements in the vicinity were Whippoorwill and Woodbine. Since that time, Corbin has grown to be the railroad center of southeast Kentucky. Now accessible by I-75, US 25E, and US 25W, Corbin has a greater population than Williamsburg, the county seat of Whitley County.

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Multiple Resources of Corbin, Ky.

Continuation sheet

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Property

Property Owner

First Christian Church

C.H. Dudley, Pastor  
First Christian Church  
First and Kentucky Avenue  
Corbin, Ky. 40701

Corbin Bank Building  
Main and Centre Street

Dr. Starr Steele  
c/o Ronald Steele  
709 West Fifth  
Corbin, Ky. 40701

Mershon Building  
Centre Street

Paul Jones  
Hall-Watson Furniture  
Centre Street  
Corbin, Ky. 40701

Carnegie Library  
Centre Street

Mr. and Mrs. James Vernon  
606 Leawood Avenue  
Frankfort, Ky. 40601

Engineers Street Bridge  
Lynn Camp Creek

Mayor F.D. Heath  
City Hall  
Corbin, Ky. 40701

St. Camillus School

Sisters of Divine Providence  
St. Anne Convent  
Rt. 8  
Melbourne, Ky. 41059

Gordon Hill Road District

309 Gordon Hill Road

Nell Evans  
309 Gordon Hill Road  
Corbin, Ky. 40701

311 Gordon Hill Road

Willard and Sharee Hart  
311 Gordon Hill Road  
Corbin, Ky. 40701

401 Gordon Hill Road

Mrs. I.O. Chitwood  
401 Gordon Hill Road  
Corbin, Ky. 40701

403 Gordon Hill Road

Alfred Hendrickson  
1619 Dunbarton Wynd  
Louisville, Ky. 40205

Gordon Hill Road District

Property

Property Owner

501 Gordon Hill Road

Cox Estate  
c/o W.M. Cox, Jr.  
401 Main St.  
Williamsburg, Ky. 40769

310 Gordon Hill Road

Lloyd Jones  
310 Gordon Hill Road  
Corbin, Ky. 40701

In addition there is one non-contributing structure within the boundaries of the Gordon Hill Road District.

405 Gordon Hill Road  
(Modern Intrusion)

Linda Smith  
405 Gordon Hill Road  
Corbin, Ky. 40701

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Corbin Multiple Resource Area Overview

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HISTORIC CONTEXT

The history of Corbin is intertwined with the expansion of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. After the Civil War, the executives of the L & N Railroad decided to expand into the Cumberland Valley to gain access to the coal and iron ore of the region. The railroad reached Livingston, north of Corbin, in 1870. Then ten more years were spent boring and tunneling through the mountainous terrain south of Livingston to London and Corbin. The railroad bridged the Cumberland River to Williamsburg and reached Pineville by 1888. Middlesboro was added to the network in 1889. A connection was made with the Norfolk and Western Railroad in Shawnee, Tennessee in 1890.

While the tracks were being extended, improvements were being made to the facilities in Corbin. The L & N established a small railroad yard, roundhouse, and engine house for equipment maintenance. Passengers travelling to points east and south from Louisville and Lexington changed trains at Corbin. J. F. Ashworth was named the first master mechanic at the yard and J. W. Logsdon was the division superintendent. In 1891, the railroad purchased additional land from E. Y. McKehan to expand the roundhouse and to build a blacksmith's shop. Both projects were completed in 1893.

The expansion of the railroad's services spurred Corbin's growth. In 1892, the Congregationalist and Presbyterian Churches were organized. David Chestnut began the first newspaper. Medical offices were opened in 1895 when Drs. Will and Jasper Bryant began their practice. The same year, Corbin was incorporated as a town through a bill introduced in the state legislature by R. C. "Red" Browning. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, the L & N employed approximately one-hundred men at the Cumberland Valley division headquarters in Corbin. Corbin itself had two planing mills, two sawmills, a tin shop, cabinet makers shop, brickyard, and twenty-five stores selling groceries, dry goods, and drugs.

E. Y. McKehan owned one of the early barn-like stores near the railroad roundhouse. He also ran the Corbin Land Company which sold lots for commercial and residential development. D. T. Chestnut and Alex Francis owned another real estate development company, called the Corbin Town Company. The Corbin Town Company not only sold lots, but also built houses. Other

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Corbin Multiple Resource Area Overview

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businesses at the time were the Gastineau Butcher Shop, B. C. Hubbard and Company which sold ladies' and children's clothes, Robert Wigginton's store and meat market, Francis Steele's store which had general merchandise, and the enterprises owned by Joe Mitchell and Major Heath.

The railroad yard and maintenance shop attracted boilermakers, blacksmiths, and machinists from other parts of the state. By 1900, Corbin's population was nine hundred. In 1902, the Corbin Banking Company was established. At the same time, two bridges were built across Lynn Camp Creek. One bridge was for pedestrians and was located near Master Street. The other structure was a wagon bridge on the Barbourville Road. Corbin was designated a Sixth Class City in 1902 while F. B. Heath was mayor.

A YMCA was established to help alleviate the housing shortage caused by the influx of L & N workers. Many men stayed in boarding houses such as the Central Hotel, nicknamed the "Ape-yard." Other areas of town also had colorful names such as "Scuffletown" and "Brickbat Hill."

The volatile mix of railroad workers with those from the timber industries earned Corbin a reputation for violence in the late nineteenth century, especially in an area of town known as "Saloon Row." Both a deputy town marshall and a town marshall were shot during this period. The state guard was sent to Corbin twice by the governor to reestablish order. Another notorious area of town was "Hell's Half Acre" which was on the north bank of Lynn Camp Creek in Laurel County and out of the jurisdiction of municipal authorities.

The liquor traffic was temporarily suspended in 1903. Shortly after it resumed, ten saloons on Florence Avenue and twelve other buildings were destroyed by fire.

By 1906, there were 102 coal mines in operation within twenty-five miles of Corbin. The Wilton and Bertha mines alone employed 1500 men. During this same period, the L & N expanded into the heart of the southeastern coal country. From 1907 to 1911, tracks were laid up the Cumberland River Valley from Pineville to Loyall, Harlan, and Benham. After 1911, the lines were laid up Poor Fork and Clover Branch to Lynch, High Point, and other areas of rural Bell and Harlan Counties. Meanwhile, the grade on the main line from Cincinnati was

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improved so that greater coal tonnages could be hauled along the route.

In preparation for the expansion, the L & N started several projects in the Corbin railroad yard. A new roundhouse, machine shop, stationary boilers, and dynamos were built. Pneumatic jacks were installed to facilitate the dropping of wheels for engine repair.

Legal liquor was abolished in 1907. Corbin's population reached 3500 by 1910. Another devastating fire in 1914 started in the Goodwin Building on the south side of Centre Street. Before it was contained, fourteen businesses were destroyed.

The defence effort for World War I caused another expansion of the railroad yards and the construction of a new locomotive shop. U. S. Steel invested in the coal mines at Lynch and Henry Ford bought the mines at Banner Fork. By 1930, Corbin had a population of 8,037.

During World War II, as many as 75,000 tons of coal a day passed through Corbin on its way to either Louisville or Atlanta. Now the railroad yard handles unit coal trains.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1902-1928      **Builder/Architect** See individual sheets

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Multiple Resource Area of Corbin is significant in the categories of architecture, education, and commerce for the period 1902-1928. Established as a railyard late in the nineteenth century, Corbin's first buildings were strictly utilitarian in design. Expansion of the railyard spawned the commercial expansion of the town. The merchants, lawyers, and railroad administrators built residences in neighborhoods away from the railyard. The Gordon Hill District demonstrates local builders' abilities to design houses according to nationally popular styles such as the Bungalow and their access to skilled craftsmen to fabricate the details. Regionally prominent architects were at work in Corbin during the period, working on St. Camillus School and the First Christian Church.

St. Camillus also figures in the establishment of parishes and missions in southeastern Kentucky by Roman Catholic educators. At first attracted by the influx of Roman Catholic miners, the Catholics eventually set up the non-denominational schools which still function as major educational resources in the area. Also significant in education is the Carnegie Library, established in 1916 as a part of the national distribution of the Carnegie funds.

The commercial growth of Corbin in the early twentieth century is best represented by the Corbin Bank Building, built in 1902, and the Mershon Building, built in 1913. The Corbin Bank Building was one of the first brick buildings in Corbin and served as a commercial center on the original main thoroughfare of town. Originally built as a multi-purpose building with many shops and apartments, the Mershon Building at one time even housed a hospital. Both the Corbin Bank Building and the Mershon Building retain a sense of Corbin's business section in the early twentieth century.

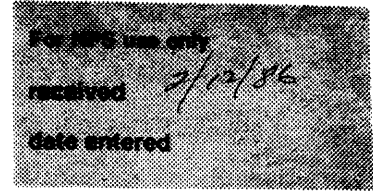
The growth of Corbin at the turn of the century was dependent on the existence of a high-quality transportation system. An effective road system with bridges over Lynn Camp Creek was, therefore, necessary. The East Main Street Bridge played an important role in Corbin's early history providing direct access to Knox County and thereby allowing for the development of the eastern section of Corbin. The East Main Street Bridge continued to play an important role in the community's history after being moved to the Engineer Street crossing of Lynn Camp Creek in 1095. The bridge is also significant as a well-preserved example of the Pratt-through Truss type of bridges.





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Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Corbin Multiple Resource Area  
State Knox County (also in Whitley County), KENTUCKY

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Carnegie Library

~~Substantive Review~~ Keeper

Cover A Schlager 3/28/86

Attest

A Schlager 3/28/86

2. Corbin Bank Building

~~Substantive Review~~ Keeper

A Schlager 3/28/86

Attest

3. East Main Street Bridge

~~Substantive Review~~ Keeper

A Schlager 3/28/86

Attest

4. First Christian Church

~~Substantive Review~~ Keeper

A Schlager 3/28/86

Attest

5. Gordon Hill Road Historic District

~~Substantive Review~~ Keeper

A Schlager 3/28/86

Attest

6. Mershon Building

~~Substantive Review~~ Keeper

A Schlager 3/28/86

Attest

7. St. Camillus Academy

~~Substantive Review~~ Keeper

A Schlager 3/28/86

Attest

8.

Keeper

Attest

9.

Keeper

Attest

10.

Keeper

Attest