

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received SEP 20 1988

date entered

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Historic Resources of Louisa, Kentucky

and or common N/A

2. Location

street & number Within the City Limits N/A not for publication

city, town Louisa N/A vicinity of

state Kentucky code KY county Lawrence code 127

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property Multiple -- see individual and district nominations

name N/A

street & number N/A

city, town N/A N/A vicinity of state N/A

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Lawrence County Courthouse

street & number N/A

city, town Louisa state Kentucky

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1975 federal state county local

depository for survey records Kentucky Heritage Council

city, town Frankfort state Kentucky

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved	date (see Louisa Residential Historic District)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Louisa is the county seat of Lawrence County, Kentucky, located in the north-eastern area of the state at the confluence of the Big Sandy River and its forks, the Tug and the Levisa. The river and Tug Fork form part of the boundary between Kentucky and West Virginia. Louisa lies in the waterways' bottomland, surrounded by hardwood-covered hills containing oil and cannel and bituminous coal. The wealth of natural resources and the navigability of the waterways -- south to the Pikeville, Kentucky vicinity and north to the juncture of the Big Sandy and Ohio Rivers at Catlettsburg, Kentucky -- have been significant factors in the development of Louisa and the surrounding area.

Similar to the surrounding portion of Eastern Kentucky, Lawrence County's population steadily declined for most of this century for a variety of reasons including a decrease in the need for mine workers. The number of county residents fell from more than 20,000 in 1910 to approximately 10,720 in 1970. During the 1970s, however, the county population trend shifted dramatically with an increase of more than 3,000 by 1980. Today, Louisa has approximately 2,000 people, about the same number it had in 1910.¹

Louisa is a rather typical small, Eastern Kentucky county seat. Central Louisa has approximately 30 commercial buildings, half of them clustered around the Courthouse Square and the rest scattered along the incoming roads or along the railroad. There also is a modern shopping center near Kentucky 23 at the west edge of town. Most residences are modest single-family dwellings located within the city limits.

The town is laid out in a grid of wide streets according to the plat drawn by early English settler and landowner Frederick Moore and formally adopted around 1825.² Settlement commenced around 1800, primarily with buildings of log construction. This building technique remained prevalent until the advent of saw mills in the river valley around 1840 and the concomitant increase of balloon frame and post and beam buildings, the latter especially popular for non-residential uses. Virtually none of the early log buildings is known to have survived, although it is suspected that some, such as the original unit of the Cushing-Stewart House in the Louisa Residential Historic District, are concealed by later overbuilding. Three frame buildings known to have been erected between circa 1840 and 1860 and a few antebellum post and beam buildings, including the Big Sandy Milling Company, remain standing. The survival of only one antebellum brick structure, the Captain Freese House, suggests that there was very little construction in brick during the period.

Rapid growth following the stagnant Civil War period yielded numerous one-story, balloon frame commercial buildings, none of which is extant. By the last decades of the nineteenth century, the use of brick for commercial buildings was becoming increasingly popular; most of these early brick examples, however, have been altered

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substantially.

Developments in Louisa's post-bellum residential construction paralleled the commercial building patterns of the period. Residential construction, mostly balloon frame, was prolific, with the larger houses displaying vernacular variations of the Victorian styles popular across the country, principally the Queen Anne. Most of the relatively few brick residences exhibit certain elements that originated with the Italianate style, such as segmental-arched windows and corbelled pendant cornices.

Louisa's most productive years spanned the turn of this century. Several large and distinctively fashionable houses built between 1890 and 1911 in the Louisa Residential Historic District and a block of mid-1920s buildings in the Louisa Commercial Historic District represent the peak of construction. By the late 1920s, the decline in local population was clearly manifest in a steady decrease in the rate of new construction.³ Although a few noteworthy structures were built in central Louisa, most houses dating from the 1920s until World War II were erected at the town's periphery.

The nomination for the Historic Resources of Louisa (Partial Inventory) encompasses two districts and four individual properties (Map #2). The Louisa Commercial Historic District contains six contributing buildings, all constructed between 1880 and 1931. The Louisa Residential Historic District consists of 16 houses, two churches, four outbuildings and three iron fences that contribute to its historic character; five buildings and a garage are non-contributing. The four individual sites are the Captain Freese House (Kentucky Historic Resource LAL-11), the Big Sandy Milling Company (KHR LAL-10), the Atkins-Carter House (KHR LAL-12) and the Louisa United Methodist Church (KHR LAL-13). In addition, two properties already have been listed individually in the National Register: the Fred Vinson Birthplace (listed September 1974) and the First United Methodist Church (listed November 1984 and included in the Louisa Residential Historic District).

This nomination has been prepared under a grant awarded to the City of Louisa by the Kentucky Heritage Council. The survey for this nomination also provided data for the Kentucky Historic Resources Inventory. The nomination for the Historic Resources of Louisa, (Partial Inventory) is primarily architectural in emphasis, documenting most properties as significant under criterion C. Buildings dating after 1938 are not nominated unless they represent obviously outstanding examples of recognizable styles since there exists limited context within which the more common recent styles can be evaluated. Although the area's major historical themes, such as settlement, industry and river transportation, are represented by buildings nominated under criteria A and B, the potential exists for identifying other such series of events or persons associated with these events and evaluating and nominating properties significant in their connections to them. Archaeological and other resources potentially

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eligible for their ability to convey information (criterion D) have not been evaluated and are not included in this inventory. The documentation for individual properties nominated here does not necessarily include all of the areas in which any given property may be significant.

Survey Methodology

A comprehensive survey of Louisa was carried out during August and September of 1985 by consultant Dorinda Kim M. Blackey, according to the survey methodology of the Kentucky Heritage Council as defined in their Survey Manual, 1985, and by the National Park Service in Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning, 1977. An individual inventory form was completed for significant buildings; neighborhood inventory forms were completed for significant groups of buildings. The survey entailed a thorough photographic documentation of individual sites and neighborhoods. Research included on-site analysis, interviews with local citizens, and investigation of primary and secondary sources.

At the conclusion of the survey, the surveyor and Kentucky Heritage Council staff evaluated the Kentucky Historic Resources forms against National Register criteria and made an on-site inspection in order to identify individual properties and districts eligible for the Register.

Photographs

Although the majority of photographs included in this nomination were taken in 1985, they continue to depict the current appearance of the resources, as confirmed by a visit to Louisa during the first quarter of 1988.

1

George Wollford, Lawrence County: A Pictorial History, Lawrence County Public Library, n.d.

2

Ibid.

3

Ibid.

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 type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) community development
Specific dates	Builder/Architect	Unknown		

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The built environment included in the nomination of the Historic Resources of Louisa (Partial Inventory) is significant under National Register Criteria A, B and C. The Big Sandy Milling Company, the Captain Freese House, and the two districts are important under Criterion A; the Captain Freese House also is noteworthy under Criterion B. Significance under Criterion C applies to all of the properties.

Due to its designation as a county seat and its location on the Big Sandy River, Louisa has been a regional focal point for trade, government, education, organized religion, and social gatherings. The community's early nineteenth-century settlement may be traced to the establishment of farms sited along the river banks to take advantage of that natural transportation to get their crops to market. Louisa was created by the Kentucky General Assembly in 1822 when the Assembly formed Lawrence County out of Greenup and Floyd Counties. The Assembly proposed a town plan which included a square for the new county seat's courthouse. This plan was not accepted locally, and in 1825 the townspeople adopted Frederick Moore's plat. Moore had settled in the area in 1815 after purchasing 35 acres, much of which became the town of Louisa. (Part of Moore's land was on the West Virginia side of the river, where he settled.) Moore and other early settlers traded fur, tanbark and ginseng.

Throughout the early and mid nineteenth century, residents from across Lawrence County brought their goods to Louisa for transport via the river and its forks to the larger regional markets, which in turn provided products and information from trend-setting metropolitan areas. The town became a trading center for the county, and soon developed small industries for the processing of local resources. Logging throughout the county commenced well before the Civil War, and sawmills appeared in the Louisa area around 1840. Numerous county residents mined coal independently; one coal company opened a mine near Louisa in the 1840s, but it closed during the Civil War. Flat boats were used to export goods until 1837 when the steamboat was introduced. These boats often were loaded with coal and floated to Cincinnati where both the coal and the boat would be sold. In 1843, Louisa boasted a "Big Hotel" and clothing store, among other enterprises. The dearth of extant antebellum buildings indicates the town's small population -- 87 in 1830 and only 258 by 1860.

In contrast, when exploitation of the region's rich oil and coal deposits brought about a marked increase in population and prosperity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many Louisa residents constructed fashionable and solidly built structures for their shops and offices as well as for their residences. Trade lull during the Civil War, but picked up quickly afterwards. By 1870, the region's timber and coal resources were being exploited in earnest and Louisa's economic health improved as the town provided commodities and services to the industrial laborers. The advent of the railroad in 1881 and continued expansion of the local coal industry reinforced Louisa's role as a local transportation and

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market center. Some Louisa residents became wealthy by trading in real estate and mineral rights, while others thrived as merchants, artisans and professionals such as doctors and lawyers. Louisa's healthy economy endured until around 1930 when the area's virgin forests were depleted and the Depression brought about a drastic reduction in coal mining.

A portion of Louisa's built environment is architecturally significant. Two individual buildings are notable as the town's only remaining, well preserved examples of particular building methods, while two others are outstanding examples of their particular architectural styles. The residential and commercial districts also are cited as collections of representative as well as distinctive examples of the building types and styles that characterized Louisa's major periods of development. Overall, Eastern Kentucky's built environment mirrors the region's poverty in its simple construction methods and austerity. In comparison, Louisa's architectural fabric is characterized by more sophisticated construction techniques and a more exuberant display of popular styles. This situation is especially apparent in the Louisa Residential Historic District, highlighted by distinctive vernacular interpretations of the Victorian styles, and in the Louisa Commercial Historic District containing striking examples of the Italianate and Queen Anne styles.

Due to the strong desire of the populace to indicate financial stability via new structures, the mere survival of an older building is rare in Eastern Kentucky. The existence of a shared perception that what they have is bad and should be changed, in combination with poor economic conditions, often results in poorly planned and executed alterations. Thus, the existence of an intact group of older buildings, regardless of historical and architectural merit, is in itself notable. The fact that Louisa's residential and commercial districts contain architecturally distinctive buildings augments their significance.

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_____, 150th Anniversary, June 29, 1972.

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Jillson, Willard R. "Lawrence Co., KY: Resources, Attractions, Opportunities." Kentucky Opportunities, Department of Associated Industries of Kentucky (1942).

Lipscomb, Alexander. The Commercial History of the Southern States. Press of John P. Morton & Co. (1903).

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9/20/88

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

Name Louisa MRA
State Lawrence County, KENTUCKY

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

Cover

~~Substantive Review~~ Substantive Review

for

Keeper

Patrick Andrus 11/1/88

1. Atkins--Carter House

~~Substantive Review~~ Substantive Review

for

Keeper

Patrick Andrus 11/1/88

Attest

2. Big Sandy Milling Company

~~Substantive Review~~ Substantive Review

for

Keeper

Patrick Andrus 11/1/88

Attest

3. Freese, Captain, House

Substantive Review

for

Keeper

Patrick Andrus 11/1/88

Attest

4. Louisa Commercial Historic District

~~Substantive Review~~ Substantive Review

for

Keeper

Patrick Andrus 11/1/88

Attest

5. Louisa Residential Historic District

Substantive Review

for

Keeper

Patrick Andrus 11/1/88

Attest

SMU 6. Louisa United Methodist Church

~~Substantive Review~~ Substantive Review

for

Keeper

Patrick Andrus 11/1/88

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7.

Keeper

Attest

8.

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9.

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Attest

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