

WEST LOUISVILLE MULTIPLE RESOURCE AREA, EXPANSION

KENTUCKY HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY

1. Name of Site: Benjamin Grove House (West Louisville M.R.A.)	16. Date: 1864	[4]
2. Prehistoric Site Building XX Object Historic Site Structure Other	17. Style: Vernacular	[] [V]
3. Location: 518 N. 26th Street Louisville, KY	18. Architect/Builder:	[]
4. ADD/County: Jefferson [111]	19. No. of Stories: 2	[C]
5. Original Owner: Benjamin Grove	20. Original Floor Plan: unknown	[Q]
6. Other Names:	21. Single Pile Double Pile N.A. X	[] [] [X]
7. Owners Name: Mr. & Mrs. Richard Meadows	22. Roof Form & Original Material: Gabled	[] []
8. Owners Address: 518 N. 26th Street	23. Structural Material: brick	[C]
9. Evaluation: [D]	24. Exterior Finish: brick (common)	[B] []
10. Status & Date: Nat. Landmark KY Survey Nat. Register Local Landmark Landmark Cert. HABS/HAER	25. Foundation Material: stone	[A]
11. N.R. Group District Name West Louisville [] Mult. Resource Area [] Thematic Name []	26. Major Alterations: Moved Wall Treat. Additions XX None	[] [] []
12. Historical Theme: Primary: [Q] Secondary: [] Other: [D]	27. Outbuildings: none	[]
13. Statement of Significance: See continuation sheet	28. Original Use: Residence	[A]
	29. Present Use: and Business Residence	Y
	30. Condition: good	[B]
	31. Endangered Yes No XX	[]
	31. Attach Photos Roll: Photo Nos: See Continuation Sheet	

14. History:

This building was first occupied by Benjamin Grove, a prominent Portland cemetery engineer and landscape gardener who designed St. Michael Cemetery, St. Louis Cemetery, Adath Isreal Cemetery and Cave Hill Cemetery. He is also attributed with a 1853 sketch of Portland and a drawing of the layout of the Linden Grove Cemetery in Covington Kentucky.

15. Source of Historical Information:

See Continuation Sheet

33. Prepared by: Joanne Weeter

34. Organization: Louisville Landmarks Commission

35. Date: July, 1984

KENTUCKY HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY

-
- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| 36. UTM Point of Primary Building: | 37. USGS Quadrant: | 38. G.I.S. Mod. [] |
| 16 605780 4236260 | New Albany | 39. Coordinate Accuracy [] |
-
40. UTM Points of Boundary:
- | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|
| A. _____ | C. _____ | E. _____ |
| B. _____ | D. _____ | F. _____ |
-
41. Total Acreage in Present Property: .1 42. Acreage Included in Nominated Boundary:
-
43. Site Plan and Boundary Description and Justification:

The legal description for the Benjamin Grove House is City of Louisville Block 4B, Lot 116. The building described here in is the only structure on the lot.

-
44. Description and House Plan:

See Continuation Sheet

WEST LOUISVILLE MULTIPLE RESOURCE AREA, EXPANSION

Benjamin Grove House, Louisville, Jefferson Co., KY

Continuation sheet

Item number 13

Page 3

The Benjamin Grove House is locally significant as the home Benjamin Grove, built for Grove and his family in 1864 and was inhabited by them until 1876. A prominent landscape gardener, civil engineer and cemetery engineer, and an artist between 1850 and his death in 1915; He is responsible for the design of St. Michael Cemetery in 1851, an 1853 drawing of Portland, a drawing of the layout of Linden Grove Cemetery in Covington, Kentucky, in 1858 (National Register, June 1976), the design of St. Louis Cemetery in 1867 (included as part of the Highlands National Register District, February 1983), the design of Adath Isreal Cemetery in 1876 (National Register, June 1982), and the design of a portion of Cave Hill Cemetery in the late 1880's (National Register, December 1979).

When Benjamin Grove made the house on 26th Street his home, 26th Street was filled with similar residences. The road fed directly into the Portland Canal making it a busy thoroughfare and vital to the City's commercial center. It was indeed fitting that such a prominent citizen should reside on such an important street.

In an advertisement that appeared in the July 17, 1865 Democrat, Benjamin Grove expounds upon his considerable talent. He identifies himself as "Benjamin Grove, Topographical and Cemetery Engineer..." and goes on to tout his talents at "... leveling, land surveying, and mapping, new rural cemeteries, rural pleasure grounds, suburban garden lots etc. etc. tastefully designed, and drawn in suitable styles of Landscape Gardening and staked out according to plan. Terms moderate." Although it appears our subject was a man of many talents it was in the area of cemetery engineer, akin to the modern Landscape Architect, that Benjamin Grove was most prominent. Evidently his reputation reached far and wide for on one of the receipts for cemetery plots at St. Louis Cemetery, Mr. Grove indicates references as to the quality of his work from a tri-state area including Ohio, Indiana, and Tennessee.

Benjamin Grove was born in Birmingham, England, in 1823. As a young man he married Elizabeth Robinson and together they immigrated to the United States. They finally settled in New Albany, Indiana, in the 1850s but eventually moved across river to the town of Portland. For several years he was employed as a surveyor, first for the Ft. Wayne and Indianapolis Railroad and later for the Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company. During the years following the Civil War, Grove turned to landscape gardening and cemetery design for his livelihood. Indeed, it is in this field that he made his mark on the City of Louisville and its environs by his thoughtful and inspiring landscape designs.

St. Michael Cemetery was one of Benjamin Groves earliest landscaping endeavors. Designed in 1851, it was the first of many commissions for cemetery designs for the Catholic church. Intended for use exclusively by German Catholics it was to serve the surrounding Schitzelburg-Germantown neighborhood. The surviving map of the original plan shows a series of curvilinear roads winding around hills and valleys, sympathetic to the area's topography.

WEST LOUISVILLE MULTIPLE RESOURCE AREA, EXPANSION

Benjamin Grove House, Louisville, Jefferson Co., KY

Continuation sheet

Item number 13

Page 4

Benjamin Grove had considerable talent as an artist in addition to his skill as a landscape designer. Sometime around the turn of the century an engraving of Portland appeared in the Louisville Courier Journal and Times. It was captioned "When Portland was a metropolis: A view From Sand Island, (redrawn from a sketch made in 1853 by B. Grove, one of the pioneer artists of Louisville)." It shows Portland as a vital port town, bustling with the energy and excitement of loading and unloading goods and materials from riverboats that have traveled the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. (view 3)

According to some, the view that appeared in the paper has several discrepancies indicating one of the riverboats illustrated was not built until one year later, in 1854. There is also a possibility that this particular boat already existed in 1853 but that it underwent a name change within the following year. In addition, other modern day historians contend that the port view makes the buildings pictured seem larger than life. This may be due to the artist's perspective from Sand Island. However, after careful research by the Portland Museum, in which they hired a draftsman to do an architectural rendering of the port view according to building measurements of the day, there seems good reasons to believe that this view is indeed an accurate portrayal of 1853 Portland. Tax records of the day indicate substantial buildings stood on those particular lots in the 1850s, further supporting the theory that the artist's rendering was true.

Despite the fact that it was signed just B. Grove, reasoning supports the fact that it was indeed executed by Benjamin Grove especially when one considers Grove's prominent position in the community, the artistic skills necessary for work as a landscape designer and because there was no other B. Grove listed in the city directory during that time period. None the less, through the portrayal of Portland, the artist exhibits a clear command of talent. The density of buildings, the throng of river traffic and the movement of sky and water captures an exciting moment in time of 1858 Portland.

Between 1858 and the late 1880s Benjamin Grove planned or designed and executed a total of four cemeteries in the Louisville area. Promoting himself as a cemetery engineer, he was the predecessor to those whom we now refer to as landscape architects.

Indeed Grove was at the forefront of rural cemetery design in Louisville while the nineteenth century and its changing attitude on death were influencing, and dictating the use and design of rural cemeteries. In the past, rapidly growing cities buried their dead amidst the hustle and bustle of urban life. While this may have made it convenient to visit the graves of the dear departed it also created a number of problems. The odors of these areas were offensive and thought to spread disease. In addition, with an ever increasing population, these city graveyards were becoming so overcrowded that, at times, the remains of one had to be moved or otherwise disposed of to accommodate another. In other instances, city grave yards were totally disregarded as land became in greater demand and buildings were actually constructed atop the remains. Add to this the high infant mortality rate and short life expectancy to realize the extreme need to change the situation.

WEST LOUISVILLE MULTIPLE RESOURCE AREA, EXPANSION

Benjamin Grove House, Louisville, Jefferson Co., KY

Continuation sheet

Item number 13

Page 5

Thus, the rural cemetery tried to correct the problems of the past by creating an atmosphere where the living were invited to linger.

The ideal cemetery, a landscaped area with hills and valleys, lakes and other water areas, played a role in the mourning ritual; it was a place for the deceased to be remembered and beauty beheld, for death was perceived as an exalted state. Under sway of nineteenth century romanticism, what people could not avoid, they made beautiful.¹

It was these changes in attitude that directly influenced Benjamin Grove's designs.

In the late 1850s, Grove was commissioned to map Linden Grove Cemetery (National Register, June 1976) in Covington, Kentucky. Although the actual design of the cemetery was by one Ephraim Robbins, Grove must have observed and been influenced by the grounds. They were described

....arranged in taste and convenience superior to anything in the West, and rarely excelled anywhere...The grounds are intersected with numerous avenues and walks planted with trees. The lots are of suitable size. There are in the cemetery some glens with walks to them, which when they shall be laid out with trees, will add greatly to the beauty of the place.²

The knowledge Benjamin Grove gained from this mapping must have been carried with him to his next landscaping project.

Benjamin Grove's next endeavor was St. Louis Cemetery in the Highlands neighborhood (National Register, February 1983) where he designed its layout in 1867. (view 4) During this time period, the area in which the cemetery was built was decidedly rural in character. It sets atop one of the highest, most picturesque hills in the area and affords a distant view of the City of Louisville. St. Louis was built as a Catholic cemetery and was the second of that name. The first St. Louis Cemetery was located in the church yard of the original St. Louis Church (demolished). Indeed, when the present St. Louis Cemetery was designed, the remains of those interred in the original St. Louis Cemetery were removed there.

In an article that appeared in the Catholic publication The Record in 1901, St. Louis Cemetery, it was claimed, had "become not only one of the most beautiful cities of the dead, but also the second most extensive in the State." Designed using picturesque design principals, the curving roads are meandering, leading one up hills and down valleys. Characteristic of its day St. Louis Cemetery had a "colored" section where Blacks were buried in unmarked graves. For the most part St. Louis was executed according to Grove's design. The only deviations were two finger-lakes that were never dug and a short road that was never built.

1. Remes, Naomi R. "The Rural Cemetery." Nineteenth Century, Winter, 1979
2. Langsom, Walter E. Linden Grove Cemetery National Register Nomination, Kentucky Heritage Council, 1976

WEST LOUISVILLE MULTIPLE RESOURCE AREA, EXPANSION

Benjamin Grove House, Louisville, Jefferson Co., KY

Continuation sheet

Item number 13

Page 6

Less than ten years later Grove designed and oversaw the execution of Adath Isreal Cemetery, one of five Jewish cemeteries in close proximity to one another. Its parklike feeling can be attributed to its topography interspersed with curvilinear roadways. Gumdrop trees shaped using topiary techniques were styled in recent years and add to the cemetery's charm.

Grove's original plan was somewhat more elaborate than what was eventually executed, but, using limited resources, he created a picturesque setting of wandering pathways amid magnificent statuary. The gatehouse, built ca. 1876 in the Victorian vernacular style and now used as the residence for the watchman, as well as the ca. 1880 receiving vault built into the side of a small hill and used before the advent of refrigeration may have both been designed by Grove. A more elaborate version of the vault appears in the margin of the 1876 rendering of Adath Isreal. Benjamin Grove's delightful plan in the tradition of nineteenth century landscape design is a welcome addition to this contiguous group of Jewish cemeteries.

Cave Hill cemetery was Grove's crowning glory and was referred to in the designer's obituary as that which he considered his finest work. Grove followed the direction set forth by Edmund F. Lee, who designed the first portion of Cave Hill, by reintroducing picturesque landscaping techniques into the south-east portion, thus, tying in the old design with the new. Set amid 300 acres of rolling hills and five natural lakes Cave Hill is certainly the most beautifully executed cemetery in Louisville and ranks among the most picturesque in the country. Each curve of the road presents another magnificent vista to feast one's eyes upon. Following the contours of what the City Fathers considered broken and irregular land and therefore only suitable for use as a cemetery, the area emphasizes the natural flowing beauty of the landscape. Using a geomorphic concept Grove evaluated the natural contour of the land whereby existing trees, hills, valley, lakes and even sinkholes, were integrated into his landscape design.

It is befitting that Cave Hill Cemetery, Grove's most magnificent design was also his last. It was here that Grove was buried after his death in 1915. The designer and artist had an incalculable affect on the City of Louisville. By designing such magnificent green spaces amid what are now very populous areas, Benjamin Grove has had a lasting impact on the area's built environment. One can only hope that future generations will appreciate the quality and care the designer put into his work and that its integrity will continue to be preserved as it has been in the past.

WEST LOUISVILLE MULTIPLE RESOURCE AREA, EXPANSION

Benjamin Grove House, Louisville, Jefferson Co., KY

Continuation sheet

Item Number 15

Page 2

Allgeier, M. A. Adath Isreal National Register Nomination: Louisville Landmarks Commission, 1981

"Benjamin Grove, Surveyor of Cave Hill, Dead at 92." Courier-Journal March 18, 1915.

Carons Annual Directories of the City of Louisville, 1884-1915.

Calvary Cemetery Records for St. Louis and St. Michael Cemeteries.

Hedgepeth, Marty. Cave Hill Cemetery National Register Nomination. Louisville Landmarks Commission, 1979

Jefferson County Courthouse Deed Books.

Langsom, Walter E. Linden Grove Cemetery National Register Nomination. Kentucky Heritage Council, 1976.

Remes, Naomi R. "The Rural Cemetery." Nineteenth Century, Winter 1979

Riehm C. E., "Catholic Cemeteries; Louisville and Jefferson County," Unpublished paper, 1979.

Weeter, Joanne. "Cave Hill: A Rural Cemetery," Unpublished research paper, 1981.

Yater, George. "Yater Runs Down Grove" The Portland Anchor, 1983.

Zanger, Jules, "Mount Auburn Cemetery: The Silent Suburb" Landscape Magazine. Vol. 24, 1980

WEST LOUISVILLE MULTIPLE RESOURCE AREA, EXPANSION

Benjamin Grove House, Louisville, Jefferson Co., KY

Continuation sheet

Item number 44

Page 2

Description and House Plan:

The Benjamin Grove House is located in the western portion of the city just east of the Portland National Register District (National Register, 1980).

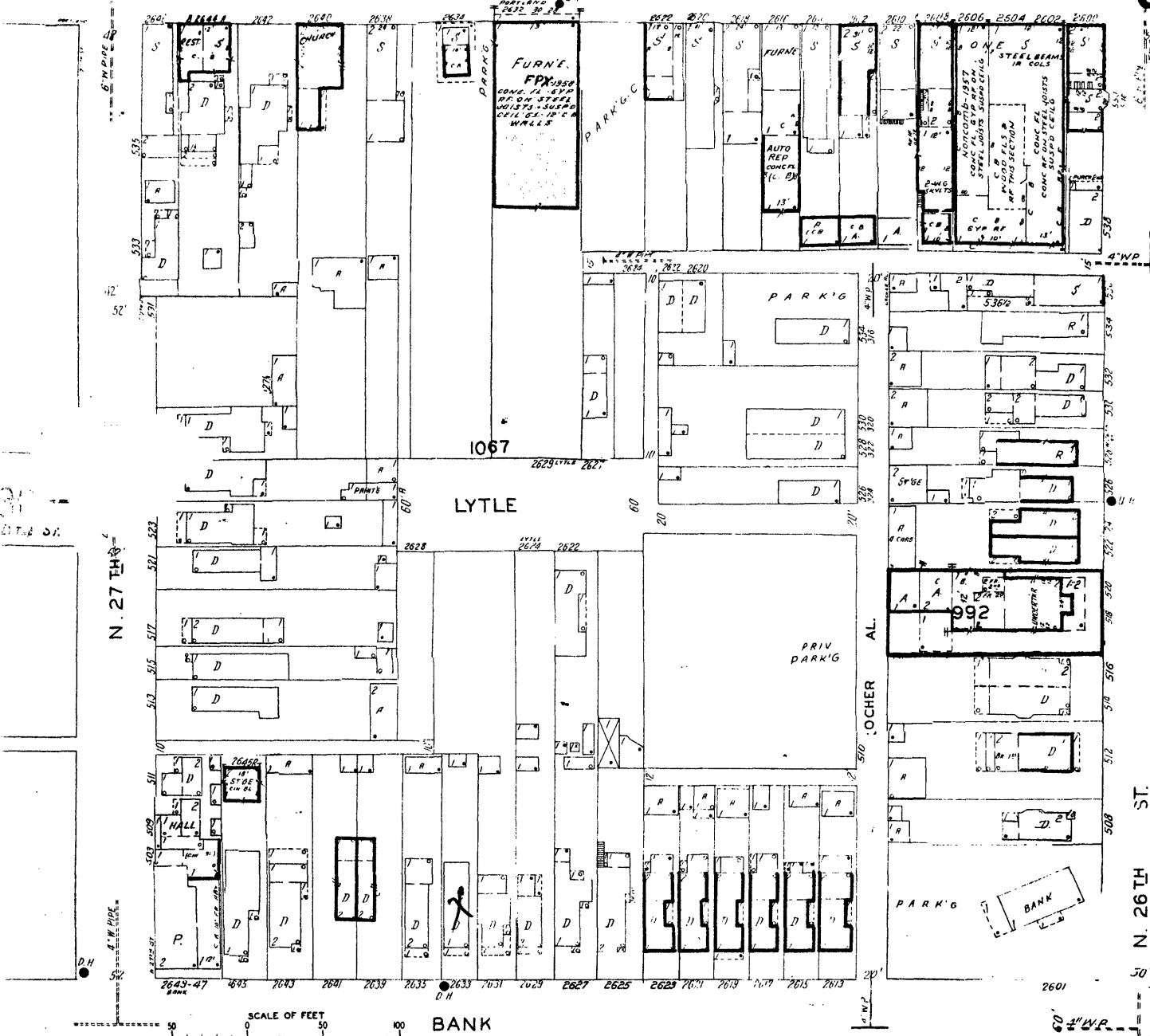
This two story brick vernacular structure (view 1) has a projecting central bay with bays flanking it. The glass paned entry has sidelights and a transom, which are all multi-paned. The flanking bays contain paired nine-over-nine light windows with stone lintels and sills. The three second floor bays contain paired windows which match those found on the first floor. The relieving arch windows on the north and south elevations are surmounted by a single round window in each of the side-facing gables. The large, two story porch with prominent classical columns is a later addition.

Originally a simple rectangle, the Benjamin Grove House has been modified through the years. Although the building still retains its basic rectangular shape there have been several additions to the building's rear and alterations to the front elevation. Two doors that originally flanked the projecting central bay were replaced with windows while the main entry was centered in the projection. These changes, in turn, necessitated the addition of a stairway in what is now the entrance hall. Each bay was originally topped by a front-facing gable but these were removed in recent years. Despite these changes the building's rectangular shape has remained unchanged since the year 1905 (view 2).

372

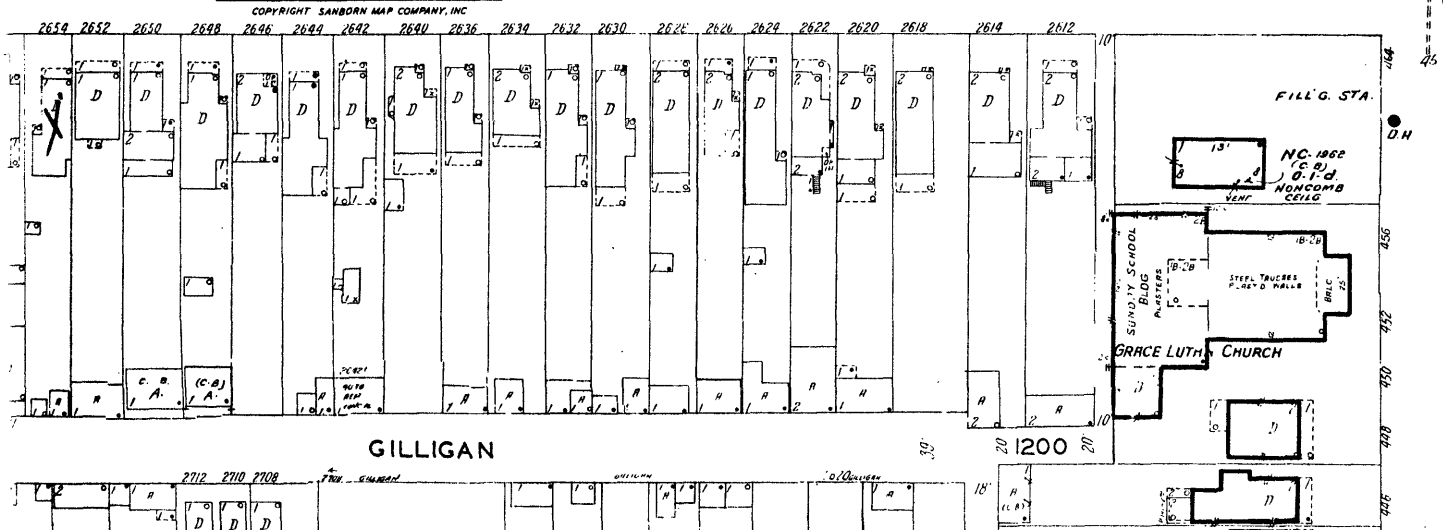
368

PORTLAND AV.



369

362



Benjamin Grove Home
518 N. 26th St
Louisville, Jefferson Co. KY
Sanborn Map 1974
Sanborn Map Company, Inc.
629 Fifth Avenue
Pelham, New York