

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Amburgey Log Home

other names/site number KT-12; Wolfpen

## 2. Location

street & number 105 Dead Mare Branch

NA
X

not for publication

city or town Mallie

vicinity

State Kentucky code KY County Knott code 119 zip code 41836

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_ statewide      X local

Signature of certifying official/Title Lindy Casebier, Acting SHPO Date \_\_\_\_\_

Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

\_\_\_ entered in the National Register      \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register      \_\_\_ removed from the National Register

\_\_\_ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

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

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		district
		site
2		structure
	1	object
1	1	<b>Total</b>

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

NA

0

**6. Function or Use**

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

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

**VACANT/NOT IN USE**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description Two-storey log home**

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

Other – log structure  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: wood  
walls: logs  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof: metal  
other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## **Narrative Description**

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### **Summary Paragraph**

The Amburgey Log Home (KT-12) is located between Dead Mare Branch and Wolfpen Creek on 34+ acres in what is now Knott County, KY. The property lies approximately 7½ miles southeast of Hindman, the Knott County seat, and 3½ miles northwest of Isom. The structure is a two-story log home.

### **History of Ownership and Character of the Site**

\*The series of numbers following names throughout this nomination form are those assigned by Dorothy Amburgey Griffith in her 1982 book, *Amburgey Ancestry in America*.

In 1827, Ambrose Amburgey (1792-1875, 11123) purchased the 500-acre property which encompasses the area proposed for listing. It included all of Carr's Fork, from Breedings Creek to Upper Smith's Branch.

The large property remained in the family, but was divided among children. In 1916, Wiley J. Amburgey and his second wife Surilda deeded 60 acres, which included the log home, to their twin boys Woodrow (1112339) and Jethro (1112338) (Deed book 37, p.351, Knott County).

In the 1935 or 1936, Woodrow and his wife Arminta deeded the land of the property to his brother Jethro and wife Raina (Deed book 55, page 538, Knott County), but took one-half of the log house (divided at a dog trot between two sections) with him, relocating it to Burgey Creek; that half structure no longer exists. Jethro also relocated his half of the structure a short distance away to its current location.

When Jethro moved from the Amburgey Log House, he permitted James Still to live there, which became his home from 1939 until about 1980. In 1962 and 1969, Jethro and his wife Rania deeded the log house to their only child, Jethro Morris (11123381). These transactions were recorded in Deed book 55, page 538, and Deed book 57, page 391. Jethro Morris Amburgey later changed his name to Morris J. Amburgey. In 1972, Morris J. Amburgey and his wife Gertrude deeded lifetime occupancy rights to James Still (Deed book 95, page 24, Knott County Courthouse). In 2000 - 2001, Morris J. Amburgey deeded the property to his son Kenneth R. Amburgey. Kenneth Amburgey is the owner of the property at this writing.

The site contains a wooden outhouse and woodshed located near the log structure. A trailer belonging to Kenneth R. Amburgey, the current owner of the log structure, is on the property, about 100 yards from the log structure.

### **Exterior Description of Log House**

The log home was built in rural Knott County on a relatively flat area created by Dead Mare Branch, Little Carr Creek, and Wolfpen Creek adjacent to Burgey Creek Road (now state road 1410). The log home was originally built as a two-part, two-story log structure, with the two parts separated by a dog trot. Both parts had one room on each story that measured about 30' x 30'. In about 1935 or 1936, the two Amburgey brothers who inherited the log structure bisected the home at the dog trot, and half was moved to Bergey's Creek. The existing half of the structure was moved less than 100 yards to its present location.

The log walls remain in good condition. The logs were "squared" prior to being put into place and were "locked together" by notches at each end. This feature is what accounts for their relatively good condition over 1.5 centuries after they were originally cut. It is well-known by the scientific community now (and likely by the Appalachian country folk in the early 1800s) that nearly all insect-caused wood deterioration and most fungus-caused deterioration is eliminated by removing the bark and sapwood by "squaring" the logs (see Bibliography). Little chinking between the logs was originally needed, but, over time, some chinking was used. This was a frequent "fix" for leaky log walls, but modern craftsmen often used concrete rather than moss or similar material that was used earlier. The materials used to separate logs should be softer than the wood (e.g., mortar used to separate bricks or stones should be softer than the materials being joined) to prevent crushing of the wood cells as the mortar swells or shrinks in response to its moisture content.

A stone chimney and fireplace are located on the west side of the structure. It is unknown when the original wood-shake roof was replaced by the current metal roof, but it likely occurred when the structure was bisected and moved. A small woodshed and outhouse are located adjacent to the log house.

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### **Interior Description of Log House**

The building has one room, measuring approximately 30' x 30', on each floor. Attached to the back of the first floor is a kitchen measuring approximately 10' x 30'. No furniture is in the structure at this time. As with most log structures, the interior faces of the wall logs are exposed in the interior. No walls divide either of the large rooms or the kitchen.

### **Changes to the Log House since the Period of Significance Ended; Maintenance Recommendations**

The current owner indicates that no changes have been made to the structure since 1962.

So, the few areas of cement chinking should be removed and replaced with softer material (e.g., elastomeric chinking now available from log home manufacturers).

The lack of a "film-forming" finish on the exterior of the logs also contributed to their long service life by not trapping water and permitting them to dry relatively fast following rains. At this point, the exteriors of the logs need a spray-application of a fungicide to replace the natural extractives (contributing to their durability) decreased over the years. A water-soluble, diffusible fungicide with low-mammalian toxicity, Timbor, is recommended by the author.

The few beetle holes present in the logs indicate areas where all of the sapwood was not removed, but these are remnants of past beetle activity.

The roof appears to be in good condition, but some new flashing is needed where it abuts the chimney.

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**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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Literature

**Period of Significance**

1939-1962

**Significant Dates**

Ca. 1835, structure built

1939 – 1980 Still lives in structure

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Still, James

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA

**Architect/Builder**

Amburgey, Ambrose, and family (builders)

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The focus of this nomination is upon noted Kentucky author, James Still, who occupied the building from 1939 until 1980. Still wrote about eastern Kentucky, and his term in this building helped shape his views. The Period ends at 1962, the conventional end of the historic period, i.e., 50 years before the writing of this form.

**Criteria Considerations**

None. This house was moved 3 years prior to the beginning of the Period of Significance. It is not being nominated or interpreted as a moved historic building.

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## Statement of Significance

### Summary Paragraph

The Amburgey Log House (KT-12) meets National Register Criterion B, important for its association with accomplished Kentucky writer James Still (1906-2001), who occupied the structure from 1939-1980. Still is significant within the context "Fiction Writers and Poets in Kentucky, 1935-1965." The nominated structure was erected by Ambrose Amburgey and his family sometime between 1830 and 1844, and remains in family ownership. Jethro Amburgey, grandson of Ambrose, was a nationally renowned dulcimer maker, and gave his friend James Still permission to live in the structure for his life. Still, born in Alabama, came to Kentucky in his 20s upon completing college. He worked as a librarian at Hindman Settlement School and began publishing short stories and poems. His portrayal of characters, stories, and life in eastern Kentucky had a truth and sympathy that became a distinguishing quality of his work. Still's life choices—to make Kentucky his home for 70 years and his long residency in the Amburgey family log house—parallel the story-telling process, in which imagination occupies a place and creates something altogether new. The authenticity in both Still's stories and in his adoption of this locale, place him among the state's most compelling and beloved writers.

### Historic Context: Fiction Writers and Poets in Kentucky, 1935-1965

When eastern Kentucky and other parts of Appalachia were brought to national attention at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> century, many of the portraits were condescending toward the people of the region. Folklorists regarded these local customs and speech as quaint, and northern churchmen and reformers established missions to save the population. In much the same way that industrialists exploited eastern Kentucky's resources, fiction writers exploited stereotypical portraits of mountain people that were emerging in popular and academic writing. Literary critic Cleanth Brooks, in an introduction to Still's *The Run for the Elbertas*, observed that fiction from 1880-1910, when set in Appalachia, turned local characters into caricature, not taking them "seriously as human beings in their own right" (in Still, 1980: xii).

Two powerful literary movements arose in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to challenge this demeaning portrait of rural southern life. A group of 16 poets known as "The Fugitives" published their works in a journal of the same name from 1915-1928. A group of 12 scholars, known as "The Southern Agrarians," wrote essays in a seminal work, *I'll Take My Stand* (1930). Many of the Fugitives and Southern Agrarians were either students or professors at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. Vanderbilt professor John Crowe Ransom is sometimes cited as leading both groups (Stoneback: 28). Their creative and scholarly writings championed a more positive view of southern culture—particularly, of its non-urban and non-industrial face. The literary scholars in the group also established a new critical method, which came to dominate literary studies during the contextual period. This so called "New Criticism" called readers to analyze the fiction or poetry work's formal structure, ignoring the author's intent and the audience's reaction in the analysis ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Criticism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Criticism)). Many of the Fugitives and Southern Agrarians had Kentucky roots, such as Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, and Allen Tate. Other Kentuckians also had strong connections to these 2 groups, such as novelists Caroline Gordon (see the Todd County, Kentucky nomination, Woodstock) and Elizabeth Madox Roberts, and critic Cleanth Brooks.

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One of the prevailing views of the creative process cites the influence of artists on other artists, or scholars on other scholars—schools of art or thought. Dean Cadle explains how James Still stood apart from that way of creating:

In the early 1930s, when it was still fashionable and perhaps somewhat necessary for beginning writers to congregate in Paris or Greenwich Village or in any artistic community that offered sustenance, Still moved into an ancient log house in Knott County, accessible only by eight miles of dirt road and two miles of creek bed (p. 237).

While his living circumstance suggested a retreat from the world, Still was not unfamiliar with the intellectual ideas circulating at the time. He encountered the ideas of the Fugitives and Southern Agrarians while a graduate student at Vanderbilt University. Some of the authors of *I'll Take My Stand* were his professors, and they read their essays in classes Still attended (Stoneback 32). While at the Settlement School, Still had access to numerous literary periodicals and national magazines which published fiction. Most early interviews tell of his effort to study the editorial direction of various magazines, to identify which could become appropriate outlets for his style of work (e.g., Miller: 10). Upon moving into the Amburgey Cabin, he continued taking subscriptions to key vehicles of new fiction and poetry. To the unperceptive viewer, he lived a simple and isolated existence; one needed to look more closely to see the deeper reality.

Still—as author—provided the window to that deeper reality in the fictional worlds he created. His set his stories in or near the Knott County locale that became his adopted home. His writing gave a dignity to his characters that seems absent from earlier writing that involved mountain folk. His task became one of depicting eastern Kentucky culture with a truth, using drama and fiction. Still drew upon a source of great actual tension for his drama—the dual pull of older agrarian ways being impacted by the more modern industrial workplace, particularly coal mining.

Folklorist Charles Martin examined how this clash between two cultures played out in a very powerful way on the landscape in his study *Hollybush: Folk Building and Social Change in an Appalachian Community* (1984). Martin looked at this Knott County community, just 9 miles north and east of the Amburgey Cabin, that underwent major social changes in the first and second decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when coal mining expanded in Knott County. People in Hollybush, as elsewhere in the region, had to choose between a life of tradition and self-determination on the family farm, or seek higher economic rewards in working away from the community, in coal mining. Martin was able to find evidence on the landscape that these economic opportunities came with the cost of lost social cohesion. Until the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many rural Knott County citizens lived in log houses constructed in traditional ways, requiring communal effort and cooperation. By the 'teens in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that way of constructing houses gave way to frame construction, where miners could pay local itinerant builders. This transition, from a social order held in place by a sharing of communal labor, knowledge, and resources, to a social system founded upon wages and more impersonal relations between parties, did not occur without some social costs. When Still arrived in the area in the early 1930s, people, families, and entire communities were still in searching for ways to deal with the implications of these new social relations.

The tug-of-war, between the slow unraveling of community and efforts to maintain social relations, proved a dynamic too rich for Still to merely observe. Miller writes, "In 1939 he left the Settlement

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School to live on Dead Mare Branch in a two-story log house built before 1840 (now on the Kentucky Register of Historic Sites). Still went to the house to finish a novel, *River of Earth* (now recognized as an American Classic). He never thought to stay there long. But he soon realized the house on Dead Mare Branch was the place he had been looking for all his life” (p. 10).

In considering which factors influenced his work, the question of Still’s participation in a larger literary movements inevitably came up. In the few interviews he gave, Still took pains to disassociate himself from contemporaneous literary trends, or even from authors whom readers saw his work similar to. For instance, inevitable comparisons occurred between Still and Elizabeth Madox Roberts. Roberts had published 3 well received novels prior to Still’s first novel *River of Earth*, had set her stories in eastern Kentucky, had a similar lyrical and economic prose style, and was highly regarded by the Southern Agrarians ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth\\_Madox\\_Roberts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_Madox_Roberts)). In addition, Still and Roberts shared the same publisher (Viking), and had exchanged a small amount of correspondence. Despite these many overlaps, he denied as many connections as others attempted to delineate. To the suggestion of his being influenced by Roberts, Still said, “I can’t imagine being influenced by anybody” (Williamson, 122). If his interviews provide any glimpse of his muse, more than anything, the place he lived inspired him, and his answers transmit an integrity—an effort to remain faithful to the people and the stories he lived among. H.R. Stoneback said it this way, “When I think of Jim Still then, I think of sense of place, sense of community, and a deep sense of the radical holiness of the earth—major themes in all Kentucky writers” (p. 32).

Writing by Kentuckians during the contextual period exhibits a strong interest in **place**—which includes the peoples’ strong connection to a place, their affection for the place, and their influence by the place. The importance of a log house as a physical place, to a Kentucky fiction author, was explored on another nomination, the Janice Holt Giles House in Adair County (1997, NR #97001237). That nomination suggested that Giles’ log house inspired her creation of historical fiction, which she typically set in pioneer days on the American plains and further west. The effect of the log dwelling on James Still’s work has a different quality: it gave him access to an actual place, an anchor within the setting of most of his novels and short stories. For Giles, the log house may have helped her imagine details of settlement living conditions that are vital to telling a plausible story, distant in time and place, and not directly part of her or her reader’s present experience. For Still, his log residence stood as an element directly connected to the place and people about whom he wrote, a culture whose drama came from the clash between old ways passing away at the onset of the modern era.

### **History of the Amburgey Log House**

The Amburgey family moved to eastern KY in 1827, emigrating from Russell County, Virginia. Ambrose was the son and grandson of two Revolutionary War veterans. Ambrose Amburgey (1792-1875, 11123) purchased 500 acres near Little Carr Creek, in what is now Knott County. The Amburgey Log Home was built sometime between 1830 and 1844 by Ambrose and his family. Likely Ambrose’s father, veteran John Amburgey, Jr., assisted in the construction and lived in the structure for a short period of time. A monument to Revolutionary War veteran John Amburgey, Jr. (Ambrose’s father) was erected in 1882 in Carr Fork Cemetery.

Ambrose was a surveyor, Justice Of the Peace, and farmer. He married Rebecca Francis (1801-1875), a teacher, around 1819. They lived in the log house for a time before moving a short distance

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away. Ambrose and his wife Rebecca had 8 children. One of Ambrose's sons, Wiley J. (111233), was deeded the home and worked the land.

Wiley Amburgey had 21 children, and deeded the log home and surrounding property to two of his sons Jethro and Woodrow, grandsons of Ambrose, in 1916. Jethro served in World War II and, upon returning, became active in the community. He was a Wood Shop teacher, the principal administrator in the Knott County Health Department, and principal administrator of the Knott County School System. He became renowned as a dulcimer maker after his work was documented in "Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands" written by Allen H. Eaton in 1937 (New York, Russell Sage Foundation).

Probably Jethro and James Still initially became acquainted when Jethro attended the Hindman Settlement School, where Still was librarian. Later, they became friends, likely, because of Jethro's position as the principal administrator of the Knott County School System, and their mutual artistic talents, one for creating objects from wood and the other for his creativity with words. Like his father, Morris also learned to make dulcimers, though took a degree in Civil Engineering at the University of Kentucky in 1950. Both Jethro and Morris deeded Still the right to live in the log home for life, and he used the Amburgey Log Home as his residence from 1939 – 1980.

In 1972, the U. S. Corps of Engineers began clearing land for the construction of Carr Fork Lake reservoir, which lies about 1½ mile to the west of the Amburgey Log House. The Corps had obtained the properties listed below from Amburgey families to create the lake:

<b>Tract</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Amburgey Family Member</b>
201	1.26	4/2/70	Tandy
209	18.45	10/31/69	John J.
215	9.73	12/10/68	John J.
301	16.16	10/7/69	Pearlie, et al
327	3.25	6/25/69	William
330	7.42	12/4/68	John J.
336	5.97	11/29/68	William
413	1.01	3/16/70	Mabel
415	2.09	11/29/68	Hiram
419	8.48	3/27/70	Burn
421	0.51	7/3/69	Ida
422	0.50	11/24/69	Burn
426	0.1	3/17/70	Burn
429	0.93	12/14/74	Estill & Cora
430	2.42	1/13/70	Burn
435	7.13	11/17/69	Odus
464	20.82	4/17/69	Ida
471	32	12/11/69	Ida
611	0.8	3/11/71	Susie Smith & Lavera
616	19.75	11/26/69	Maynard
<b>Tract</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Amburgey Family Member</b>
704	4.71	12/18/69	Edgar

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705	1.37	12/18/69	J. D.
720	1.72	7/24/74	Nora
758	0.22	4/2/70	William
821	0.08	12/30/68	Virgil & Jewell
844	36.22	12/17/69	W. J.
844C	0.05	6/19/74	W. J.
847	1.29	3/18/71	Wiley
850	139.4	1/16/74	Valeria, et al
850C	0.06	6/19/74	Valeria, et al
865	32.3	10/21/69	Ruth
870E	0.62	9/16/70	Earl

If nothing else, this demonstrates that the entire area in the vicinity of the Amburgey Log House is populated by family members that, in one way or another, identify with the property proposed for listing. Also, all of the land bordering the 34+ acres associated with the Amburgey Log Home is owned by various Amburgey family members.

**Evaluation of the Significance of the Amburgey Log Home within the Context of “Fiction Writers and Poets in Kentucky, 1935-1965”**

James Still (1906 – 2001) was a renowned author and wrote the majority of his work while living in the cabin. Still is best known for his novel, *River of Earth*, which depicts the struggles of coal mining in eastern Kentucky. Other aspects of eastern KY Appalachian life are chronicled in other Still works such as, *Way Down Yonder on Troublesome Creek*, *Appalachian Riddles and Rusties*, and *The Hills Remember: The Complete Short Stories of James Still*. A citation by the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters states, “His (Still’s) gift is to set for the poverty and valor of his people in a prose as limpid and musical as the waters of Little Carr Creek.” Still was named Kentucky’s Poet Laureate for 1995 and 1996.

Many considered Still to be Appalachia’s foremost literary artist. One contemporary said that Still was the, “most influential Kentucky writer of the last 50 years.” Another said “Nobody has captured the Southern Appalachian folk life better than James Still.” Bellarmine University professor Wade Hall placed Still in rarefied company, in reflecting upon Still’s passing: “Like his contemporaries Thomas Wolfe, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, Robert Penn Warren, and William Faulkner, Still’s achievement was to record accurately and sensitively the life of his piece of the south, while transcending it to reveal, in Faulkner’s words, ‘the old verities and truths of the heart’” (p. D-4).

**Evaluation of the Integrity of the Significance of the Amburgey Log Home in Light of its Physical Condition: Integrity Considerations**

Integrity is defined as the ability of a property to convey its significance in its material form. This building’s historic value is being interpreted according to its association with an important Kentucky author, James Still, the most important integrity factor, then is integrity of association. The view advanced in this integrity discussion sees that integrity of association to be a culmination of a number of more detailed integrity factors: location and setting, and to a lower extent, materials and design. The Amburgey Log Home retains enough of these defining characteristics to convey its significance as the long-time home of author James Still during the peak of his creativity.

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The Amburgey Log Home has integrity of **location** at least because it has not been moved, and it has integrity of **setting** because it remains in its historic rural locale, surrounded on its lot by woods, and outside the area proposed for listing by even more woods, as it had been during the Period of Significance. The location and setting of this property are integral to an understanding of James Still's real personal identity and the worlds he created with his fiction. He wrote about this particular place in Kentucky, taking his observations of the culture and landscape, and fashioning them into stories that convey truths of early-20<sup>th</sup>-century experiences in this part of the state. While his stories sought to speak to a universal human experience, those stories sprung from an imagination in contact with a real world, which began with the immediate surroundings, i.e., the place where he wrote, the Amburgey Log Home.

The Amburgey Log Home has integrity of **design** and **materials** that dates more to Still's tenure (1939-1980) than to the hundred years that the building had stood, though in a different form. The house may have been built as early as 1840, but as a 2-cell dogtrot. In the mid-1930s, the two Amburgey brothers who owned the property literally split the house into halves, and both halves were moved to nearby locations from the original house site. Still came to occupy the half that remained on the original property, shortly after it was re-assembled on the current site. The other half, relocated nearer to a stream, but off the historic property, eventually disintegrated. The extant portion of the historic dogtrot log house has less to offer to explain antebellum log construction practices in Knott County than it has to tell us about its use and occupant after the late 1930s. Its materials and design offer an open arrangement of interior space, an unpretentious exterior, and solid construction; all these are qualities that have their analogues in Still's prose. The log house aesthetic does not demand an arrangement of the wood material according to the rules of style; the beauty of the log house comes from the log material itself, from its straightforward expression of function and form out of wood material. Likewise, those assessing Still's work, tended to offer praise for his stories that does not sound completely dissimilar: he built beautiful tales out of solid material that he gathered nearby—character, setting, conflict, traditions, dreams, and longing.

Finally, the Amburgey Log Home possesses integrity of **association**. No other place can claim to have as direct an association with Still's literary production as this log house does. It functions as the center, foundation, and shelter for his creative activity. Still himself identified with this place sufficiently that he named several of his works in relation to the bordering stream, Wolfpen Creek, (Wolf Penn Creek), such as *The Wolfpen Notebooks: A Record of Appalachian Life*, and *Wolfpen Rusties*. It was at this property that Still interacted with the surrounding landscape of eastern Kentucky, and gained an understanding and appreciation for Appalachian families—their customs, culture, and way of life. Through this personal association, he came to identify with this place, and the people embraced him as one of theirs. Because the house and property supports this integrity of association, the house qualifies for National Register listing.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Amburgey, T.L. and L.H. Williams

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1982 Constructing log homes in the south. Mississippi Forest Products Utilization Laboratory, Mississippi State University, Information Series No. 22. 6pp.

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Amburgey Log Home  
Name of Property

Knott County, KY  
County and State

Stoneback, H.R.  
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**Internet sources**

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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth\\_Madox\\_Roberts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_Madox_Roberts) accessed on 7/15/12

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_ KT 12 \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 34+ acres

**UTM References**

**Blackey Quad**

**UTM Coordinates expressed in NAD 1983 shown in margin of USGS quad map submitted with nomination**

**Location Expressed in terms of NAD 1927 below:**

1	<u>17</u>	<u>329 517</u>	<u>4122 965</u>	3	<u>17</u>	<u>329 111</u>	<u>4122 411</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>17</u>	<u>329 516</u>	<u>4122 390</u>	4	<u>17</u>	<u>329 113</u>	<u>4122 964</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The area proposed for National Register listing is an irregularly shaped area depicted on map 1. The northernmost point of the property is found where the Dead Mare Branch flows into the Little Carr Fork. Dead Mare Branch forms the western boundary of the site; an adjacent property and the Wolfpen Branch form much of the eastern portion of the property.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary selected includes the acreage which has integrity and has been associated with the log house since the important person, James Still, occupied the residence. The property's setting is still intact, and that wooded setting is integral to understanding the importance of rural values in Still's literature.

**11. Form Prepared By**

Amburgey Log Home  
Name of Property

Knott County, KY  
County and State

name/title Terry Lee Amburgey, Ph. D. L. Martin Perry/National Register Coordinator  
organization Amburgey Family Assoc. Kentucky Heritage date June 3, 2012  
Council date \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number 612 Smith Road Telephone 662-465-9939  
city or town Sturgis state MS zip code 39769  
e-mail [terryamburgey@yahoo.com](mailto:terryamburgey@yahoo.com)

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**Photographs:**

**Same information for all Photographs (unless stated):**

Name of Property: **Amburgey Log Home; KT-12; Wolfpen**  
City or Vicinity: **105 Dead Mare Branch, Mallie, KY**  
County: **Knott**  
State: **Kentucky**  
Photographer: **Terry Amburgey**  
Date Photographed: **Summer 2011**

**Photo specific information**

1. **Original Amburgey Log Home, a two-part, two-story log home with the two parts separated by a dog trot. Photographer unknown. Shot in the mid-to-late 1800s.**
2. **Amburgey Log Home. Half of the original now located at 105 Dead Mare Branch, Mallie, KY. Front faces north; chimney on west side.**
3. **Amburgey Log Home showing chimney on west side and kitchen attached to south side.**
4. **Squared wall logs of Amburgey Log Home showing beetle exit holes from a non-active infestation in a band of old sapwood that had not been removed during squaring of logs. Also shows a portion of cement chinking that should be removed.**
5. **Northeast corner of Amburgey Log Home showing notches locking the logs together.**
6. **Woodshed (left) and outhouse adjacent to west side of Amburgey Log Home (2011).**
7. **West side of Amburgey Log Home as viewed from near Dead Mare Branch Road.**

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**Property Owner:**

name Kenneth R. Amburgey  
street & number PO Box 497 telephone 740-746-8573  
city or town Sugar Grove State OH zip code 43155







BLACKKEY QUADRANGLE  
KENTUCKY  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

NW/4 WHITESBURG 15' QUADRANGLE

468 IV SE  
(KITE)

8 IV SW  
(DMAN)

329

55'

331

3 830 000 FEET

332

333

82° 52' 30"  
37° 15'

CFLSWMA

Little Carr  
Bible Ch

Cem

Oil Well

10771

Bath

Cem

Mines

Cem

Cem

Mine

Logan Gap

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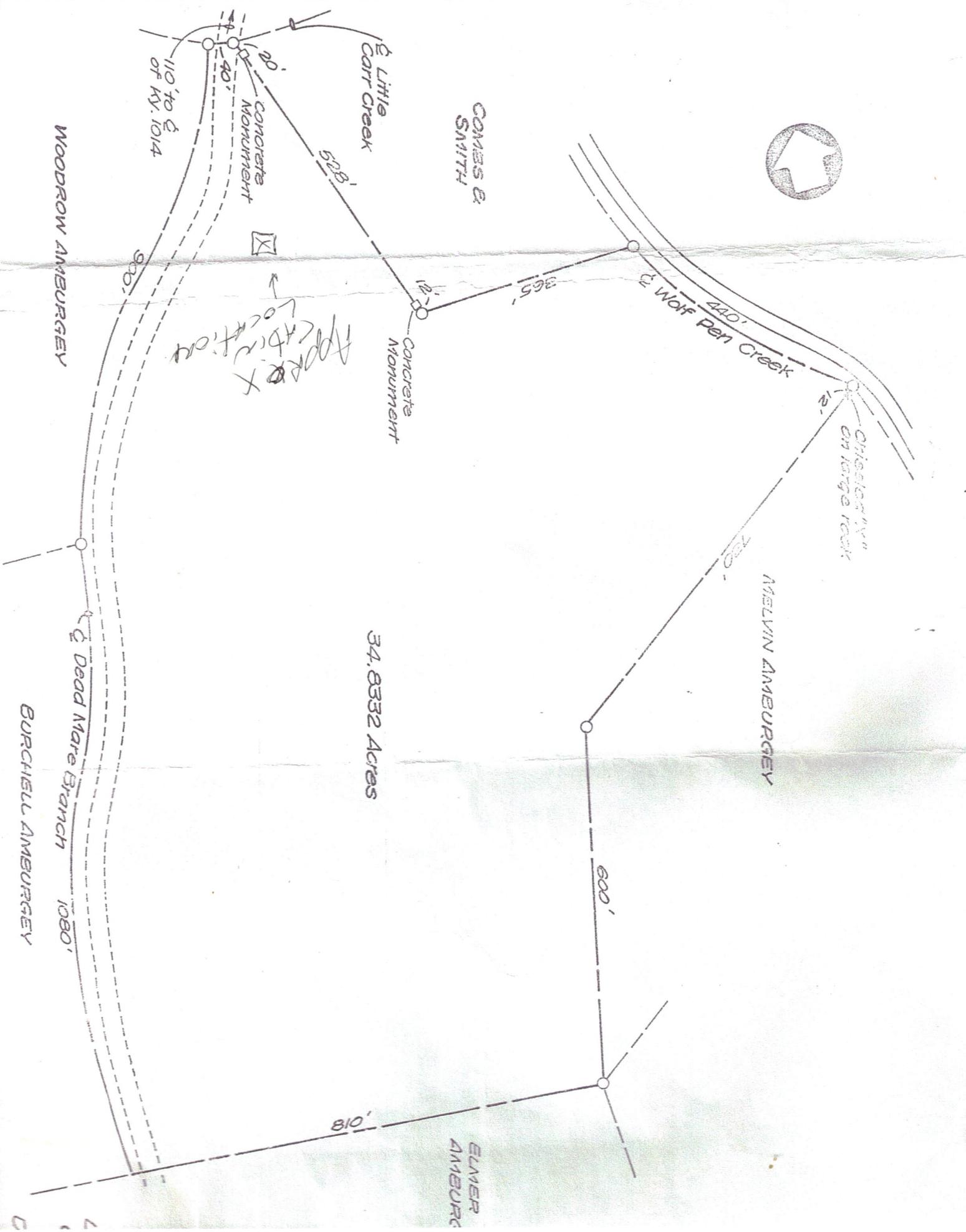
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COMES &  
SMITH

WOODROW AMBURGEY

34,8332 Acres

BURCHELL AMBURGEY

MELVIN AMBURGEY

ELMER AMBURGEY

Little Carr Creek

Wolf Pen Creek

Orisler "V"  
on large rock

110' to E  
of Ky. 1014

Apple Orchard  
location

Concrete Monument

Concrete Monument

Dead Mare Branch 1080'

810'

600'

780'

365'

528'

Amburgey Log home

7/05/12

National Register of Historic Places



Original Amburgey Log Home, a two-part, two-storey log home with the two parts separated by a dog trot



Amburgey Log Home, summer 2011. Half of the original now located at 105 Dead Mare Branch, Mallie, KY. Front faces north; chimney on west side.



Amburgey Log Home (2011) showing chimney on west side and kitchen attached to south side.



Squared wall logs of Amburgey Log Home (2011) showing beetle exit holes from a non-active infestation in a band of old sapwood that had not been removed during squaring of logs. Also shows a portion of cement chinking that should be removed.



Northeast corner of Amburgey Log Home (2011) showing notches locking the logs together.



Woodshed (left) and outhouse adjacent to west side of Amburgey Log Home (2011).



West side of Amburgey Log Home (2011) as viewed from near Dead Mare Branch Road.