

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Willisburg Historic District

other names/site number NA

## 2. Location

street & number Properties along Kentucky 433 and Kentucky 53

NA
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not for publication

city or town Willisburg

NA
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vicinity

state Kentucky code KY county Washington code 229 zip code 40078

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  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 \_\_\_\_\_

Willisburg Historic District  
 Name of Property

Washington County, KY  
 County and State

**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.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>	
63	35	buildings
		district
1	3	site
		structure
		object
64	38	<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**

Crossroads Communities in Kentucky's Outer Bluegrass Cultural Landscape Region

1

**6. Function or Use**

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

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

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

RELIGION/religious facility

GOVERNMENT/courthouse

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

RELIGION/religious facility

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

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

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

Craftsman

Colonial Revival

Gothic Revival

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

foundation: stone, concrete,

walls: synthetics, metal, wood, brick

\_\_\_\_\_

roof: asphalt, metal

other: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Narrative Description

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### Summary Paragraph

The proposed Willisburg Historic District is nominated as a crossroad community, in conjunction with the Multiple Property Submission, "Crossroad Communities in Kentucky's Bluegrass Cultural Landscape Region." The two crossing roads are KY 433 (northwest to southeast) and KY 53 (southwest to northeast). The two roads converge and run together as Willisburg's Main Street, and then part again at the community's periphery. Willisburg is located approximately 10 miles northeast of Springfield, the Washington County seat. The district contains approximately 252 acres, 64 contributing buildings (1 previously listed on the National Register), 36 non-contributing buildings, and 1 contributing site.

### Description of Willisburg Historic District as a *District*

North to south, the area that the current nomination proposes for listing stretches south on Lawrenceburg Road (KY-53) just south of its intersection with Chaplin Road (KY-1754), past the Willisburg Cemetery, to the intersection of Lawrenceburg Road and Main Street (KY-53/KY-433). Turning east, the district travels along Main Street (KY-53/KY-433) past the old Central Bank building (now Willisburg City Hall) and the dominant curve at the old Willisburg Baptist Church building to a point near its intersection with Polin Road. Turning east from the Lawrenceburg Road (KY-53) and Main Street (KY-53/KY-433) intersection, Main Street becomes KY-433 (Mackville-Willisburg Road) at the stop sign. The district continues along Mackville-Willisburg Road to a point near its intersection with Walnut Street. KY-555 provides direct access to the Bluegrass Parkway several miles north of Willisburg.

Willisburg is located on KY-433 just off KY-555. In 2010, the total population of Willisburg was 282. The highest proportion of the population was people thirty to thirty-four years of age followed by those five to nine years of age. It seems Willisburg is the home of a number of young families. Population is fairly balanced between male and female residents. In 2010, Willisburg was 97.9 percent white.<sup>i</sup> Only 10.8 percent of the housing units in Willisburg were vacant in 2010. Of the occupied houses in Willisburg, 82.2 percent were owner-occupied and 17.8 percent were rentals.<sup>ii</sup>

### Willisburg before it became a crossroad community in 1873

In Willisburg, unlike the nearby crossroads community of Mackville, a longer period of development can be observed. As in Mackville, Willisburg also apparently had an original plat, although it has not been located. In the *History of Willisburg*, Welch notes that the boundaries of Willisburg were settled on and surveyed soon after its establishment. Robert A. Mitchell laid out the town in blocks and lots. Each block apparently contained several lots, most of which were one-quarter of an acre. A plat was apparently made and used to record deeds. The town acquired some of the vacant lots, and later sold them, placing the money in the town treasury.<sup>iii</sup>

The original 1830s-era log Willisburg School would have been located directly opposite the current Willisburg High School building. The Willisburg post office was established in December 1844.

Lots for homes and businesses were being sold long before the Civil War. Antebellum Willisburg already had businesses, physicians, a church, school, cemetery, post office, and Masonic lodge. Early Willisburg may have had a brick yard and a distillery.

George Breckenridge built the first house of worship, a log building, on a small piece of land donated from the large landholdings of Ebenezer Miller in 1848. The first church was nondenominational. This building burned soon after it was built. A second was built on the same site in 1851, but was organized as Willisburg Christian Church. Breckenridge also organized the Willisburg Masonic Lodge in the 1850s, helped champion the cause of a community cemetery, and in 1848, the Willisburg Cemetery was established on land donated by Andrew Pinkston across from the site of the first church in Willisburg.

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<sup>i</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Demographic Profile Data, DP-1, American FactFinder website, accessed February 2, 2012.

<sup>ii</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census, Summary File 1, Tables H3, H4, H5, and HCT1, American FactFinder website, accessed February 2, 2012.

<sup>iii</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 17.

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After the Civil War, several turnpikes were built to connect Willisburg to other areas. One of these turnpikes was the old Mackville-Willisburg-Louisville Turnpike or "Louisville and Mackville" turnpike (now two portions of Highway 433 - Polin Road north of Willisburg and Mackville-Willisburg Road south of Willisburg). This turnpike, chartered in 1869, began in Mackville and extended to Willisburg and Chaplin by 1873.<sup>iv</sup>

**Willisburg after it became a crossroad community in 1873**

The 1877 Beers map provides a glimpse of the origins of the small City of Willisburg with its map of the "Willisburg Precinct No. 4." Willisburg developed near the junction of the Mackville-Willisburg-Louisville Pike and the Springfield-Willisburg-Antioch-Fox's Creek Pike. Without a strict grid plan to channel development, Willisburg has farm fields abutting the rear parcel lines of some homes built along the main travel artery, the town's Main Street.<sup>v</sup> By the 1870s there were two toll houses, several turnpikes, and a steam mill in Willisburg.<sup>vi</sup> The turnpikes roads were such that, due to a lack of a bridge at the Beech Fork at Mackville, travelers had to go through Willisburg to get to Springfield.<sup>vii</sup>

Buildings on the 1877 Beers map began at the dominant curve on Main Street near the location of the Masonic Lodge and continued south, ending at the intersection of Main Street and present Highway 53. Beyond these end points, development appears to have continued into the 1940s with evidence of early-twentieth-century T-plan houses, along with narrower lots subdivided to make way for later Craftsman and Cape Cod houses. Also, unlike in Mackville, there is evidence of later-twentieth-century development at the Highway 433-Highway 53 junction. A modern bank, gas station/convenience market, and post office occur at this node.<sup>viii</sup>

Near where Sportsman's Lane intersects Main Street today, the 1877 Beers map insert of Willisburg shows a livery stable, blacksmith shop, and another shop adjacent to the J.A. Seay Hotel. Farther southeast along Main Street (toward its intersection with Lawrenceburg Road) on the southwestern side of the street, the H. Leachman Store & Post Office (later Central Bank) building is noted as well as the neighboring U.T. Merritt Drug Store and the nearby H.S. Merritt Cabinet Shop. The old Seay Hotel would have been located somewhere near the brick veneer ranch house at 2421 Willisburg Road.<sup>ix</sup> The only doctor listed by title on the 1877 Beers map insert of Willisburg is Dr. S. Scruggs listed near the intersection of Main Street and Lawrenceburg Road, close to where the Trent Store and Crowe barbershop would be built in later years and where the Springfield State Bank – Willisburg Branch is now located. In the 1870s, the Willisburg Masonic Lodge built a two story building located near the present J. Speed Smith Masonic Lodge building on land purchased from Elizabeth Light. This building housed the Willisburg School on the first floor and the Masonic Lodge on the second. The school and lodge dissolved partnership in 1884 and a single-story school was built on the site of the original log school around 1885.

In the late 1800s, the current Masonic Lodge building was constructed and, in 1898, the lodge and school formed a second partnership. The school district purchased a half interest in the building. The school district used the first floor through 1909 when it sold back its half interest to the lodge. After this point, the lodge building became the site of circuit court trials conducted by constables. In 1911, the J. Speed Smith Masonic Lodge (WS-176) sold a half interest in the building which became known as the Willisburg Court House. The first floor, once used by the school district, was used as a court house and the upper floor was used by the Lodge.<sup>x</sup> Trials were conducted there for only a few years.

At the dominant curve in Main Street remain the old Willisburg Baptist Church and an early-twentieth-century commercial building, apparently a store, next to it. These have been preserved, although both are clad in aluminum siding. Larry's Tire and Auto, a current business housed in a modern metal-clad commercial building, is located directly across from these historic buildings. Demolitions are evident at this curve as well. Twentieth-century residences have replaced many of the residences and livery stables indicated on the 1877 map; remaining homes from this period are concentrated near what was the center of Willisburg in 1877. The twentieth-century Willisburg Church of Christ and adjacent brick telephone exchange building are located near what was indicated in 1877 as a small nineteenth-century

<sup>iv</sup> Washington County History Book Committee, p. 40.

<sup>v</sup> Springfield Main Street District NRHP nomination form.

<sup>vi</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 24.

<sup>vii</sup> Violet Elliott and Helen Gabhart, *Mackville, Kentucky: A Pictorial Review*, (Harrodsburg: The Harrodsburg Herald, 2002), p. 14.

<sup>viii</sup> Springfield Main Street District NRHP Nomination Form.

<sup>ix</sup> Interview by author with Bobby Cheser, Willisburg, Kentucky, January 20, 2012.

<sup>x</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 28.

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core of commercial buildings including a store and post office, drug store, and cabinet shop.<sup>xi</sup> Only one historic resource, the Central Bank of Willisburg and Willisburg Post Office (WS-185) located on Willisburg Road at the intersection of Willisburg Road and current Valley View Lane, has been listed on the National Register. The old bank was listed in 1988 as part of the Washington County Multiple Resource Area nomination. The bank was actually built in 1870s as a general store and appears as such on the 1877 Beers map. Later, the building housed a doctor's office and Willisburg Main Street Museum before becoming the Willisburg City Hall. The bank was incorporated in 1906 and closed in April 1935.<sup>xii</sup> Thomas Reed was a large landholder in the late 1800s and a number of the Willisburg deeds trace back to him.

Before Springfield's connection with the L & N Railroad in 1888, Willisburg residents received shipments at Lebanon, the nearest L & N Railroad depot at that time.<sup>xiii</sup> It definitely had a drug store and furniture store as well as a hotel, general store, an undertaker, and multiple doctors' offices in the late-nineteenth century. By the early-twentieth, it had a flour mill and multiple churches.<sup>xiv</sup>

In 1875 the cemetery was expanded. In 1906, William Foster donated land for an internal road through the Willisburg cemetery and room for expansion. After 1915, the cemetery expanded six more times to become the largest in Washington County. In 1993 it was designated a Kentucky Historic Landmark.<sup>xv</sup> The cemetery remains an important landscape feature as well historic site; it situated on the rise going north up Willisburg Road from the major crossroads intersection. In 1888 the Willisburg Christian Church was built on the site of the previous building with the same name, and in 1953, an addition was built to accommodate Sunday School classes.<sup>xvi</sup> Its steeple was damaged by a tornado in March 1923.<sup>xvii</sup> In 1986, the church built a parsonage on adjoining land. Two previous parsonage buildings had been located north of the church. Sometime after Bruce Welch wrote his book in the 1990s, the 1888 Willisburg Christian Church was demolished for the modern church that stands there today.<sup>xviii</sup>

In 1881, Corporal John Seay established his "mercantile house"; Seay also operated a hotel building, blacksmith shop, boarding house, and funeral home.<sup>xix</sup> Other early stores were operated by A.B. Wells, Dr. Sutherland & Son (later operated by Minner Sutherland), and J.M. Trent (later operated by Tom Trent).<sup>xx</sup> In the late-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Meredith Lynch drug store, W.A. Colvin and M.V. Crouch furniture shop, and the A.B. Wells livery stable were operating in Willisburg.<sup>xxi</sup> In 1889, the Willisburg African Methodist Episcopal Church was organized. Anna and Henry Miller purchased land for the church in 1890 and it was completed that year. In 1893, a racial conflict resulted in the burning of the church.<sup>xxii</sup> Willisburg apparently once had a thriving African American population, but similar racial problems and "harassment" forced African Americans to move elsewhere. Most African American residents had already left Willisburg before the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>xxiii</sup>

In the early-twentieth century, the population of Willisburg increased again. The mill in Willisburg was built in the early 1900s by J.C. Burns; J.C. Cheatham helped him operate the business. It was later owned and operated by T.J. Miller and his brother.<sup>xxiv</sup> Its steam engines were later replaced by gas when it was converted to a roller mill.<sup>xxv</sup> According to Bobby Cheser, Arthur Harmon later helped a Gibson run the mill. In 1906 the Bank of Willisburg incorporated; it closed in April 1935.<sup>xxvi</sup> In 1906, R.L. Crouch and Brother were undertakers in Willisburg. Ed Crouch followed as undertaker

<sup>xi</sup> Springfield Main Street District NRHP Nomination Form.

<sup>xii</sup> Bruce Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, self published, 1994, p. 27.

<sup>xiii</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 17.

<sup>xiv</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 27.

<sup>xv</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>xvi</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, pp. 41-43.

<sup>xvii</sup> Washington County History Book Committee, p. 131.

<sup>xviii</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, pp. 41-43.

<sup>xix</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 20.

<sup>xx</sup> "Historic Facts Concerning the Town of Willisburg, Kentucky" in *The Springfield Sun*, June 9, 1960, p. 2.

<sup>xxi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxii</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 26.

<sup>xxiv</sup> "Historic Facts Concerning the Town of Willisburg, Kentucky" in *The Springfield Sun*, June 9, 1960, p. 2.

<sup>xxv</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 24.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 27.

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and, in the 1930s, Fred Sutherland was undertaker in Willisburg. Rudolph Carey, who married Mr. Sutherland's daughter, also operated a funeral home in Willisburg.<sup>xxvii</sup> The Bank of Willisburg was chartered in 1906 and closed in April 1935.<sup>xxviii</sup>

The Willisburg Baptist Church was organized in 1908 and a lot was purchased that year from Thomas J. Miller for its building. The dedication of the church by its first pastor, Rev. S.F. Sims, was conducted in 1909. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, a modern annex addition was built to accommodate Sunday School classes. In 1957, a second story was added to the annex and the entire building updated with kitchen, bathrooms, and new furnishings. The church built a new parsonage in 1957.<sup>xxix</sup> After a new church was built in 1971, the church moved.

Wilbert Carrier purchased a commercial building in 1971 and operated it as Carrier General Merchandise; his son Mike purchased the store when Wilbert retired in 1974 and finally closed the store in 1995. Wilbert Carrier had operated a store in Willisburg since 1965; he and his wife Ruby began in a store across from the Baptist Church building.<sup>xxx</sup> They later moved the store to the Willisburg Baptist Church building. After this time, the Willisburg Baptist Church was used for Gin-Gin's Restaurant, Mama Carney's Restaurant, and the Willisburg History Center. Around 1993, Virginia Thompson began operating Gin-Gin's Restaurant in the old Willisburg Baptist Church building; it operated at least through 1996.<sup>xxxi</sup> In 1910 the Willisburg Graded School was founded and in 1914 the first high school in Willisburg began.<sup>xxxii</sup> Geneva Jenkins Keeling, a longtime resident, said that the Willisburg Graded School later burned, but operated through 1938.

In the late 1920s, the telephone came to Willisburg. Elizabeth McMillin operated the first exchange until the new, automated exchange was built. The automated exchange, a small brick, windowless building similar to its counterpart in Mackville, remains on Main Street near the new Dollar General. The exchange was originally between the Willisburg Christian Church and two historic houses that were demolished for the Dollar General.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

During the 1930s, people were returning to Willisburg to share living accommodations with relatives. While a drought contributed to the sense of hopelessness, few businesses in Willisburg closed. As the decade progressed, the community began to heal. In 1936-1937 the new Willisburg High School was built with its gym and cafeteria.<sup>xxxiv</sup> The building also contained a stage, office, and at least twelve classrooms. A W.P.A. crew helped build the school.<sup>xxxv</sup> In 1948, an addition was built for seventh and eighth graders, along with the high school students. In 1968, high schools in Washington County were consolidated and these students were forced to leave Willisburg for the Washington County High School in Springfield. In the late-twentieth century, new cafeteria and library additions were built to accommodate rising junior high populations and was then classified as an elementary and junior high school.<sup>xxxvi</sup> The Willisburg Church of Christ, organized in 1926, built its Main Street church in 1942 where a historic boarding house had once stood.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

After World War II, there were two auto repair shops, a furniture shop, two funeral homes, three general stores, two restaurants, a barber shop, a billiard room, a Masonic Lodge, three churches, a school with a new addition for high school students, a cemetery, and a drug store. In the 1950s, a lack of employment drove the youth from Willisburg to Louisville to work at the Ford and General Electric Appliance Park plants.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Although many of its young people were leaving for factory jobs, Willisburg's soil remained fertile as a June 1960 article in the *Springfield Sun*, noted the ". . . fine quality of burley tobacco it [Willisburg] produced."<sup>xxxix</sup>

<sup>xxvii</sup> Washington County History Book Committee, p. 132.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 27.

<sup>xxix</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 44.

<sup>xxx</sup> Peg Teachey, "Willisburg Store Closes", Section F1 - Willisburg, p. 1, 4.

<sup>xxxi</sup> "Quiet Willisburg Gaining New Residents," in *Lexington Herald-Leader*, Wednesday, April 17, 1996, p. B1.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Washington County History Book Committee, p. 66.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 31.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 33.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 34.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 45.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 35.

<sup>xxxix</sup> "Historic Facts Concerning the Town of Willisburg, Kentucky" in *The Springfield Sun*, June 9, 1960, p. 2.

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In the 1960s, Willisburg residents fought school consolidation and the closing of their high school. Residents believed Springfield wanted to "take" their schools and boycotted the Washington county seat.<sup>xi</sup> Despite community efforts, in 1963, Willisburg High School closed.<sup>xii</sup> In 1965, Willisburg incorporated as a sixth class city and in 1967 the town sponsored the Willisburg Lake project. This project involved damming Lick Creek and using the dam as a platform for the new KY-555.<sup>xiii</sup> The lake is not only recreational but also provides drinking water for the county, treated at the plant in Springfield. In the late 1970s, the modern Willisburg U.S. Post Office was built; by this time, the Corner Market had already been built.<sup>xliii</sup>

In July 1995, a branch of the Springfield State Bank opened in Willisburg. In 1996 Willisburg had a convenience market, beauty shop, body shop, elementary school, and Larry Boblitt's auto repair and parts. Willisburg was experiencing a growth spurt when construction began on the new Willisburg Christian Church in 1996. Willisburg had a fire and rescue service in a building erected in the 1990s; cable television and a modern water system was in place by 1996.<sup>xliv</sup> Sometime in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the small front-gable building that remains due east of the Willisburg High School served as the office for Jenkins Trucking. Due east of this small commercial building is a mid-twentieth-century brick-veneer house with an attached garage connected via a glass-walled hyphen. According to Geneva Jenkins Keeling and Bobby Cheser, longtime residents, this house was owned by Gardner Jenkins and, in 1948, housed the Pine Knot Restaurant, also operated by Jenkins. Gardner Jenkins apparently lived in the basement of the house and the restaurant was near the front of the first story. Geneva and Bobby Cheser, also remembered the Trent Store (later operated by Carl Perkins) and a Crowe Barber Shop which were located at the site of the current Springfield State Bank – Willisburg Branch. Geneva Jenkins Keeling notes that there were houses on Jenkins Lane, but they burned. Only the associated barns remain.<sup>xlv</sup> Heading east around the dominant curve near the Willisburg Baptist Church building would have been J.A. Johnson's Store as well as the Seay Hotel building. J.A. Johnson's Store, later operated by current resident Virginia Coulter's grandfather Gus Johnson and A.P. Cole, was located across from the modern Larry's Tire and Auto business and due east of the Willisburg Baptist Church building. Johnson's was located on land continuous with that of the church that later became a parking lot; in the 1970s, the parking lot was sold and Sportsman's Lane was cut through as an access street for new houses that had been built north of the church. The houses on the "Circle Drive" near Pat Kirsch were built in the 1970s and the Piney Way subdivision was developed in Willisburg in the late 1980s.

On the site of Johnson's Store, Everett Scruggs later built a store. Everett Brumley operated a store, later owned by Joe C. Robinson, across from Larry's Tire and Auto. Brumley had clerked in Johnson's Store from 1922-1923; Brumley later built a drug store in Willisburg. Fire claimed both the old Johnson's and Brumley's Stores, the first church buildings in Willisburg, the old Lynch Drug Store and Maccabees meeting place, as well as several residences in Willisburg.<sup>xlvi</sup> Joe C. Robinson operated another store located between the Willisburg Church of Christ and current Dollar General Store; that store was later run by Joe Perkins and was demolished around 1989. Everett Jenkins operated a store beside the J. Speed Smith Masonic Lodge. The small frame commercial building due west of the Willisburg Baptist Church has been a garage and a restaurant. It was built around 1900 by a Colvin. According to Cheser, there was apparently a doctor's office in Willisburg operated by J.H. Hopper; a Dr. Scruggs (listed on 1877 Beers map) and a Dr. Miller practiced in Willisburg at some point. Other doctors included Dr. Shields, Dr. Phelps, Dr. Williams, and Dr. Hyatt.<sup>xlvii</sup>

After World War II, there were two auto repair shops, a furniture shop, two funeral homes, three general stores, two restaurants, a barber shop, billiard room, Masonic lodge, three churches, a school for high school students, cemetery, and a drug store.

## Housing Characteristics

<sup>x1</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 36.

<sup>xli</sup> Washington County History Book Committee, p. 132.

<sup>xlii</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 37.

<sup>xliiii</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 39.

<sup>xliv</sup> "Quiet Willisburg Gaining New Residents" in *Lexington Herald-Leader*, Wednesday, April 17, 1996, p. B2.

<sup>xlv</sup> Interview by author with Geneva Jenkins Keeling, Willisburg, Kentucky, November 24, 2011.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 38.

<sup>xlvii</sup> "Willisburg Was Originally Named Paeola" in "Washington County, Kentucky, 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year" supplement to the *The Springfield Sun*, June 22, 1967.

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Strong similarities exist among two types of extant historic houses in the core of Willisburg. The first type is composed of compact, two story frame houses with side gable roofs and rural Gothic Revival steeply-pitched central cross gables. Examples of these houses are located at 2248, 2374, and 2534 Main Street. The second type is composed of single-story T-plan houses, usually Craftsman style, with hipped roof front corner porches with battered wooden supports and brick and concrete solid balustrade. Examples of these houses are located at 2093, 2165, and 2251 Main Street. Geneva Jenkins Keeling, current owner of 2093 Main Street and longtime Willisburg resident, said that her house was built in the early 1900s by John R. Rose; John's wife's name was Molly. Deeds confirm that John R. Rose purchased the 2093 Main Street property from W.S. Poulter and wife in 1911.<sup>xlviii</sup> Keeling noted that Rose may have built a number of houses in Willisburg. The similarities between the houses listed above, as well as their apparently similar construction dates, may indicate a common builder. Both types of houses were built in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 1928, Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company purchased easements for telephone lines in Willisburg. Shortly after, the lines were installed, telephone exchange built, and telephones installed.<sup>xlix</sup> In 1938, the Salt River Electric Corporation purchased easements for electrical lines and soon after this time electricity was available to everyone in Willisburg. Before this time, generators had provided electricity for some businesses.<sup>1</sup> In the 1950s, the Lion's Club installed street lights.<sup>ii</sup> The Lion's Club still takes up a collection once a year to maintain the lights. In 1985, new water pipes carried water from the Willisburg Lake to be treated in Springfield and carried back to residents in Willisburg. Fire hydrants were installed along with the pipelines.<sup>iii</sup>

### **Dominant Construction Materials**

Dominant construction materials in Willisburg include frame and masonry veneer. Most of the early historic dwellings are vinyl- or aluminum-sided frame. Mid- to late-twentieth-century houses are mainly of stone or brick veneer. Extant commercial buildings include a frame store building beside the old Willisburg Baptist Church and the structural brick Central Bank building, now used as the Willisburg City Hall.

### **Prominent Architectural Styles**

Prominent architectural styles in Willisburg include folk Victorian, Craftsman, Colonial Revival, and Gothic Revival. Most early dwellings are built in a folk Victorian style with basic Victorian form and features, but few Victorian decorative details. Dwellings built in the 1930s and 1940s typically have Craftsman or Colonial Revival style features. Gothic Revival features are found in some of the oldest buildings in Willisburg; the steeply-pitched Gothic cross gable, whether it occurs as a single or paired cross gable, is a feature that persisted into the 20<sup>th</sup> century here.

#### *Craftsman*

These homes are often one or one-and-a-half stories with dormers, brick veneer integral front porches, and roofs with bracketed, wide eave overhangs. Craftsman style houses often had original one-over-one double hung sash windows with either wooden muntins or leaded glass dividing lights. The Craftsman style in Willisburg is best represented by the house at 2471 Main Street. The house at 3149 Lawrenceburg Road (WS-999) is an unusual example of a transitional Craftsman/Victorian house.

#### *Colonial Revival*

The Colonial Revival style is meant to hearken to Federal and Adam style architecture. Often these buildings exhibit symmetry and have fanlights, classical door and window surrounds, and gable roof dormers. The Colonial Revival style shows up in a number of residences constructed during the second quarter of the twentieth century and concentrated mainly at the far eastern and western ends of Main Street. Some of these are Cape Cod houses while others have a more Neoclassical look due to front porches with classical columns or square-sided supports. In Willisburg, there are a number of Cape Cod houses, including those at 6374 Main Street and 2572 Mackville-Willisburg Road.

<sup>xlviii</sup> Washington County Clerk, Washington County Deed Book 57, p. 410.

<sup>xlix</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 31.

<sup>1</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 33.

<sup>ii</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 35.

<sup>iii</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 39.

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*Gothic Revival*

The Gothic Revival in its vernacular form is often expressed in steeply-pitched cross gables, quatrefoil windows or ventilators, pointed arched windows, window moldings, or porch details. Good examples of rural Gothic Revival houses in Willisburg include 2874 Lawrenceburg Road (WS-992) and 2273 Main Street (WS-1115). Houses with Gothic Revival features include those at 2248, 2374, and 2534 Main Street. These three latter houses are strikingly similar in form, style, and construction date and may indicate a common builder.

**Inventory of District Resources**

**Key:**

NC/A | non-contributing (age)

NC/E | non-contributing (empty lot)

NC/M | non-contributing (modification)

NA | not applicable

U | undetermined

A | aluminum

AB | asbestos

BV | brick veneer

CM | corrugated metal

CB | concrete block

D | dryvit

F | frame

PS | permastone

RB | rusticated concrete block

SC | stucco

SV | stone veneer

V | vinyl siding

VR | veneered

W | weatherboard

Inv #	Site #	Street #	Street	Type	Description	Nom Status	Orig Exter Mtrl	Current Exter Mtrl	Signif Altertn During POS	Signif Altern After POS	Date of Constr	Cnstr Mthd
1	WS-1073	2645	Lawrenceburg	Road	Col Rev hs near W-bg Christian Ch (new parsonage?)	NC/A	BV	BV			1975-2000	VR
2	WS-196	2680	Lawrenceburg	Road	Willisburg Cemetery	C	NA	NA			1825-1849 (1848)	NA
3	WS-1074	2681	Lawrenceburg	Road	modern Willisburg Christian Church	NC/A	BV	BV			1975-2000	VR
4	WS-1075		Lawrenceburg		Willisburg Fire & Rescue	NC/A	CM	CM			1975-2000	F
5	WS-1076	2836	Lawrenceburg	Road		C	U	V	Y	Y	1925-1949	F
6	WS-1077	2853	Lawrenceburg	Road		C	U	A	Y	Y	1925-1949	F
7	WS-992	2874	Lawrenceburg	Road		C	W	V	Y		1900-1924	F
8	WS-993	2883	Lawrenceburg	Road		C	W	W	Y	Y	1900-1924	F
9	WS-1078	2896	Lawrenceburg	Road		NC/A	BV	BV			1950-1974	VR
10	WS-994	2912	Lawrenceburg	Road	may be Bro. Prather's house	C	U	A			1925-1949	F
11	WS-995	2930	Lawrenceburg	Road		C	U	A			1950-1974	F
12	WS-1079	2952	Lawrenceburg	Road	house near Highland Park Subdn	C	BV	BV			1950-1974	F

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13	WS-1080	2977	Lawrenceburg	Road		NC/A	BV	BV			1975-2000	VR
14	WS-996	2988	Lawrenceburg	Road		C	W	V		Y	1825-1849	F
15	WS-1081	3017	Lawrenceburg	Road	brick veneer house next to 2988	NC/A	BV	BV			1975-2000	VR
16	WS-997		Lawrenceburg	Road	next to 2997 - Mr. Lottis' "junk house"	C	BB	AP			1925-1949	F
17	WS-998	2997	Lawrenceburg	Road		C	U	A			1950-1974	F
18	WS-1082	3016	Lawrenceburg	Road	Mr. Lottis	C	U	A	Y	Y	1900-1924	F
19	WS-1083	3040	Lawrenceburg	Road	brick veneer ranch beside 3016	NC/A	BV	BV			1950-1974	VR
20	WS-1084	3045	Lawrenceburg	Road	house beside brick veneer ranch	NC/A	V	V			1975-2000	F
21	WS-1085	3081	Lawrenceburg	Road	brick veneer ranch	NC/A	BV	BV			1975-2000	VR
22	WS-1086	3084	Lawrenceburg	Road	manufactured home	NC/A	V	V			1975-2000	F
23	WS-1087	3114	Lawrenceburg	Road	T-plan house	C	U	V	Y	Y	1900-1924	F
24	WS-1088	3123	Lawrenceburg	Road	rural Gothic house	C	U	A	Y		1925-1949	F
25	WS-999	3149	Lawrenceburg	Road	may be Larry Parrott House - ovr 100 yrs old	C	W	V	Y		1900-1924	F
26	WS-1089	3181	Lawrenceburg	Road	Craftsman house - looks like 3149	C	U	V	Y	Y	1925-1949	F
27	WS-1090	3205	Lawrenceburg	Road	bungalow	NC/M	U	V		Y	1925-1949	F
28	WS-1092	3235	Lawrenceburg	Road		NC/M	U	V	Y	Y	1925-1949	F
29	WS-1093	3263	Lawrenceburg	Road		NC/M	U	V		Y	1925-1949	F
30	WS-1094	25	Piney	Way		NC/A	BV	BV			1975-2000	VR
31	WS-1095	10	Sportsman	Lane		NC/M	U	A		Y	1925-1949	F
32	WS-176	28	Sportsman	Lane	Willisburg Court Hs - Masonic Lodge	C	W	V		Y	1876-1900	F
33	WS-989	11	Valley View	Drive	Massed plan house (was WS-1004, too)	NC/A	U	V		Y	1950-1974	F
34	WS-1005	23	Valley View	Drive	Massed plan house	NC/A	U	V		Y	1950-1974	F
35	WS-1006		Main	Street	Willisburg Ch of Christ - a/c frm WS-1005	C	U	A	Y	Y	1925-1949 (1942)	F
36	WS-1007	466	Main	Street	Telephone Exchange Bldg- House Demo'd	C	U	V	Y	Y	1900-1924	F
37	WS-1008		Main	Street		NC/D 2011	U	V	Y		1925-1949	F
38	WS-1106	1998	Main	Street		C	SV	SV	Y		1925-1949	VR
39	WS-1098	2041	Main	Street	Nice multi-purp. Barn, tob. Barn, modern hs	C	BV	BV			1975-2000 (1975)	VR
40	WS-1099	2069	Main	Street		NC/A	BV	BV			1975-2000	VR
41	WS-947	2084	Main	Street	Old Willisburg Elementary School - Isaiah Hs.	C	CB	CB	Y	Y	1925-1949 (1936)	CB
42	WS-1100		Main	Street	Office for Jenkins Trucking (beside Jenkins hs - 2126)	C	FB	FB			1925-1949	F
43	WS-1108	2093	Main	Street	Front gable & wing hs	C	U	V	Y		1900-1924	F
44	WS-1109	2109	Main	Street	Front gable house	C	W	V	Y		1900-1924	F
45	WS-1101	2125	Main	Street		NC/A	BV	BV			1950-1974	VR
46	WS-1102	2126	Main	Street	Jenkins House - had Pine Knot Restaurant	C	U	V			1925-1949	F
47	WS-1110	2141	Main	Street	Foursquare Hs	C	U	A	Y	Y	1900-1924	F
48	WS-1111	2165	Main	Street	may have been Dr. Hopper's house	C	U	V	Y	Y	1900-1924	F
49	WS-1152	2142	Main	Street	ranch across from 2141	C	BV	BV		Y	1950-1974	VR
50	WS-1103	2162	Main	Street	st. veneer ranch a/c from 2165	C	SV	SV	Y		1950-1974	VR

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51	WS-1112	2191	Main	Street	may hv. Bn. Dr. Hopper's, Crouch Funrl Hm, Beef Co-op	C	U	V		Y	1900-1924	F
52	WS-1104	2217	Main	Street		NC/A	BV	BV		Y	1950-1974	VR
53	WS-1125	2218	Main	Street	ranch - owner objection	C	BV	BV		Y	1950-1974	VR
54	WS-1126	2220	Main	Street		C	BV	BV		Y	1950-1974	VR
55	WS-1114	2248	Main	Street	CCG - may be Colvin house, old BIG house was on lot	C	U	V	Y	Y	1875-1899	F
56	WS-1113	2251	Main	Street	Front gable & wing house	C	U	V		Y	1900-1924	F
57	WS-1127	2263	Main	Street		C	BV	BV		Y	1950-1974	VR
58	WS-1115	2273	Main	Street	may have been moved, been Baptist parsonage	C	U	V	Y	Y	1900-1924	F
59	WS-1116	2293	Main	Street	may have been A.P. Cole's house	C	U	V	Y	Y	1900-1924	F
60	WS-1128	2308	Main	Street		NC/A	BV	BV			1975-2000	VR
61	WS-1117	2319	Main	Street	may be Della Pinkston's house	C	U	V	Y	Y	1900-1924	F
62	WS-1129	2331	Main	Street		C	U	A	Y		1925-1949	F
63	WS-1130	2339	Main	Street		C	U	A		Y	1925-1949	F
64	WS-1118	2342	Main	Street		C	U	A	Y	Y	1900-1924	F
65	WS-1131	2353	Main	Street		C	U	V		Y	1925-1949	F
66	WS-1120	2362	Main	Street	may be Ellis Hickerson house	C	U	V	Y	Y	U	F
67	WS-1119	2367	Main	Street		C	U	CM	Y		1925-1949	F
68	WS-1121	2374	Main	Street		C	W	W	Y	Y	1900-1924	F
69	WS-1132	2410	Main	Street	Larry's Tire & Auto	NC/A	CM	CM		Y	1975-2000	F
70	WS-1133	2421	Main	Street		NC/A	BV	BV		Y	1975-2000	VR
71	WS-948	2437	Main	Street	Esther & Andy Jenkins house/Hardin Pool Room	NC/M	U	V	Y	Y	1925-1949	F
72	WS-949	2451	Main	Street	Foursquare Hs.	NC/M	U	V	Y	Y	1925-1949	F
73	WS-1134	2460	Main	Street	NEW Dollar General Store	NC/A	CB	CB			2001-present	CB
74	WS-1135	2461	Main	Street		C	U	V	Y	Y	1925-1949	F
75	WS-950	2471	Main	Street	may be Joe Perkins' hs - across from his store	C	AB	AB	Y		1925-1949	F
76	WS-1136	2499	Main	Street		C	U	V		Y	1900-1924	F
77	WS-1137	2508	Main	Street		C	BV	BV			1950-1974	VR
78	WS-951	2521	Main	Street		C	U	A	Y	Y	1900-1924	F
79	WS-988	2534	Main	Street		C	W	A	Y	Y	1900-1924	F
80	WS-952	2543	Main	Street	Coulter House	C	U	V	Y	Y	1900-1924	F
81	WS-175	2387	Main	Street	Willisburg Baptist Church - Carrier's Store	C	W	CM	Y	Y	1900-1924 (1909)	F
82	WS-185	2516	Main	Street	Central Bank-Willisburg P.O.-Wbg City Hall	C - listed	B	B	Y		1900-1924 (1906)	B
83	WS-987	2554	Main	Street	1960s era ranch house	NC/A	BV	BV		Y	1950-1974	BV
84	WS-1138	2559	Main	Street	Springfield State Bank Willisburg Branch	NC/A	BV	BV			1975-2000	BV
85	WS-986	2572	Main	Street	Cape Cod (was undertaker's house)	C	U	A	Y		1925-1949	F
86	WS-985	6293	Highway 433			C	W	A	Y		1900-1924	F
87	WS-1139		Highway 433		AT&T telephone exchange	C	U	V			1925-1949	F
88	WS-1140	6273	Highway 433		Hs beside AT&T	NC/A	V	V			2001-present	F

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89	WS-1141	6286	Highway 433		Corner Market	NC/A	CB	CB		Y	1975-2000	CB
90	WS-1142		Highway 433		Frame garage beside Corner Market	C	HB	HB	Y		1925-1949	F
91	WS-1143	6260	Highway 433		Willisburg P.O.	NC/A	BV	BV			1950-1974	BV
92	WS-984	6247	Highway 433		T-plan house	C	W	V	Y	Y	1900-1924	F
93	WS-983	6237	Highway 433		Cape Cod House	C	W	W			1925-1949	F
94	WS-1144	6217	Highway 433			C	BV	BV		Y	1950-1974	BV
95	WS-981	6210	Highway 433		Walter Gibson massed plan Hs.	C	W	A	Y	Y	1900-1924 (1917)	F
96	WS-982	6199	Highway 433		T-plan House	C	W	W	Y	Y	1900-1924	F
97	WS-980	6181	Highway 433		Carey ranch house	NC/A	BV	BV			1950-1974 (1965)	BV
98	WS-1145	6170	Highway 433			NC/A	BV	BV			1975-2000	BV
99	WS-1146	6188	Highway 433		Hs beside 6170	NC/A	BV	BV			1975-2000	BV
100	WS-1153		Jenkins	Lane	Barns	C	VB	VB	Y		1925-1949	F
101	WS-1091		Main	Street	Empty Lot	NC/E	NA	NA			NA	NA
102	WS-1096		Main	Street	Empty Lot Beside W-bg Church of Christ	NC/E	NA	NA			NA	NA
103	WS-1097		Main	Street	Empty Lot	NC/E	NA	NA			NA	NA

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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.)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1865-1961

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1838 – Willisburg established

1873—Year the crossing road comes through

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

NA

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Rose, John R. (builder)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance in Willisburg encompasses the construction dates of the oldest extant, turnpike era, historic dwellings in its core as well as provides for later subdivision and building representative of the automobile era. There are no extant historic resources from the founding date of Willisburg. The period of significance takes in the construction dates of the most significant religious and commercial buildings in the community including its churches, Willisburg High School, the J. Speed Smith Masonic Lodge building, and the Central Bank.

**Criteria Considerations: NA**

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## Statement of Significance

### Summary Paragraph

The Willisburg Historic District meets the registration requirements of the Multiple Property Submission, "Crossroad Communities in Kentucky's Bluegrass Cultural Landscape Region." It meets the terms of National Register Criterion A for its associations with events that have made contributions to broad patterns of local history. The district's significance is evaluated within the context, "Community Planning and Development of Crossroads Communities in Washington and Marion Counties, Kentucky, 1816-1961." This nomination looks at the Planning and Development decisions, as they were enacted in residential and commercial constructions, which resulted in a crossroads community. This building activity helps illustrate the characteristics of crossroads communities in Washington County, differentiating the village as a distinct town form from the county seat town of Springfield, and the county's other rural communities, which do not have two travel routes through them.

Mackville and Willisburg, the two largest crossroads communities in Washington County (its second and third largest communities of any kind) perhaps best illustrate the local patterns of the turnpike-driven crossroads community. Both Mackville and Willisburg were founded in the second quarter of the nineteenth century during the era of turnpike road construction.

Due to the lack of railroad access in most Washington County crossroads communities, turnpike roads featured more prominently in their development. The lack of rail access also meant that Washington County crossroads community residents needed to travel turnpike roads more regularly to pick up or ship goods via the railroad at Lebanon (later Springfield), visit family and friends in adjacent towns, and attend social or religious events. When connected to the seat of a bordering county via early turnpike roads, crossroads community residents often chose to do business in these adjacent counties. Willisburg and Mackville residents, for instance, did much business in Harrodsburg, seat of nearby Mercer County, instead of in their own seat of Springfield. In the *History of Willisburg*, Welch notes that "The people of Willisburg and northern Washington County had strong ties to Mercer County." Even as early as the settlement era, Willisburg residents had friends and family in Mercer County. Families married and moved back and forth between the two counties frequently. Welch also notes that, "The services offered in Harrodsburg were also utilized as often as those in Springfield by many persons."<sup>liii</sup>

### Development of Willisburg as a Crossroads Community

The early settlers of the area that became known as Willisburg emigrated from Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina.<sup>liv</sup> These settlers included the Yocum, Coulter, Farris, Hughes, Miller, and McIlvoy families. The act creating the town required that its boundaries incorporate the earlier Paeola election precinct and that elections were to be held in Willisburg at a house furnished by its citizens. Willisburg was named for Captain Henry Willis, a Revolutionary War veteran and member of the Kentucky Militia.<sup>lv</sup>

From the time of the split of southern Washington County into Marion County in 1834, there was a rivalry between the leading towns in Washington County including Springfield, Mackville, and Willisburg. This grew out of the fact that Springfield was no longer the center of the county. Originally, the Washington County courthouse was located at the geographic center of the county as determined by survey, but after the split, the courthouse was almost at the southern border. The feeling in the northern portion of the county was that the new borders called for a new county seat farther north than Springfield and closer to Mackville. Northern Washington County residents also believed that the locus of population had shifted far enough to the north that Springfield could be outvoted. In 1857 came a challenge from the northern portion of the county. A bill was introduced in Frankfort to submit the question of whether the county seat should be centrally relocated closer to Willisburg. In 1858 the governor signed a bill calling for a referendum. The county judge was ordered to open a poll on the issue at the August election. W.E. Bell was appointed as surveyor to run a line to

<sup>liii</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 4.

<sup>liv</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 6.

<sup>lv</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 19.

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determine the new central location for a court house if the bill passed.<sup>lvi</sup> A vote was taken and resulted in 679 in favor and 840 against. Springfield voted against the bill and Mackville and Willisburg voted for it. Still, the bill was defeated.<sup>lvii</sup>

Union soldiers on their way to the Battle of Perryville would later use a portion of the Mackville-Willisburg-Louisville Turnpike, from its intersection with Polin Pike (Polin Road) through Willisburg to Mackville.<sup>lviii</sup> The Springfield-Willisburg-Antioch-Fox's Creek Pike (now Highway 53 or Lawrenceburg Road) was chartered in 1870.<sup>lix</sup> Washington County had almost as many miles of turnpikes as any other in the state in 1896.<sup>lx</sup> In March 1896, the counties were authorized to buy up all the toll road stock and assume all toll road functions. The counties were to tax for their support and make them free roads.<sup>lxi</sup> As a result, in the 1890s, the Mackville, Willisburg, and Louisville Turnpike became a county turnpike.<sup>lxii</sup> Willisburg had two toll houses, built in the 1870s. One was located at the corner of the Springfield-Willisburg-Antioch-Fox's Creek Pike and the pike leading to Walton's lick. The other was also on the same turnpike but at the point where the Tatum Springs Pike intersected.<sup>lxiii</sup>

### **Evaluation of the Historic Significance of the Willisburg Historic District within the Context Community Planning and Development in Marion and Washington Counties, 1865-1961**

The Willisburg Historic District meets the registration requirements of the Multiple Property Submission, "Crossroads Communities in Kentucky's Bluegrass Cultural Landscape Region." It meets the terms of National Register Criterion A for its associations with events that have made contributions to broad patterns of local history. The district's significance is evaluated within the context, "community Planning and Development of Crossroads Communities in Washington and Marion Counties, Kentucky, 1816-1961."

Willisburg, due to its location at the major crossroads intersection of KY-433 and KY-53, illustrates the patterns of development in a turnpike-driven crossroads community. Much as in Mackville, churches and stores anchored dominant curves in the road. One of the most significant curves in the road is where Willisburg Baptist Church remains as an important community marker. The route of Main Street (KY-53/KY-433) has remained intact, preserving the original form of Willisburg and contributing to its integrity of form and design. Reflecting development patterns in turnpike-driven crossroads communities, commercial development is interspersed more with dwellings and less concentrated. Willisburg retains its high school, now the Isaiah House, an important resource at the entrance to town from the Springfield direction. The school also serves as an indicator of a crossroads community which moved into a higher phase of development. The Willisburg Cemetery is an important landscape feature and also demonstrates the important town planning decisions made in crossroads communities. The Willisburg Court House/Masonic lodge building remains near the Willisburg Baptist Church. This has always been a multi-purpose commercial building with first floor space being rented and second floor space being used by the Masonic lodge. The lodge reminds residents of a time when Willisburg was thriving enough to have its own courthouse, even if it could never be the county seat. The court house, again, demonstrates that Willisburg was a large, self-sustaining crossroads community and provides evidence of perhaps the highest level of historic town development possible next to the county seat. Willisburg preserves a density of development and a definite boundary between crossroads community and farmland.

Because it has preserved its farms as component resources, and because it never had a direct rail connection, Willisburg still represents town life and development in the absence of the railroad. Although residents of railroad-driven crossroads communities also grew some of their own food, they were not nearly as self-sufficient as the residents of Mackville and Willisburg with their crossroads farms. They definitely could not produce the surplus tobacco to sell in the winter, although this was possible on surrounding farms. Turnpike-driven crossroads communities tended to have much deeper lots, providing space at the rear for some of the resources typically present on a larger farm. Cutting through the

<sup>lvi</sup> Washington County History Book Committee, *Washington County Bicentennial History*, p.

34.

<sup>lvii</sup> Baylor, p. 111.

<sup>lviii</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 19.

<sup>lix</sup> Washington County History Book Committee, p. 40.

<sup>lx</sup> "Lawless Outbreak By Night Raiders Destroyed Kentucky's Toll Road System," in *Kentucky Explorer*, November 1995, p. 3, reprinted from 1896 Courier-Journal article.

<sup>lxi</sup> Washington County History Book Committee, p. 51.

<sup>lxii</sup> Washington County History Book Committee, p. 51.

<sup>lxiii</sup> Welch, *The History of Willisburg*, p. 22.

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community, the railroad right-of-way actually limited the size of many parcels within railroad-driven crossroads communities.

**How the Proposed Willisburg Historic District meets the MPDF Registration Requirements: Evaluation of the Integrity of Historic Significance of the Willisburg Historic District, given its physical character today**

Individual resources in Willisburg maintain integrity of location and design by retaining a close relationship with the roads they address. Willisburg preserves fewer of its late-nineteenth-century residences, but perhaps more of its early-twentieth-century residences. Willisburg follows the patterns of other crossroads communities in that it has experienced the loss of its early manufacturers and most of its early commercial buildings. Willisburg seems to be a town currently in transition, with the construction of the brand new Dollar General Store on Main Street right next to the modern Larry's Tire and Auto business. Willisburg also has the late-twentieth-century Springfield State Bank branch and Corner Market, a modern franchise convenience market located at the intersection with Lawrenceburg Road. Although these modern businesses affect the integrity of materials and feeling in the district, they also help Willisburg retain its mixed use character. Although they will probably never again be self-sustainable, crossroads communities need to provide certain services in order to retain community-minded residents. Willisburg has lost the most integrity of materials, feeling, and design between the main curve at Willisburg Baptist Church and the intersection with Lawrenceburg Road. On the other hand, the Willisburg Church of Christ and Central Bank of Willisburg have been preserved in this area, along with some of the oldest dwellings in Willisburg. Outside the center of the district, Willisburg retains its crossroads farms – narrow, long parcels just large enough for a dwelling, domestic outbuildings, at least one agricultural building, and farm fields for growing the cash crop of tobacco. In addition to the significance of its court house and crossroads farms to town development, Willisburg retains a home-based business from the mid-twentieth century in the Gardner Jenkins House (Inventory #46; WS-1102). Jenkins operated the restaurant in a room of the house. A historic office building for his trucking company has also been preserved next door. Willisburg's physical townscape significant for the way it represents not only the community's development, but also everyday life in crossroads communities.

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Washington County History Book Committee, *Washington County Bicentennial History, 1792-1992*, (Turner Publishing Company, 1991).

Welch, Bruce. *History of Willisburg*, self published, 1994.

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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Willisburg Historic District  
Name of Property

Washington County, KY  
County and State

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** approximately 258  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

### UTM References

**Coordinates 1 & 4 on Brush Grove Quad; coordinates 2 & 3 on Cardwell Quad**

**All Coordinates calculated via GIS (ArcGIS)**

**All Coordinates expressed according to NAD27**

1	<u>16N</u> Zone	<u>664 160</u> Easting	<u>4185 540</u> Northing	3	<u>16N</u> Zone	<u>665 840</u> Easting	<u>4187 280</u> Northing
2	<u>16N</u> Zone	<u>665 940</u> Easting	<u>4185 670</u> Northing	4	<u>16N</u> Zone	<u>664 100</u> Easting	<u>4187 180</u> Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)  
See sketch map

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Boundaries in Willisburg were selected to encompass the core of the crossroads community based on 1877 map information, historic descriptions, and the perceptions of longtime residents. On all corridors, the boundary ceases where compact, crossroads community parcels meet farmland or where historic buildings mainly cease and new construction begins. The majority of more recent construction occurs along the three main corridors as they extend farther from the center of the community in typical "piano key development" fashion. Where these were still interspersed with historic resources and on small parcels they were sometimes included.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Jennifer Ryall  
organization University of Kentucky/Kentucky Archaeological Survey date \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number 1020A Export Street telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Lexington state KY zip code 40506-9854  
e-mail [bluebug70@gmail.com](mailto:bluebug70@gmail.com)

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### Photographs:

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**Name of Property:** Willisburg Historic District

**City or Vicinity:** Willisburg, KY

**County:** Washington County

**Photographer:** Jennifer Ryall

**Dates Photographed:** 9-28-11, 1-20-12

**Location of Original Photographs:** CD housed at the Kentucky Heritage Council (SHPO)

**Description of Photograph and Number:**

1. Streetscape view looking northwest on KY-433 showing (L-R): AT&T telephone exchange (Inventory #87; WS-1139), 6293 Highway 433 (Inventory #86; WS-985), 2572 Main Street (Inventory #85); WS-986), Central Bank of Willisburg/Willisburg City Hall (Inventory #82; WS-185), 2543 Main Street (Inventory #80; WS-952), and Springfield State Bank (Inventory #84; WS-1138).

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2. Streetscape view looking northwest on Main Street showing (L-R): Central Bank of Willisburg/Willisburg City Hall (Inventory #82; WS-185), telephone exchange building (Inventory #36; WS-1007), Willisburg Baptist Church (Inventory #81; WS-175), 2471 Main Street (Inventory #75; WS-950), and 2499 Main Street (Inventory #76; WS-1136).
3. Streetscape view of the northeastern side of Main Street showing (L-R): 2499 Main Street (Inventory #76; WS-1136), 2521 Main Street (Inventory #78; WS-951), 2543 Main Street (Inventory #80; WS-952), and a portion of Central Bank of Willisburg/Willisburg City Hall (Inventory #82; WS-185).
4. Streetscape view looking northwest on Main Street showing (L-R): telephone exchange building (Inventory #36; WS-1007), Larry's Tire & Auto (Inventory #69; WS-1132), Willisburg Baptist Church (Inventory #81; WS-175), 2437 Main Street (Inventory #71; WS-948), 2451 Main Street (Inventory #72; WS-949), 2461 Main Street (Inventory #74; WS-1135), and a portion of 2471 Main Street (Inventory #75; WS-950).
5. Streetscape view looking southeast on Main Street from the dominant curve, showing (L-R): 2437 Main Street (Inventory #71; WS-948), Central Bank of Willisburg/Willisburg City Hall (Inventory #82; WS-185), Willisburg Church of Christ (Inventory #35; WS-1006), telephone exchange building (Inventory #36; WS-1007), and Larry's Tire & Auto (Inventory #69; WS-1132).
6. Streetscape view looking toward the boundary at Sportsman Lane showing (L-R): Willisburg Baptist Church (Inventory #81; WS-175), new houses outside the boundary, and Willisburg Court House-Masonic Lodge (Inventory #32; WS-176).
7. Streetscape view looking west on Main Street at the dominant curve showing (L-R): 2367 Main Street (Inventory #67; WS-1119) and Willisburg Baptist Church (Inventory #81; WS-175).
8. View of the northwestern side of Main Street showing (L-R): a portion of 2339 Main Street (Inventory #63; WS-1130), 2353 Main Street (Inventory #65; WS-1131), 2367 Main Street (Inventory #67; WS-1119), and Willisburg Baptist Church (Inventory #81; WS-175).
9. Streetscape view looking west on Main Street toward the northwestern side showing (L-R): 2293 Main Street (Inventory #59; WS-1116), 2319 Main Street (Inventory #61; WS-1117), 2331 Main Street (Inventory #62; WS-1129), 2339 Main Street (Inventory #63; WS-1130), and 2353 Main Street (Inventory #65; WS-1131).

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10. Streetscape view of the northwestern side of Main Street showing (L-R): 2093 Main Street (Inventory #43; WS-1108) and 2109 Main Street (Inventory #44; WS-1109).
11. Streetscape view of the northwestern side of Main Street showing (L-R): 2141 Main Street (Inventory #47; WS-1110), 2165 Main Street (Inventory #48; WS-1111), 21919 Main Street (Inventory #51; WS-1112), 2217 Main Street (Inventory #54; WS-1104), 2367 Main Street (Inventory #67; WS-1119), and Willisburg Baptist Church (Inventory #81; WS-175).
12. Streetscape view looking northwest on Main Street from the intersection with Lawrenceburg Road showing (L-R): 2554 Main Street (Inventory #83; WS-987), 2534 Main Street (Inventory #79; WS-988), Central Bank of Willisburg/Willisburg City Hall (Inventory #82; WS-185), and 2543 Main Street (Inventory #80; WS-952).
13. Streetscape view looking north on Lawrenceburg Road (KY-53) showing (L-R): 2977 Lawrenceburg Road (Inventory #13; WS-1080), 2988 Lawrenceburg Road (Inventory #14; WS-996), and 2997 Lawrenceburg Road (Inventory #17; WS-998).
14. Streetscape view looking southeast from Lawrenceburg Road toward the intersection with Main Street showing (L-R): Willisburg Fire & Rescue (Inventory #4; WS-1075), Corner Market (Inventory #89; WS-1141), AT&T telephone exchange (Inventory #87; WS-1139) and 6293 Highway 433 (Inventory #86; WS-985).
15. Streetscape view looking east on Main Street showing 2191 Main Street (Inventory #51; WS-1112), 2217 Main Street (Inventory #52; WS-1104), and 2220 Main Street (Inventory #54; WS-1126).
16. Streetscape view looking south from Main Street toward the Jenkins Lane Barns (Inventory #100; WS-1153).
17. Streetscape view looking northwest on Main Street toward the dominant curve, showing: Larry's Tire & Auto (Inventory #69; WS-1132), Willisburg Baptist Church (Inventory #81, WS-175), Willisburg Court House – Masonic lodge (Inventory #32; WS-176), and 10 Sportsman Lane (Inventory #31; WS-1095).
18. View of the construction of the new Dollar General Store (Inventory #73; WS-1134).
19. View at western edge of boundary looking west on KY-53 (Main Street).
20. View looking east from western boundary on KY-53 (Main Street) showing, (L-R): a house outside the boundary and 1998 Main Street (Inventory #38; WS-1106).
21. Streetscape view of the western side of Main Street showing (R-L): Dollar General Store (Inventory #73; WS-1134), telephone exchange building (Inventory #36; WS-1007), Willisburg Church of Christ (Inventory #35; WS-1006), and Central Bank of Willisburg-Willisburg City Hall (Inventory #82; WS-185).
22. Streetscape view of western side of Main Street showing (L-R): Dollar General Store (Inventory #73; WS-1134), Larry's Tire & Auto (Inventory #69; WS-1132), and Willisburg Baptist Church (Inventory #81; WS-175).
23. Side view of Central Bank of Willisburg-Willisburg City Hall (Inventory #82; WS-185).
24. Perspective photo looking northwest down the hill on Main Street toward the intersection with Lawrenceburg Road.
25. View looking northwest from the southeastern boundary on KY-433.
26. Perspective photo looking north on Lawrenceburg Road and showing (L-R): 2645 Lawrenceburg Road (Inventory #1; WS-1073), Willisburg Christian Church (Inventory #3; WS-1074), and Willisburg Cemetery (Inventory #2, WS-196).
27. View looking south from northern boundary on Lawrenceburg Road and showing 3263 Lawrenceburg Road (Inventory #29; WS-1093).

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28. View looking south on Lawrenceburg Road and showing (L-R): Willisburg Cemetery in the background (Inventory #2; WS-196), 2853 Lawrenceburg Road (Inventory #6; WS-1077), and 2883 Lawrenceburg Road (Inventory #8; WS-993).
29. Perspective photo looking north on Lawrenceburg Road within the district.
30. Perspective photo taken from Jenkins Lane near the barns within the district (Inventory #100; WS-1153) looking northwest toward Main Street. Note the Isaiah House (old Willisburg High School – Inventory #41; WS-947) at the far left of the photo.

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**Property Owner:**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Multiple Owners

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

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

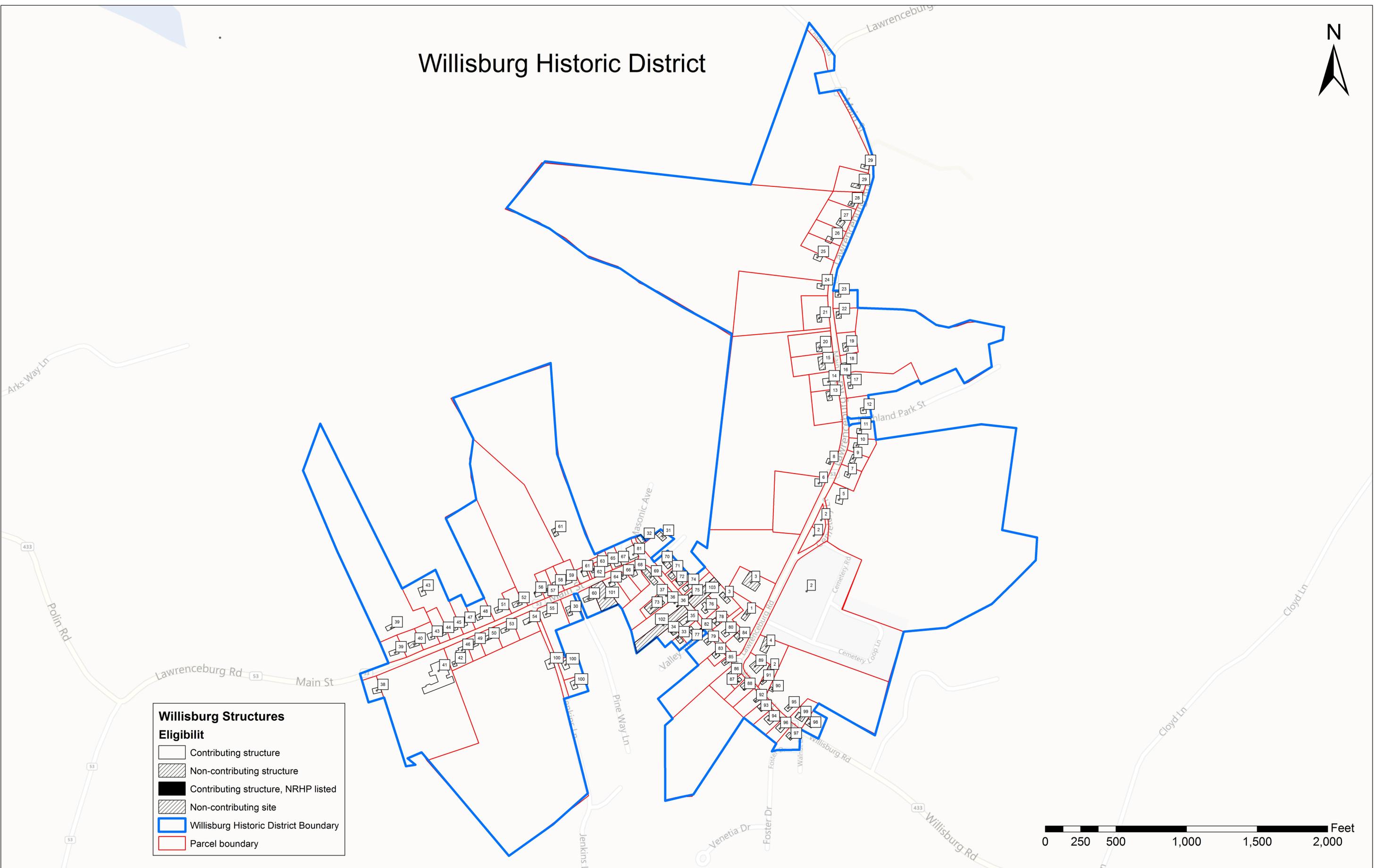
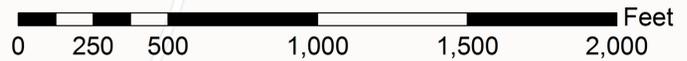


# Willisburg Historic District



**Willisburg Structures Eligibility**

- Contributing structure
- Non-contributing structure
- Contributing structure, NRHP listed
- Non-contributing site
- Willisburg Historic District Boundary
- Parcel boundary





4189  
50'  
4188  
4187  
4186  
4185

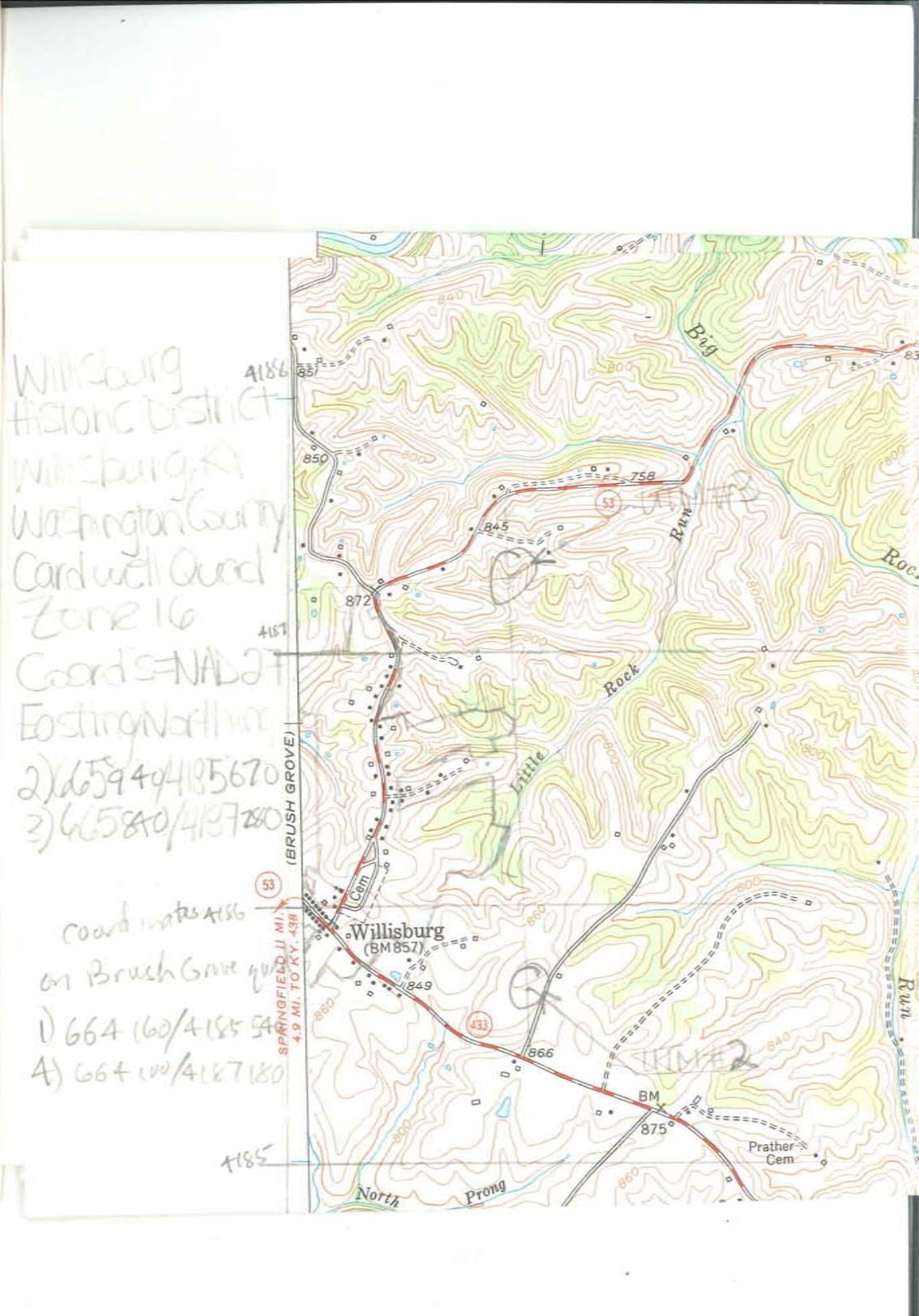
(CARDWELL)  
3959 1 SE

ASHBROOK (KY 53) 12 MI. N

SPRINGFIELD (MI. 49 MI. TO KY. 438)

Willisburg  
Historic District  
Willisburg, KY  
Washington County  
Brush Grove Quad  
Cardwell Quad  
Zone 16  
Coord's = NAD 83  
Easting Northing  
1) 664 160 / 4185 540  
4) 664 100 / 4187 180

coordinates on  
card well quad:  
2) 665 940 / 4185 670  
3) 665 840 / 4187 280



Willisburg  
Historic District  
Willisburg, KY  
Washington County  
Cardwell Quad  
Zone 16  
Coord's = NAD 83  
Easting Northing  
2) 665 940 / 4185 670  
3) 665 840 / 4187 280

coordinates 4186  
on Brush Grove quad  
1) 664 160 / 4185 540  
4) 664 100 / 4187 180







Church of Christ



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GENERAL**











FOR SALE  
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\$120,000

























DOLLAR GENERAL

DOLLAR GENERAL

GENERAL

General Store





OF WILLIAMSBURG VA  
**Church of Christ**  
Sunday, 10:00 AM Service - 11:00 AM Worship - 7:00 PM













