

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**  
**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

**1. Name of Property**

Historic name: Horse Cave Residential Historic District

Other names/site number: See Description Inventory

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

**2. Location**

Street & number: Roughly bounded by Maple Ave., Guthrie St., Walthall St., Cemetery St., Hart Ave., College St., E. Kathleen Ave.

City or town: Horse Cave State: Kentucky County: Hart

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

**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

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X  A   B   C   D

<p>_____  Signature of certifying official/Title: <b>Craig Potts/SHPO</b> Date _____  <u> Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office </u>  State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p> <p>_____  <b>Signature of commenting official:</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Date</b></span></p> <p>_____  <b>Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>
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**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

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>191</u>	<u>15</u>	buildings
_____	<u>5</u>	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>191</u>	<u>20</u>	Total

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling  
RELIGION/religious facility  
RELIGION/church-related residence  
LANDSCAPE/Parking lot  
LANDSCAPE/Unoccupied land

**Current Functions**

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling  
RELIGION/religious facility  
RELIGION/church-related residence  
LANDSCAPE/Parking lot  
LANDSCAPE/Unoccupied land

**Architectural Classification**

MID-19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY/Greek Revival  
LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne  
LATE 19<sup>th</sup> AND 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY  
REVIVALS/Colonial Revival  
LATE 19<sup>th</sup> AND 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY  
REVIVALS/Tudor Revival  
LATE 19<sup>th</sup> AND 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY  
REVIVALS/Victorian Revival  
LATE 19<sup>th</sup> AND 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY  
REVIVALS/Late Gothic Revival  
LATE 19<sup>th</sup> AND 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY  
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Prairie  
LATE 19<sup>th</sup> AND 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY  
AMERICAN  
MOVEMENTS/Bungalow/Craftsman  
MODERN MOVEMENT/Ranch  
MODERN MOVEMENT

**Materials:**

Foundation: Stone, Brick, Concrete  
Exterior Walls: Wood, Vinyl, Metal, Brick,  
Concrete block, Stone  
Roof: Asphalt and Synthetics

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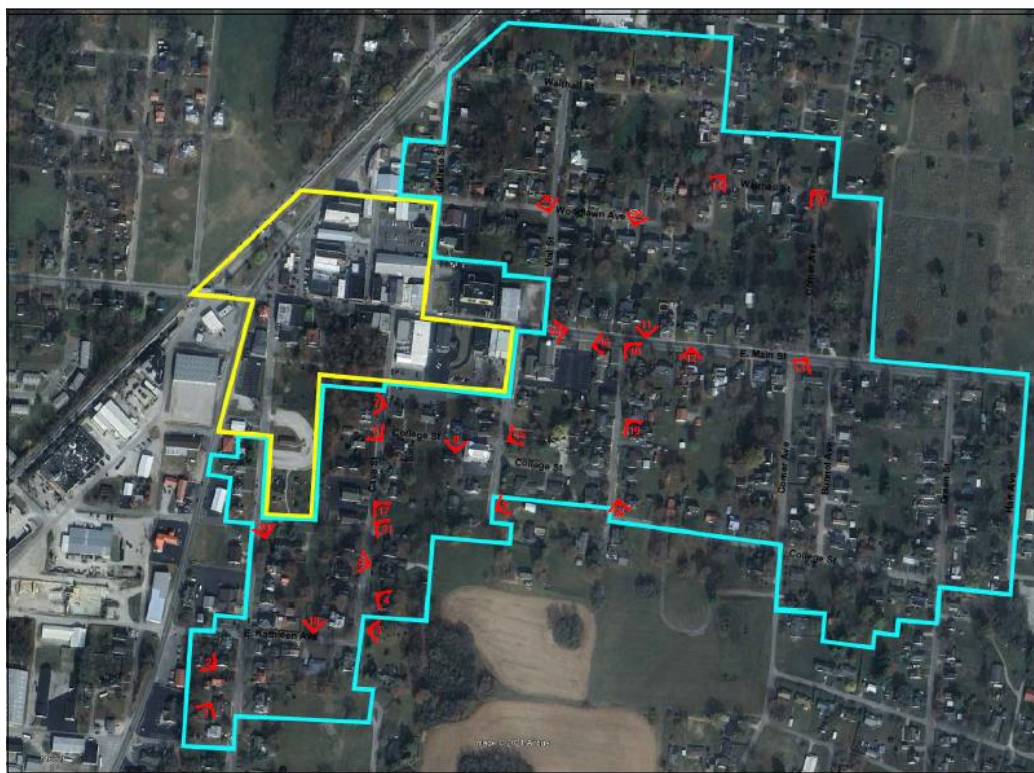
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## 7. Narrative Description

### Summary Paragraph

The Horse Cave Residential District surrounds the city center of Horse Cave on the north, east, and south. The district straddles East Main Street and is situated just east of US 31-W (Dixie Street) and the former Louisville and Nashville (L&N) Railroad, now a line in the Seaboard System Railroad. US 31-W and Main Street serve as the major thoroughfares in Horse Cave, with the latter making up the area's primary commercial corridor, along which the 2001 National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-listed Horse Cave Historic District (NR #01000796) is located. The proposed district covers approximately 89 acres, and it is bounded roughly by residential parcels along Maple Avenue and Guthrie Street to the west, residential parcels along Walthall Street to the north, residential parcels along Cemetery Street and Hart Avenue to the east, and residential parcels along College Street and East Kathleen Avenue to the south. The district is mainly single-family dwellings. The Horse Cave Residential District has resources that range from ca. 1850 through the twenty first century. Its Period of Significance begins in 1914, when the town's development began to be affected by cave tourist travel, and 1974, a year corresponding to the current fifty-year threshold commonly used to delineate historic significance. The district features 191 Contributing resources and 20 Non-Contributing resources (15 buildings and 5 sites). All Non-Contributing properties are considered such because they are either vacant lots or were constructed after the Period of Significance. The district as a whole conveys its historic identity as a town whose development relied upon the support of the tourism industry.



Proposed Horse Cave Residential District in blue; existing historic district in yellow

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**General Setting of the District**

The Horse Cave Residential Historic District is a collection of primarily single-family homes that make up the earliest phase of residential development around the Horse Cave commercial corridor, which itself was predicated on the existence of a cave entrance located in the center of town. The City of Horse Cave is located at the intersection of US US 31-W (Dixie Street) and Kentucky State Route 218 (Main Street), along the former L&N Railroad line. After the mid-twentieth century, the construction of Interstate 65 essentially bypassed the cave town, skirting Horse Cave by nearly 2.5-miles, by the closest on-ramp. However, the city's location along a major road (US 31) and the presence of the cave entrance allowed the city to endure with little change to the overall population or daily life over the last several decades.

Outside of the proposed boundaries, the district is surrounded by a smattering of residential development on all sides with industrial development to the southwest, along the rail line, a dense forest past the residential properties to the west, a cemetery immediately to the east, and agricultural land past the residential properties to the north, south, and east. While there are some residential streets around the district, east of the rail line, the boundaries included in this nomination reflect the earliest laid out streets associated with the growth of Horse Cave and the residential demands in the early decades of the twentieth century. The majority of the houses just outside the district boundaries date to the mid twentieth century, and while that is within the Period of Significance, they largely makeup the later expansion and development, and not the earliest organization of the city.

There have been minimal changes to the district over the years, both in the built environment and in the general layout/configuration. Such changes include the occasional loss of a historic resource, which have been replaced with newer construction in some cases and left as empty lots in others. In one instance, previous density was lost when the church at 301 E. Main St. was constructed, however, this construction took place during the mid-twentieth century, within the Period of Significance, and just after one of the City of Horse Cave's notable periods of growth. Otherwise, with the exception of these small and infrequent occurrences throughout the district, the Horse Cave Residential Historic District is superbly intact and displays excellent integrity. This is further demonstrated by the low number of Non-Contributing resources within the district, five of which are empty lots, another five of which were constructed on a single parcel that was subdivided in the mid-1980s, and yet another is a new associated building built next to a historic church.

Most of the residential construction within the Horse Cave Residential Historic District was completed during the decades spanning the late-nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries.

**While Project Methodology**

When surveying and assessing a neighborhood, certain methodologies must be employed, and thus explained to allow the reader to fully understand the information presented. One of the key elements that must be examined, identified and explained is the Period of Significance. The Period of Significance for the Horse Cave Residential Historic District begins in 1850, the approximate date of construction of the first extant Contributing resource, and ends in 1974, marking the end of the fifty-year threshold, commonly used to denote historic resources by the National Park Service.

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Once the Period of Significance has been identified, a comprehensive list of all resources within the district’s boundaries whose construction falls within that time span must be compiled. In order to do this, other datasets must be consulted. Thankfully, the Hart County Property Valuation Administrator (the “PVA,” which is the county tax assessment office in Kentucky) has an up-to-date database with each parcel in the county which includes key attributes such as parcel number, if there have been any improvements to the property, such as construction of buildings, and other key information about said buildings such as square footage, zoning, owner, and year built. Along with photographs, the key dataset used for the purposes of this nomination is the construction year. However, just as it is unrealistic to expect this nomination to have in-depth information on every resource within its boundaries, so too is it unrealistic to expect the PVA to have accurate information on every parcel in the county. As such, the PVA’s construction year is often an estimate, based on key identifiers and historic documentation. Common practice for the Hart County PVA when dates are unknowable is to use a placeholder of 1900. This usually indicates a rough approximation, meaning the building could be built thirty years before or after 1900. This historian consulted historic maps of Horse Cave to confirm dates of construction within the district’s boundaries. Additional steps were relied upon to identify whether or not that resource will be labeled Contributing or Non-Contributing. These steps are outlined below.

As is commonplace among working-class rural communities, especially those that have a history spanning over one hundred years, many of the buildings have undergone some material changes, namely in a replacement of exterior material, small additions, and a change in fenestration. Additionally, some resources have experienced more noticeable and severe changes, such as unsympathetic additions. Many such changes occurred during the historic period and continue to the present. Some of these changes have become a part of the definable character of such neighborhoods, meaning that working-class families, who are often financially burdened in ways that affluent families in nicer neighborhoods are not, pride themselves on remodeling their house, even if it is not in ways that fall outside of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, used by SHPOs, cities with local historic preservation ordinances, and the preservation community in general. Such an example seen throughout working-class communities is in the replacement, or covering, of original exterior wall cladding with something newer, “prettier,” and easier to maintain, such as vinyl siding. The same is true for replacement windows. As such, in Horse Cave, these alterations are not seen as detrimental to the resource’s integrity and, thus its eligibility or status as Contributing, as long as the building is still able to convey its valuable forms, features, and details. These determinations were made for each building that was built within the Period of Significance and are outlined in the table below.



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**305 Maple Ave**

**207 Cave St**

**115 Cave St**

attempts to demonstrate the date of construction of each of the resources within the district, many of these dates are approximate and cannot be precisely verified. Most of the dates, were gathered from the Hart County Property Valuation Administration (PVA) and are merely estimates (the PVA assigns 1900 for historic buildings that have no other documented age). However, while the PVA dates are approximations, the resources were constructed during the period of residential development in Horse Cave in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries and can be confirmed in the building's construction and by using historic Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and United States Geological Survey (USGS) Topographic maps.<sup>1</sup>

**Physical Character of the District**

The general spatial layout and infrastructure of the Horse Cave Residential Historic District can be seen as influenced by the early wave of residential development and community planning around the commercial corridor of the city, Horse Cave, which promoted itself as a tourist destination. The City of Horse Cave as a whole is laid out in a way that makes sense and is commonplace among similar-sized small towns, with the commercial district located adjacent to the railroad line and the industrial development occurring further along the line. Similarly, the residential development occurred in a way that makes sense and is somewhat predictable, spreading out from the commercial corridor, extending only a few blocks to the north, east, and south (all east of the railroad line) at first, before later growth in Horse Cave occurred outside of this central core.

The layout of the Horse Cave Residential Historic District has similarities to what is typical in small rural towns, with lots being generally similar in size and shape, with a few exceptions, and houses having very similar setbacks that allow for a front yard while still leaving ample room on the property behind the house. Most of the large and ornamental resources within the district are situated along the main thoroughfare, E. Main St., which would have been a sought-after site for the early affluent townspeople. The further from the city center one goes within the district, the more modest the residences tend to get, both in size and style, and that is where most of the later additions to the district are located. Moreover, the road infrastructure within the district has remained unchanged with an irregularly-shaped grid-like pattern, complete with unequal block sizes, dead-end streets, non-contiguous streets, and frequent two-street intersections creating ninety-degree turns, instead of the typical four-way intersections. These oddities are somewhat commonplace among small towns that were largely laid out all at once in the mid-nineteenth century on land that had hitherto been mostly undeveloped farmland. The strange aspects occur as the town developed beyond the town's original limits, which was mostly laid out in 1859 by a developer from Barren County on 535 acres he had purchased.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hart County Property Valuation Administration, Various: Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1916 and 1923; USGS various.

<sup>2</sup> "Horse Cave Local Historic District Designation Report 2004," The City of Horse Cave, Horse Cave, Kentucky 2004; Edwards, Cyrus and Florence Edwards Gardiner. *Cyrus Edwards' Stories of early days: and others in what is now Barren, Hart and Metcalfe Counties*. Louisville: The Standard Printing Company, Inc, 1940.

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The two major factors for development of the district are early transportation routes, namely East Main Street, North Dixie Street (Kentucky US 31-W, also known as Dixie Street), and the L&N Railroad line, the latter two of which run parallel until Dixie Street redirects after intersecting with East Main Street. The City of Horse Cave in general owes its formation and growth to its location along the main L&N line. The L&N began to build the track in 1857-1858 and the town was laid out the year after, which included land for a rail depot. The railroad line's location in the heart of Horse Cave allowed a point for people from the surrounding region to converge to ship produce, tobacco, and livestock with the major vehicular transportation routes (Dixie Street – north/south and, Main Street – east/west) facilitating the travel to and from town. These transportation routes were integral to the growth and survival of Horse Cave, and thus were the focal points of the earliest stages of residential development.



**Larger and more ornate resources along East Main Street.**

### Neighborhood Resources

The Horse Cave Residential Historic District consists almost exclusively of single-family residential properties, however there are a few notable exceptions. One of these exceptions is the presence of religious facilities within the district. This is commonplace among small towns in Kentucky. The Horse Cave Residential Historic District features four churches, two of which are among the residential properties, one is along the main corridor, and one is just north of it, both of which are immediately adjacent to the commercial district.

There are also sporadic multi-family dwellings within the district, all of which are either outside the Period of Significance, meaning that they are modern construction, or they have been converted. These, too, are standard occurrences in small towns, as they provide a quality residence with ideal location and lesser expense than a single-family dwelling. Lastly, there is one commercial property within the district's boundaries. This is a modern construction on a previously undeveloped lot and it is situated just outside the commercial district, placing it in an appropriate location.



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**Churches located within the District**

**Residences in the Horse Cave Residential Historic District**

One of the most interesting features of the Horse Cave Residential Historic District is the eclectic nature of the architecture while maintaining a sense of cohesiveness and uniformity. The styles within the district span the gamut, but the forms of the houses can be somewhat homogenous in their layout and harmony within the district as a whole while the overall layout portrays cohesion. For example, high-style houses tend to be situated more centrally, close to the commercial corridor, while more recent and modest houses are along the boundary's outskirts, however, neither resource feels out of place when traveling about the district.

In addition to houses on the district's outskirts featuring less decoration, they also tend to be larger in scale and often feature enlarging alterations over the years. The closer a person gets to East Main Street, the houses tend to often be at one-and-a-half to two-stories tall or sprawl more in floorplan, while the houses near the outer edges are smaller and often feature a regular, simpler footprint. The high-style houses tend to feature elaborate ornamentation as well as more frequent projections while the more modest homes tend to be utilitarian in form and feature minimal embellishment. Lastly, the styles and forms of the resources in the district are informed by the time period in which they were constructed. While this notion sounds evident, it warrants stating, as the older resources are often more easily recognized by their stylized, material, and overall architectural differences while the more recent resources display architectural trends of the time which display lesser amounts of diversity, possibly or the sake of reducing cost. As such, early resources feature Victorian styles while later houses have a more utilitarian appearance and include Ranch House variants, as well as other simplistic mid-century styles.

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**Larger houses within the district that feature stylistic elements and embellishments**



**Mid-Century styles/forms within the district that are more utilitarian in design**

**Project Methodology**

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**305 Maple Ave**



**207 Cave St**



**115 Cave St**

**Table 1: List of Resources within Horse Cave Residential Historic District.**

<b>Inventory Number</b>	<b>KHC Site Number</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Year Built (estimate)</b>	<b>Style/Form</b>	<b>NRHP Eligibility</b>
1	HT 838	114 Maple Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
2	HT 837	116 Maple Ave	1915	Craftsman	Contributing
3	HT 836	118 Maple Ave	1900	Craftsman	Contributing
4	HT 835	120 Maple Ave	1945	Craftsman	Contributing
5	HT 833	212 Maple Ave	1919	Craftsman	Contributing

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6	HT 832	300 Maple Ave	1915	Craftsman	Contributing
7	HT 831	302 Maple Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
8	HT 830	304 Maple Ave	ca. 1930s	Craftsman	Contributing
9	HT 1286	306 Maple Ave	1963	Ranch	Contributing
10	HT 829	308 Maple Ave	ca. 1930s	Craftsman Bungalow	Contributing
11	HT 825	307 Maple Ave	1917	Colonial Revival	Contributing
12	HT 824	305 Maple Ave	1940	Colonial Revival	Contributing
13	HT 823	303 Maple Ave	ca. 1930s	Craftsman	Contributing
14	HT 822	301 Maple Ave	ca. 1930s	Craftsman	Contributing
15	HT 821	209 Maple Ave	1890	Craftsman	Contributing
16	HT 820	207 Maple Ave	1919	Craftsman	Contributing
17	HT 819	205 Maple Ave	1944	Tudor Revival	Contributing
18	HT 818	203 Maple Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
19	HT 1047	201 Mary Thomas Ave	1958	Ranch	Contributing
20	HT 817	114 Cave St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
21	HT 816	116 Cave St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
22	HT 815	118 Cave St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
23	HT 814	120 Cave St	1948	Modern	Contributing
23a	HT 814a	120 Cave St	2014	Modern	Non-Contributing
24	HT 813	202 Cave St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
25	HT 812	204 Cave St	1917	Victorian Revival	Contributing
26	HT 811	206 Cave St	ca. 1920s	Colonial Revival	Contributing
27	HT 117	208 Cave St	1900	Queen Anne	Contributing
28	HT 1051	113 Kathleen Ave	ca. 1950s	Ranch	Contributing
29	HT 1050	115 Kathleen Ave	ca. 1950s	Modern	Contributing
30	HT 1049	117 Kathleen Ave	1956	Ranch	Contributing
31	HT 1048	119 Kathleen Ave	1900	Craftsman	Contributing
32	HT 810	205 Cave St	1900	Craftsman	Contributing
33	HT 809	203 Cave St	1906	Queen Anne	Contributing
34	HT 808	201 Cave St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
35	HT 807	121 Cave St	NA	Vacant Lot	Non-Contributing
36	HT 806	119 Cave St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
37	HT 119	117 Cave St	1940	Tudor Revival	Contributing
38	HT 805	115 Cave St	1937	Craftsman	Contributing
39	HT 120	113 Cave St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
40	HT 1287	206 College St	ca. 1960s	Ranch	Contributing
41	HT 1288	208 College St	ca. 1940s	Craftsman	Contributing
42	HT 804	108 Edwards Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
43	HT 803	110 Edwards Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
44	HT 122	202 Edwards Ave	1924	Colonia Revival	Contributing
45	HT 802	206 Edwards Ave	1938	Craftsman	Contributing
46	HT 1289	210 Edwards Ave	1850	Greek Revival	Contributing

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<b>Inventory Number</b>	<b>KHC Site Number</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Year Built (estimate)</b>	<b>Style/Form</b>	<b>NRHP Eligibility</b>
47	HT 1290	201 Edwards Ave	1942	Modern	Contributing
48	HT 800	107 Edwards Ave	1900	Craftsman	Contributing
49	HT 123	105 Edwards Ave	ca. 1970s	No Style	Non-Contributing
50	HT 799	103 Edwards Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
51	HT 1060	301 E. Main St	1955	Colonial Revival	Contributing
52	HT 1059	NA	NA	Parking lot	Non-Contributing
53	HT 1058	309 E. Main St	ca. 1920s	Prairie	Contributing
54	HT 1291	106 Yancey Ave	1965	Neo Eclectic/Modern	Contributing
55	HT 1292	108 Yancey Ave	1963	Ranch	Contributing
56	HT 798	110 Yancey Ave	ca. 1920s	Tudor Revival	Contributing
57	HT 797	112 Yancey Ave	1937	Craftsman	Contributing
58	HT 1293	301 College St	1956	Ranch	Contributing
59	HT 1294	114 Yancey Ave	ca. 1950s	Craftsman	Contributing
60	HT 795	113 Yancey Ave	1934	Tudor Revival	Contributing
61	HT 794	111 Yancey Ave	1940	French Eclectic	Contributing
62	HT 1074	109 Yancey Ave	1954	Ranch	Contributing
63	HT 139	107 Yancey Ave	1975	Craftsman	Non-Contributing
64	HT 793	105 Yancey Ave	ca. 1940s	Craftsman	Contributing
65	HT 792	103 Yancey Ave	ca. 1940s	Craftsman	Contributing
66	HT 791	311 E. Main St	1889	Queen Anne	Contributing
67	HT 1057	313 E. Main St	ca. 1950s	Ranch	Contributing
68	HT 1056	315 E. Main St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
69	HT 1055	317 E. Main St	1890	Craftsman	Contributing
70	HT 1054	319 E. Main St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
71	HT 1053	321 E. Main St	1900	Craftsman	Contributing
72	HT 1052	323 E. Main St	ca. 1920s	Queen Anne	Contributing
73	HT 1295	106 Comer Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
74	HT 750	108 Comer Ave	ca. 1920s	Colonial Revival	Contributing
75	HT 751	110 Comer Ave	1900	Queen Anne	Contributing
76	HT 752	112 Comer Ave	1941	Craftsman	Contributing
77	HT 1296	308 College St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
78	HT 1297	310 College St	1950	Craftsman	Contributing
79	HT 1298	312 College St	1950	Modern	Contributing
80	HT 1299	314 College St	1941	Modern	Contributing
81	HT 1300	316 College St	ca. 1960s	Ranch	Contributing
82	HT 755	205 Comer Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
83	HT 1301	403 College St	ca. 1960s	Ranch	Contributing
84	HT 1302	402 College St	1954	Modern	Contributing
85	HT 753	111 Comer Ave	1930	Craftsman	Contributing
86	HT 774	110 Bunnell Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
87	HT 1303	108 Bunnell Ave	1954	Craftsman	Contributing

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88	HT 1304	107 Comer Ave	1987	Ranch	Non-Contributing
89	HT 1305	105 Comer Ave	1987	Modern	Non-Contributing
90a	HT 1306	103 Comer Ave	1988	Ranch/Eclectic	Non-Contributing
90b	HT 1307	103 Comer Ave	1988	Ranch/Eclectic	Non-Contributing
90c	HT 1308	103 Comer Ave	1988	Ranch/Eclectic	Non-Contributing
91	HT 1309	401 E. Main St	ca. 1920s	Queen Anne	Contributing
92	HT 1310	403 E. Main St	1940	Craftsman	Contributing
93	HT 1311	E. Main St	ca. 1960s	Modern	Contributing
94	HT 1312	405 E. Main St	1972	Ranch	Contributing
95	HT 1313	407 E. Main St	ca. 1960s	Ranch	Contributing
96	HT 1314	409 E. Main St	ca. 1960s	Ranch	Contributing
97	HT 137	101 Bunnell Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
98	HT 770	103 Bunnell Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
99	HT 771	105 Bunnell Ave	1959	Craftsman	Contributing
100	HT 138	107 Bunnell Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
101	HT 772	109 Bunnell Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
102	HT 773	111 Bunnell Ave	ca. 1930s	Craftsman	Contributing
103	HT 140	405 College St	ca. 1890s	Queen Anne	Non-Contributing
104	HT 1315	407 College St	1956	Ranch	Contributing
105	HT 1316	409 College St	ca. 1960s	Ranch	Contributing
106	HT 1317	411 College St	1950	Craftsman	Contributing
107	HT 1318	406 College St	ca. 1970s	Ranch	Contributing
108	HT 1319	408 College St	1947	Craftsman	Contributing
109	HT 1320	410 College St	1953	Ranch/No style	Contributing
110	HT 1321	116 Green St	ca. 1940s	Craftsman	Contributing
111	HT 1322	114 Green St	ca. 1940s	Craftsman	Contributing
112	HT 1323	112 Green St	ca. 1970s	Ranch	Contributing
113	HT 788	110 Green St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
114	HT 789	108 Green St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
115	HT 1324	106 Green St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
116	HT 790	102 Green St	NA	Vacant Lot	Non-Contributing
117	HT 775	501 E. Main St	ca. 1920s	Folk Victorian	Contributing
118	HT 1325	505 E. Main St	ca. 1930s	Colonial Revival	Contributing
119	HT 776	103 Green St	1929	Craftsman	Contributing
120	HT 1326	107 Green St	1972	Ranch	Contributing
121	HT 141	109 Green St	ca. 1920s	Folk Victorian	Contributing
122	HT 1327	111 Green St	ca. 1930s	Craftsman	Contributing

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<b>Inventory Number</b>	<b>KHC Site Number</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Year Built (estimate)</b>	<b>Style/Form</b>	<b>NRHP Eligibility</b>
123	HT 1328	113 Green St	1979	No style	Non-Contributing
124	HT 777	115 Green St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
125	HT 1329	113 Hart Ave	ca. 1970s	No style	Non-Contributing
126	HT 765	110 Hart Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
127	HT 1073	400 E. Main St	1927	Craftsman	Contributing
128	HT 1075	Margaret Ave	NA	Vacant Lot	Non-Contributing
129	HT 1330	322 Walthall Ave	1929	Craftsman	Contributing
130	HT 1331	320 Walthall Ave	1970	Ranch	Contributing
131	HT 1332	318 Walthall Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
132	HT 1333	316 Walthall Ave	1985	Craftsman	Non-Contributing
133	HT 1334	314 Walthall Ave	1940	Modern/Minimal Traditional	Contributing
134	HT 723	313 Walthall Ave	1940	Craftsman	Contributing
135	HT 1078	315 Walthall Ave	ca. 1920s	Ranch	Contributing
136	HT 1077	319 Walthall Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
137	HT 729	325 Walthall Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
138	HT 1076	120 Margaret Ave	ca. 1950s	Contemporary	Contributing
139	HT 1072	322 E. Main St	1938	Craftsman	Contributing
140	HT 1071	320 E. Main St	1900	Craftsman	Contributing
141	HT 1070	Margaret Ave	NA	Vacant Lot	Non-Contributing
142	HT 1069	316 E. Main St	1930	Craftsman	Contributing
143	HT 1068	314 E. Main St	early-1900s	Colonial Revival	Contributing
144	HT 1067	312 E. Main St	1880s	Queen Anne	Contributing
145	HT 1066	310 E. Main St	1902	Colonial Revival	Contributing
146	HT 1064	306 E. Main St	1923	Colonial Revival	Contributing
147	HT 1063	304 E. Main St	1923	Colonial Revival	Contributing
148	HT 1062	302 E. Main St	1921	Craftsman	Contributing
149	HT 1061	300 E. Main St	1900	Craftsman	Contributing
150	HT 743	103 Vial St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
151	HT 735	105 Vial St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
152	HT 734	107 Vial St	1949	Craftsman	Contributing
153	HT 746	109 Vial St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
154	HT 1084	303 Woodlawn Ave	ca. 1950s	Mid-Century Vernacular	Contributing
155	HT 1083	305 Woodlawn Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
156	HT 1082	309 Woodlawn Ave	ca. 1970s	Ranch	Non-Contributing
157	HT 1081	311 Woodlawn Ave	1988	Ranch	Non-Contributing

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158	HT 1080	313 Woodlawn Ave	1947	Contemporary	Contributing
159	HT 1079	315 Woodlawn Ave	1988	Craftsman	Contributing
160	HT 1090	318 Woodlawn Ave	ca. 1920s	Colonial Revival	Contributing
161	HT 1089	316 Woodlawn Ave	1945	Colonial Revival	Contributing
162	HT 1088	314 Woodlawn Ave	ca. 1920s	Colonial Revival	Contributing
163	HT 1087	312 Woodlawn Ave	ca. 1920s	Colonial Revival	Contributing
164	HT 1086	310 Woodlawn Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
165	HT 739	308 Woodlawn Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
166	HT 716	304 Woodlawn Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
167	HT 1085	302 Woodlawn Ave	1962	Craftsman	Contributing
168	HT 126	300 Woodlawn Ave	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
169	HT 1335	203 Vial St	ca. 1960s	Craftsman	Contributing
170	HT 733	205 Vial St	1915	Colonial Revival	Contributing
171	HT 732	207 Vial St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
172	HT 731	209 Vial St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
173	HT 1336	301 Walthall St	ca. 1950s	Modern	Contributing
174	HT 717	305 Walthall St	ca. 1930s	Craftsman	Contributing
175	HT 1337	312 Walthall St	1928	Craftsman	Contributing
176	HT 1338	310 Walthall St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
177	HT 1339	308 Walthall St	1960	Modern	Contributing
178	HT 1340	306 Walthall St	ca. 1960s	Modern	Contributing
179	HT 1341	304 Walthall St	ca. 1930s	Craftsman	Contributing
180	HT 1342	302 Walthall St	ca. 1940s	Modern	Contributing
181	HT 728	300 Walthall St	ca. 1940s	Craftsman	Contributing
182	HT 727	208 Walthall St	ca. 1930s	Craftsman	Contributing
183	HT 1343	206 Walthall St	ca. 1930s	Craftsman	Contributing
184	HT 726	204 Walthall St	ca. 1930s	Craftsman	Contributing
185	HT 725	202 Walthall St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
186	HT 724	200 Walthall St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
187	HT 730	208 Vial St	1941	Tudor Revival	Contributing
188	HT 747	206 Vial St	ca. 1940s	Craftsman	Contributing
189	HT 1344	204 Vial St	1947	Modern	Contributing
190	HT 737	202 Vial St	ca. 1940s	Modern	Contributing
191	HT 1345	200 Vial St	ca. 1960s	Modern	Contributing
192	HT 745	108 Vial St	ca. 1940s	Craftsman	Contributing
193	HT 744	106 Vial St	1940	Tudor Revival	Contributing
194	HT 1346	209 Woodlawn Ave	ca. 1960s	Modern	Contributing
195	HT 1347	207 Woodlawn Ave	1965	Modern	Contributing
196	HT 125	105 Guthrie St	1895	Gothic Revival	Contributing
197	HT 1348	109 Guthrie St	ca. 1970s	Modern	Non-Contributing
198	HT 1349	208 Woodlawn Ave	1947	Modern	Contributing
199	HT 1350	206 Woodlawn Ave	1960	Craftsman/Modern	Contributing
200	HT 1351	204 Woodlawn Ave	1966	Ranch/Modern	Contributing



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201	HT 715	201 Guthrie St	1911	Craftsman	Contributing
202	HT 714	203 Guthrie St	1911	Craftsman	Contributing
203	HT 713	205 Guthrie St	ca. 1930s	Craftsman	Contributing
204	HT 712	207 Guthrie St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
205	HT 711	209 Guthrie St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing
206	HT 710	206 Guthrie St	1920	Craftsman	Contributing
207	HT 709	204 Guthrie St	1919	Craftsman	Contributing
208	HT 708	200 Guthrie St	ca. 1920s	Craftsman	Contributing

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

- 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

- 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

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

### Period of Significance

Ca. 1916-1974

### Significant Dates

1916, 1943, 1969

### Significant Person

NA

### Cultural Affiliation

NA

### Architect/Builder

Unknown

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## Statement of Significance

### Summary Paragraph

The Horse Cave Residential Historic District meets National Register Criteria A and C and is significant in the area of Community Planning and Development within the historic context “Cave Tourism in Kentucky, 1850-1975.” It is significant under both Criteria because it is noteworthy in the founding and growth of Horse Cave (Criterion A) and it is significant as a show cave town (Criterion C). Within this context, the Horse Cave Residential Historic District signifies the earliest waves of residential development around the commercial corridor. Horse Cave’s NRHP-listed commercial district (known as the Horse Cave Historic District [NR #01000796]) demonstrated that Horse Cave is a significant example of a show cave town. That nomination argues that Horse Cave is distinct among efforts to exploit caves as a tourist attraction; most of those efforts are a single property without a town surrounding. Horse Cave is the only community built around a “show cave,” i.e., Hidden River Cave. Its growth is a response to the presence of the show cave and tourist developments. While numerous caves exist in the area, somehow, no other towns grew up around them as Horse Cave grew up around Hidden River Cave. Consequently, those caves’ owners prospered individually, and Horse Cave benefitted as a town. The citizens of Horse Cave could see their entire community profiting from the opening and promotion of Hidden River Cave, and the town enjoyed this prosperity until the operators of the show cave closed it in 1943. Horse Cave’s view of itself as a show cave town, a civic identity relying on tourism, persisted even after the cave closed. From 1943-1975, the city and the residential district continued to grow, albeit at a slower pace, as the community’s self-perception as a tourist identity persisted. The continuity of this community identity is evidenced by actions undertaken after the close of the Period of Significance: the construction of Horse Cave Theatre, the large-scale cleaning efforts, and ceaseless work to get the cave reopened to the public. These latter-day actions enable us to recognize that an identity of the town Horse Cave is maintained over time and had an effect upon actions through the end of the historic period and even after it. These instances denote significance for this district in the fact that Horse Cave is a unique and important part of the larger story of cave tourism in Kentucky, something that is significant in and of itself. Horse Cave stands as a unique expression in the larger story of cave tourism in Kentucky, something that is a regionally significant activity pattern. The Mammoth Cave region of Kentucky is famous not only for the large system of caves that exist, but for the widespread tourism that developed in response to these natural phenomena. The development potential of cave tourism in central Kentucky led to improvements in transportation, development of national and state parks, and, in Horse Cave’s case, it led to the growth and increased development of a city. The historic district provides a strong sense of an important local idea: how a town markets itself to outsiders.

### Historic Context: Cave Tourism in Kentucky, 1850-1975

Cave tourism in the Mammoth Cave region of Kentucky began in the early 1800s but took off in the mid-nineteenth century. It was during this time that people put significant effort into “developing Mammoth Cave into a major tourist attraction.”<sup>3</sup> One major support for this tourism opportunity was the completion of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad (L&N) main line in 1859. That transportation improvement lay the groundwork for townbuilding and cave tourism. Other

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<sup>3</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Mammoth Cave National Park Historic Resource Study, Multiple Property Documentation Form, National Register, #64500237.

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later regional improvements, such as the construction of the Mammoth Cave Railroad and state highways in the region, and the construction of Lock Number 6 on the Green River, allowing access by steamboat by 1906, made it possible for tourists to visit the area. During the late nineteenth century through the turn of the twentieth, tourism was this region's primary economic enterprise.<sup>4</sup>

Around the turn of the twentieth century, cave tourism had reached a point of viability for cave owners and promoters to compete for this tourist business. This led to what has been dubbed the Kentucky Cave Wars. Precipitated by an increased interest in cave tourism, the level of competition from the numerous viable cave systems in the area, and the widespread adoption of the automobile by American families, tourism became a sustainable business. As a result, proprietors often engaged in questionable marketing activity to lure tourists to their attractions. Already, by the mid-nineteenth century, Mammoth Cave was the main attraction in the region, so smaller caves looked for ways to carve out a portion of that tourist traffic. It was estimated that by 1904 "no less than ninety other caves have been explored within" a ten-mile radius of Mammoth Cave.<sup>5</sup> During this time, businesses and individuals sought to bind themselves to Mammoth Cave through either a cave connection or proximity to the transportation routes tourists favored, such as the L&N and the Mammoth Cave Railroad.<sup>6</sup>

During this time, the use of questionable practices became widespread, demonstrating how competitive the cave industry had become and, similarly, how lucrative it was to the region. One of the key incidents occurred when entrepreneur George Morrison came to the area in 1915 and was enthralled with the cave tourism business. His interest was so intense, that within 7 years of his initial arrival in the area, he had purchased approximately 2000 acres of land, blasted into the earth, and uncovered another entrance into the Mammoth Cave system, one that he advertised as the New Entrance to Mammoth Cave.<sup>7</sup>

The cave wars persisted for decades as "cave cappers," a name given to solicitors who sought to lure tourists to "their" caves, lawsuits, trespassing, and all manner of actions took place all to get a greater portion of the cave tourism that was dominating the region. Even after the search for new caves and potential developments cost a man, Floyd Collins, his life in 1925, and the Mammoth Cave National Park was created in 1941, the competition and passion of the aggressive tourism industry endured through the 1960s. The ultimate cooperation between cave owners, the integration of multiple cave systems into the National Park, and the closure of others led to a collective approach to central Kentucky cave tourism and away from the hostile methods of the past.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Mammoth Cave National Park Historic Resource Study, Multiple Property Documentation Form, National Register, #64500237

<sup>6</sup> National Park Service. "The Kentucky Cave Wars."

<sup>7</sup> National Park Service. "George Morrison." Electronic Document, <https://www.nps.gov/people/george-morrison.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> National Park Service. "The Kentucky Cave Wars."

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Morbidly, the interest in cave tourism grew after Collins died in 1925, an occurrence that was only heightened by the Depression-era programs that followed. These programs, such as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Federal Highway Modernization Program, not only provided employment for thousands of Americans, but they promoted access to outdoor recreation and the newly established park systems throughout the country.<sup>9</sup>

The City of Horse Cave was very much a part of this “cave war era,” given its proximity to Mammoth Cave and its location along the L&N mainline. Not only was Horse Cave vying for the tourist traffic that the various cave systems bolstered, but the proprietors of the Hidden River Cave, who were themselves financially engaged in the success of show caves, were directly involved in the widespread propagandizing of the area. As such, in 1927, after the passing of Floyd Collins, Dr. H.B. Thomas of Horse Cave bought the Crystal Cave from the Collins family, and profited off the tragedy. Thomas placed Floyd’s coffin and headstone in the cave and built the ticket office near their family home, playing into the increased tourism traffic that the national attention on the Collins’ death triggered. The Crystal Cave remained in the Thomas family until it was incorporated into the National Park in the 1960s.<sup>10</sup>

Passing of Federal legislation leading to the creation of a National Park alleviated some of the rivalry among cave owners by incorporating several formerly-competing caves under a single entity, it did not ease the tension completely. Some cave owners held out for decades while other nearby caves were never incorporated. Despite the lessening of cave-centered conflict, the tourism industry in the area continued to flourish for decades, something that was not only witnessed in the National Park, but at every show cave in the region.<sup>11</sup>

### **Kentucky Show Caves**

The caves of the Mammoth Cave region were known and utilized by Native Americans for millennia. Caves throughout Kentucky were significant sites for Native Americans, as evidenced by archaeological investigation. Those cultures survived through an awareness of their surroundings, which included caves. In the early literature on cave exploration, it is frequently mentioned that a cave was “discovered” in the last couple centuries. This is referencing the discovery made by Americans of European descent and generally overlooks the hundreds and thousands of years that these caves were known by Native groups.

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, show caves, which are caves that are made publicly available and accessible for visitors and guided tours, gained interest in central Kentucky in an area known as the Mammoth Cave region, named for the longest known cave system in the world. From their earliest identification and exploration, these caves captivated the public, with individuals traveling to Mammoth Cave as early as the early nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century, with the emergence of the automobile and the development of roads, show caves became tourist attractions. This infatuation brought tourist dollars to the proprietors and other

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<sup>9</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Great Saltpetre Cave, Rockcastle County, Kentucky, National Register #13000565.

<sup>10</sup> National Park Service. “The Kentucky Cave Wars.”

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

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nearby attractions and amenities. By the 1920s, there were more than twenty caves open to the public in the Mammoth Cave region.<sup>12</sup>

A large portion of Kentucky is underlain by karst land, which are characterized by caves, among other geological features. As of the 1980s, there was just shy of 4,000 recorded caves in Kentucky.<sup>13</sup> This count includes four of the fifty longest caves in the world, with the Flint-Mammoth-Roppel system being the longest, and six caves that are a part of the National Cave Association: Onyx Cave (also known as Kentucky Caverns), Mammoth Cave, Diamond Caverns, Crystal Onyx, Hidden River Cave, and Lost River Cave.<sup>14</sup> The first four were included in the analysis conducted in the NRHP nomination of the Horse Cave Historic District.<sup>15</sup> This nomination will build on the discussion of show caves in Kentucky by including other caves in the analysis.

Show caves, in this context, are characterized by caves that were open to the public and heavily promoted during the height of Kentucky's cave tourism and the Kentucky Cave Wars. Onyx Cave (Kentucky Taverns), Mammoth Cave, and Diamond Caverns, while all now existing within the Mammoth Cave National Park, have vastly different histories. The former was established during the height of the Kentucky Cave Wars when H.B. Thomas, who also owned Hidden River Cave, bought the known onyx cave to be used for tourism. However, the latter two had been operating as sites for tourism since the early-to-mid-nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> The Crystal Onyx Cave, however, was not discovered by modern man and subsequently opened to the public until the end of the Kentucky Cave War era in the 1960s. In addition to these four caves specifically called out in the Horse Cave Historic District nomination, this nomination would like to draw on other examples to demonstrate the importance of tourism surrounding Kentucky caves yet how unusual it was for a residential development to arise in conjunction with a cave's success.

Carter Caves, situated in the Carter Caves State Resort Park, in eastern Kentucky's Carter County, consist of more than 20 caves and caverns that were a part of a huge swath of land that was partially donated to the Commonwealth of Kentucky and partially purchased by same in the 1940s for preservation and conservation. Four of the caves within this state park are open to the public.<sup>17</sup> The Colossal Cavern was a show cave that was owned and operated by the L&N railroad and functioned as a commercial show cave from its discovery in 1895 until it was donated to become a part of the Mammoth Cave National Park in 1929. During its heyday, Colossal Cavern competed with other major regional caves and is a perfect example of a show cave from the Kentucky Cave Wars, as it signifies the heavy-handed involvement of outside entities, like the railroad companies.<sup>18</sup> The Great Saltpetre Cave, in Rockcastle County (NRIS 13000565) is unique in that it was originally a significant site for the extraction of saltpeter, a key ingredient in gunpowder,

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> George, Angelo I. "Caves in Kentucky." *Caves and Karst in Kentucky*. Special Publication 12, Series XI, 1985

<sup>14</sup> Currens, J.C. "Caves." *The Kentucky Encyclopedia*. Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1992.

<sup>15</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Horse Cave Historic District, Hart County, Kentucky, National Register #01000796.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis, Jonathon F. (2004). *Carter Caves State Resort Park: A Living History*. Charleston, W.Va.: Chapman Printing.

<sup>18</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Colossal Cavern Entrance, Mammoth Cave National Park MPS, Edmonson County, Kentucky, National Register #91000491.

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but later attained significance as a show cave from 1938 through the 1970s.<sup>19</sup> Lastly, the Lost River Cave in Bowling Green (NRIS 75000839) is included because of its prominence attained through its recognition by the National Caves Association and its distinctiveness in this analysis. The Lost River Cave has a history reaching back to an eighteenth-century mill constructed at the site and one that stretches through the Civil War, when it was used as shelter by both the Union and Confederate troops, and into its commercial use during the twentieth century. While the cave does not appear to have been used as a show cave until the late twentieth century, it was used for commercial purposes and for tourism-centric activities. From 1933 through the 1960s, there was a night club in operation at the cave's entrance, one that utilized the climate controlled nature of the cave system to promote acts and lure tourists. Lost River Cave is the only other Kentucky cave that exists in association with a noteworthy city. However, unlike Horse Cave, Bowling Green was an established city whose growth was not dependent upon the cave.<sup>20</sup>

**Horse Cave as a Show Cave Town**

Horse Cave has been noted as an unusual example of a show cave town.<sup>21</sup> In the previous documentation, there were several factors that were used to evaluate show cave towns in the region. Logsdon writes

the development of a town plan in relationship to a cave that was open for public tours; the cave producing drinking water and electricity; the town's location on a major transportation route; the construction of a railroad; the existence of hotels and/or boarding houses for visitors; the existence of a post office; a cohesive group of commercial and residential buildings that remain intact; and the continued viability of a show cave town despite adverse conditions such as fires and pollution."<sup>22</sup>

Four other show caves in the region were considered—Mammoth Cave, Kentucky Caverns, Diamond Caverns, and Crystal Onyx Cave—in evaluating the significance of the Horse Cave Historic District. In light of these four caves, the city of Horse Cave is noted as exceptional because of the urban area that grew around the cave. Lastly, Horse Cave, and the Hidden River Cave located therein, are especially significant due to the access to water and electricity that the cave offered, something that none of the other caves provided. These are all factors that made the town and cave significant and that informed the residential development around the city center.<sup>23</sup> However, the one feature, most of all, that sets Hidden River Cave and the surrounding city aside from the other show caves, is the town that grew with, and because, of the cave.

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<sup>19</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Great Saltpetre Cave, Rockcastle County, Kentucky, National Register #13000565.

<sup>20</sup> Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet. "Lost River Cave: Heritage Land." Electronic Document, <https://eec.ky.gov/Nature-Preserves/Locations/Pages/Lost-River-Cave.aspx#:~:text=The%20history%20of%20Lost%20River,night%20club%20and%20dance%20hall,> accessed April 2024.

<sup>21</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Horse Cave Historic District, Hart County, Kentucky, National Register #01000796.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid: Section 8, Page 1

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

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Hidden River Cave met the criteria of many other show caves during the early twentieth century, however it is distinct in that its commercial benefits reached beyond the private owners and supported a town. The City of Horse Cave had existed prior to the Cave's development as a show cave. It prospered since the mid-nineteenth century, thanks to the location of the L&N railroad and its establishment as an agricultural and shipping place for the region. Horse Cave at one point was one of the largest tobacco markets in the world, with renowned tobacco warehouses dominating the landscape in the industrial area south of town. But these characteristics did not alter the city's identity and growth as much as the opening of Hidden River Cave to the public. When that occurred, the city grew to accommodate the rise in tourism. The city's population grew, the residential district was quickly developing and expanding, and the entire city was thriving. Hidden River Cave had a quality that made it stand out among its competitors: it was located in an already thriving central Kentucky city.

Not only was Hidden River Cave an impressive attraction, but it was surrounded by a booming city with easy access to key regional thoroughfares, and the railroad line, complete with passenger train service. Moreover, the commercial district, which was already partially established at the time of the cave's opening, consisted of a commercial hub for the region, including storefronts, a post office, bank, and key amenities that were rare in this region of central Kentucky. Furthermore, to further accentuate Horse Cave's identity as a show cave town, one rooted in the existence and success of the tourism industry, the commercial district, much like the surrounding residential neighborhood, saw extensive growth in conjunction with the success of the cave.

Horse Cave's existence along US 31 W (Dixie Street/Highway) was key to its success and growth as a tourist destination after Hidden River Cave opened. It was "one of the first roads that linked different parts of the nation and 'allowed freedom of movement not available through the railroad and riverboat network.'"<sup>24</sup> In 1930, the highway was paved and provided unprecedented access to the Mammoth Cave region of Kentucky at the height of the cave tourism craze. The increase in automobile traffic and the accessibility that the highway added led to a reimagining of the landscape. Commercial developments and tourist attractions popped up along US 31 to cater to the increased traffic.<sup>25</sup> Thankfully for Horse Cave, this route led through the already established commercial corridor, right near the Hidden River Cave entrance.

Horse Cave's downtown was one of the region's tourism centers in the first half of the 20th century. It was also one of the most bustling commercial districts in the region. Storekeepers and business owners built their homes nearby, making the commute easy, especially in the time when automobiles were just beginning to become popular for everyday use. While passenger railroad service lasted until the mid-1960s, the highway began to crowd after the mid-1930s with the relocation of US 31W to the center of town, making it easier for shoppers to access the commercial district and bringing tourists who were traveling one of the busiest north/south corridors in the nation. During this period, tobacco sales were at their height, with farmers towing in their "hands" of tobacco by wagon and buyers flocking to the area from all over the world. Business was booming, and the residential expansion was, too. But when the cave closed in the 1940s and

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<sup>24</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Rock Cabin Camp, Barren County, Kentucky, National Register #100001418.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.



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development shifted to regional shopping centers and subdivisions after the end of World War II, the community began to change. However, the tourism identity that had been developed and cultivated within Horse Cave never left. At this point, Horse Cave had already resolutely established itself as a city that identified with and relied on tourism associated with the cave at the city's center, the one after which the city was named, establishing it henceforth as a show cave town.

**Residential Development of Horse Cave, Kentucky: A Show Cave Town**

Hart County was formed in 1819 from neighboring counties, making it the sixty-first in Kentucky. Horse Cave, which is the largest city in the county, was originally settled by people of European descent as early as the 1790s, but it did not really begin to develop until the mid-nineteenth century.

In the 1850s, Major Albert Anderson purchased and subsequently laid out the town of Horse Cave.<sup>26</sup> This coincided with the L&N Railroad obtaining a charter “to build a railroad between Louisville, Kentucky, and the Tennessee state line in the direction of Nashville.”<sup>27</sup> This corridor brought the path of the railroad through Horse Cave and, as such, by the late 1850s, L&N had graded the land and begun laying the tracks. Similarly, in 1858, Anderson donated land to L&N for them to build a railroad depot in the heart of Horse Cave, a move that would prove to be very fortuitous.<sup>28</sup>

Immediately following the establishment of L&N's presence in Horse Cave, a post office was established and within ten years, a building boom occurred that led to residents constructing both commercial and residential buildings just east of the railroad line. During this time, the population grew from 82 in 1860 to 470 in 1870, and that would almost double by 1880 when it reached 800.<sup>29</sup> It was during this time that the presence of the rail depot provided a shipping point for the surrounding countryside to market their tobacco, produce, and livestock.<sup>30</sup> It was during this period of growth, nearing the end of the nineteenth century, that residential development began to take off.

Dr. George Alfred Thomas, who moved to the area in 1886 to establish his dental practice, bought the cave in 1887 and began to develop it with his son, Dr. H.B. Thomas. Within the first couple years, set up a water pumping system that was able to provide a lot of the city with drinking water and installed one of the first hydroelectric generators in Kentucky to power the cave itself as well as several nearby downtown buildings.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout the last few decades of the nineteenth century, Horse Cave grew considerably, largely as a shipping point and leader in the tobacco industry, but, as was common at the time, most of the residents lived in the surrounding countryside, as only about 10 percent of the houses in the district

<sup>26</sup> Edwards, 1940; “Horse Cave Local Historic District Designation Report 2004,” The City of Horse Cave.

<sup>27</sup> Charles B. Castner, “A Brief History of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad”, accessed March, 2024.

<sup>28</sup> “Horse Cave Local Historic District Designation Report 2004,” The City of Horse Cave.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Hart County Historical Society, “Horse Cave: A History of – Part II 1850-1900.” Hart County Historical Quarterly, October 1982.

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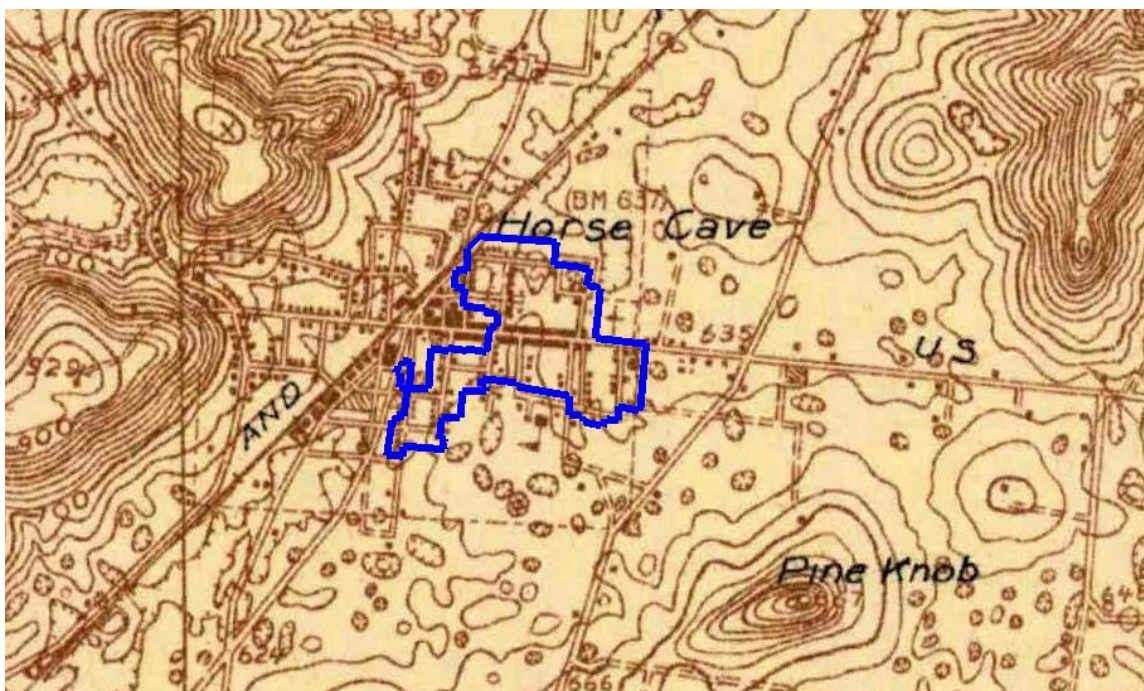
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were constructed during this time. These nineteenth century remnants include houses along E. Main Street such as HT 791, HT 1055, and HT 1067. In 1905, H.B Thomas took control of the cave and in 1916, opened it to the public and renamed it Hidden River Cave.

Over the next few decades, the residential development increased significantly in the Horse Cave Residential District. Over half of the buildings in the district were built. In the 1920s, six passenger trains dally scheduled stops in the town, and in the mid-1930s, US 31 was rerouted, passing straight through downtown Horse Cave, boosting tourism commerce. This growth triggered an expansion of the city limits to include the industrial center to the south of town.

Hidden River Cave closed as a show cave in 1943, and in the years following, the residential expansion of Horse Cave slowed down. Within the Horse Cave Residential Historic District, the majority of parcels had already been built upon and residential development of the city began expanding past the original limits.

From 1920 to 1930, the years after the opening of Hidden River Cave, the population of the city rose over 45%. From 1940 to 1950, Horse Cave still experienced a 20% increase in population.<sup>32</sup> After the cave's closing, residents relied on the normal mix of local industries, the railroad, agriculture, and the nearby Mammoth Cave National Park, to prop up the local economy. Today, nearly twice as many people live in Horse Cave as lived there when Hidden River Cave closed to the public. The 1935 and 1966 United States Geological Survey (USGS) maps of the area show that Horse Cave continuing to develop even when Hidden River Cave was not in operation.



*1935 USGS Topographic Map of Horse Cave showing the Horse Cave Residential Historic District*

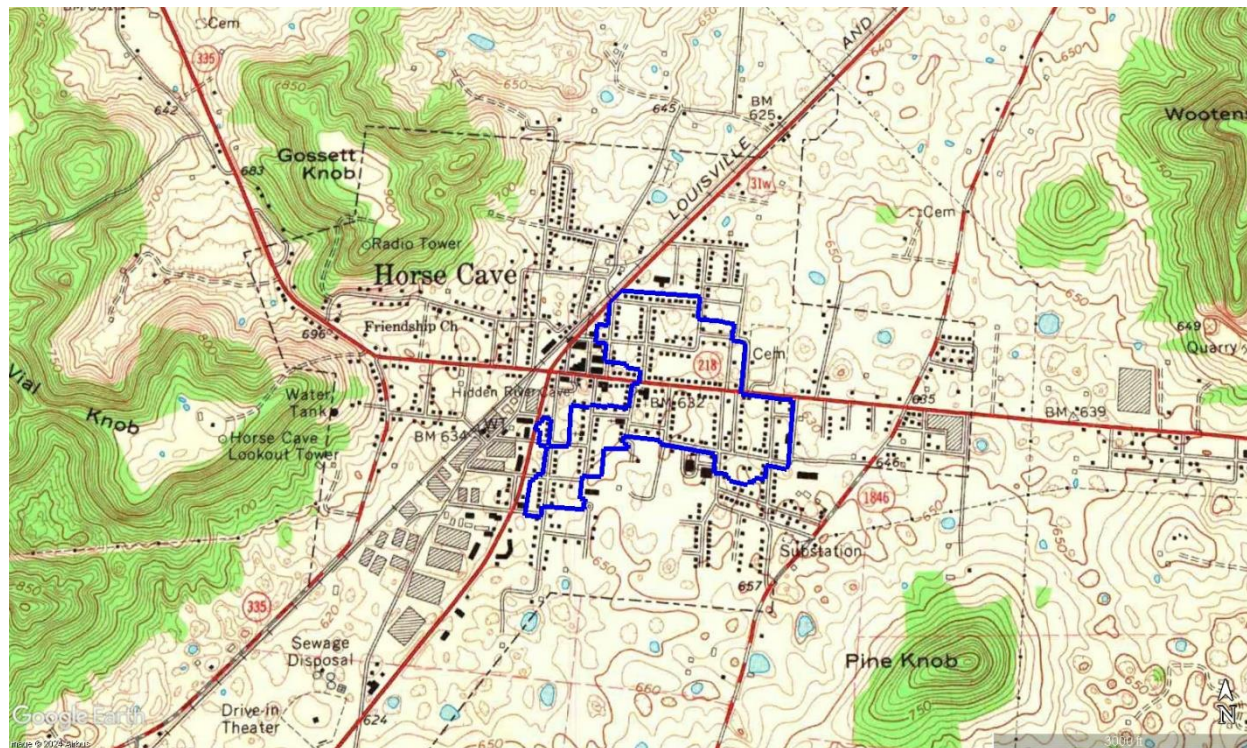
<sup>32</sup> United States Census Bureau, *Historical Census 1900-1980*. Census.gov.

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*1966 USGS Topographic Map of Horse Cave showing the Horse Cave Residential Historic District*

Despite the closing of Hidden River Cave, the people of Horse Cave continued to identify with their civic identity as a show cave town. Over the next few decades, they sought to reinvigorate the tourism industry by constructing new attractions and cleaning up the iconic cave that the town was built around. This effort was somewhat slowed by the construction of Interstate 65 a couple miles away from Horse Cave, allowing motorists to skirt the city. The new highway provided a driving experience uninterrupted by traffic lights, while travel on its predecessor, US 31, had traditional interruptions. The loss of the cave and the tourist traffic hurt Horse Cave for several years.

Although efforts were taken to end the cave's contamination, the construction of the first sewage treatment plant ended up making the issues worse by dumping its wastewater into dry wells which in turn fed into the cave. It was also during this time that Interstate 65 was constructed, effectively bypassing the city of Horse Cave for north/south travel through central Kentucky.

In the 1970s, Horse Cave mounted an effort to bring people back to the city with the opening of the Horse Cave Theatre. Horse Cave was already the most thriving commercial hub in the region and a successful agricultural town, but the city sought to revive its tourist identity. The Hidden River Cave was also never far from the city's mind, with the cave entrance located in the middle of the city, and local grassroots efforts existed for years to bring life back to the cave, both literally and figuratively. Cleanup efforts to the cave and the groundwater from the late 1980s allowed the

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cave to open back up to the public in 1993, as a public-owned cave, bringing cave tourism back to Horse Cave, and helping bolster the community and the local economy.

Through the efforts made by local residents as well as federal and state funded projects, Horse Cave and its cave system witnessed a resurgence in the late twentieth century and into the twenty first. In the late 1980s, local groups began to organize cleanup efforts around the cave system and in 1989, a new sewage treatment system effectively ended the contamination and helped restore groundwater quality to the region. By the early 1990s, animal life returned to the underground river in the cave system and in 1992, the American Cave and Karst Center opened at the mouth of the cave and begun offering tours again. The emphasis on tourism in Horse Cave was always close to the residents' hearts, thus when Hidden River Cave was reopened, it was done so under public ownership. The cave is owned by the City of Horse Cave and leased to the American Cave Conservation Association, who runs it. This, along with other tourism-centric improvements over the years, namely the construction of the Horse Cave Theater in 1977, led to a revitalization of the commercial corridor. Today, the city of Horse Cave is thriving and Hidden River Cave is an environmental success story.<sup>33</sup>

Over the last hundred years, Horse Cave has derived much of its income from efforts to market itself as a destination. The earliest residential boom coincided with the original opening of the cave and. Despite the cave closing to the public, the town continued to enjoy a sense of growth, and maintained a dream of bringing tourism back to the town. The town opened tourist-centric businesses and residents cleaned up the cave, enabling the community to thrive again.

As such, this district grew as a significant grouping of residential development around the center of Horse Cave that assists in telling the more than a century of history in Horse Cave and its expansion as a significant show cave town. The district's Period of Significance, 1916-1974, opens with the opening of the town as a tourist destination, and ends with a point 50 years in the past from the time this nomination to align with the NPS guidelines for evaluations. Continued development outside the Period of Significance did continue, which further accentuates the city's persistence of maintaining the tourism identity, however, most of this occurred outside the district's boundary.

**Evaluation of the Significance of the Horse Cave Residential Historic District.**

The Horse Cave Residential Historic District is significant to the story of Horse Cave's development from its establishment in the mid-nineteenth century through the present. From its establishment and the construction of the L&N line and depot, through the early twentieth century boom, and into the mid-twentieth century, the Horse Cave Residential Historic District was the focal point of residential development around the city center. This was in large part due to the added attention that tourism brought the City of Horse Cave when Hidden River Cave was opened to the public. It was during these years that Horse Cave was established as a show cave town and

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<sup>33</sup> "Hidden River Cave: An Environmental Success Story." Hidden River Cave. Electronic Document, <https://hiddenrivercave.com/hidden-river-cave-history/#:~:text=The%20Village%20of%20Horse%20Cave,public%20waterworks%20in%20the%20cave.,> accessed March 2024.

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a major tourist destination, something that has remained a part of its identity ever since. The Horse Cave Residential Historic District not only demonstrates the developmental trends associated with the construction boom and the rise in tourism in the city, but it also shows how a residential neighborhood was laid out in order to provide the necessary housing support to a burgeoning show cave town.

Most of the residential development in the district slowed as the 1970s approached. The reason for this was two-fold; the first, and most obvious reasoning, is because the district was mostly at developmental capacity with nearly all plots already claimed, and the second being the construction of Interstate 65, which made US 31 virtually obsolete for travelers. Since the earliest layout of the streets within the district, side streets have been constructed and Horse Cave has grown to accommodate growing numbers. Many houses that exist in this sprawl were built in the latter years of the Period of Significance and after. Inside the district boundaries, there are only 20 resources with construction dates that extend past 1969, which marks the year that Interstate 65 was built. While this is not the cutoff of the Period of Significance, largely due to the fact that Horse Cave still experienced some development, albeit on a smaller scale, it is an important event in understanding the district.

One thing that is important to note as it relates to residential growth after the closing of Hidden River Cave is that this persistent development was indicative of Horse Cave's continued heavy association with the tourism industry. During the years following the Period of Significance, the town constructed the now popular Kentucky Repertory Theatre (formerly the Horse Cave theatre), the townspeople relentlessly took on efforts to clean up the pollution to the Hidden River Cave, and they banded together to eventually encourage the reopening of Hidden River Cave, all of which brought tourism back to the city. Tourism, above all else, was the identity that Horse Cave associated with, and it was this association that not only accounts for the growth within the district, but also the continued growth in the years after Hidden River Cave closed.

Tourism was a huge part of the city's identity. Although Horse Cave can attribute its early growth and expansion to other events, namely the construction of the L&N railroad and the subsequent establishment of Horse Cave as an agricultural shipping point, especially with the tobacco industry, the existence of the cave within the heart of the city and the tourism it drew was paramount. After the closing of Hidden River Cave, many residents still valued the show cave tourism and worked to get the cave reopened. When that finally happened, it was reopened under public ownership and leased to the American Cave Conservation Association who runs the day to day. Moreover, following the establishment of the Mammoth Cave National Park and the ensuing acquisition of cave systems and land throughout the region, including northern Hart County, many residents chose to live in Horse Cave and work for the National Park. While the railroad and tobacco industries were instrumental to the establishment of Horse Cave, its existence as a show cave town remained the largest part of its identity, for the city itself and for its residents.

**Evaluation of the Integrity between the Significance of the Horse Cave Residential Historic District and its Current Physical Condition.**

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Each building's contribution to the district has been evaluated insofar as it helps reinforce and interpret the significant identity of the Horse Cave Residential Historic District. The Horse Cave Residential Historic District meets the definition of a district stated as the 4<sup>th</sup> term of Criterion C, it is "a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction." Because that significance is in Horse Cave's developmental history, particularly in the context of early residential development, the primary Criterion of eligibility is Criterion A.

The task of evaluating the overall significance of the Horse Cave Residential Historic District means first evaluating its social and developmental significance and then evaluating whether there is an integrity between the resources' physical condition and the sense of significance. That will call for "... sometimes a subjective judgment, ... it must always be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance.<sup>34</sup> The evaluative lens for this district is that it was the primary residential development Horse Cave that supplemented and corresponded with the growth of the commercial corridor and the city as a whole. The established Period of Significance stretches from the mid-nineteenth century to the point in time fifty years ago in order to fully demonstrate that the district has been an integral residential addition to the commercial since the town was founded.

The Horse Cave Residential Historic District is in good condition overall. Although some of the resources that in the district are no longer extant and others have sustained some damage, are in a state of disrepair, or have been irreversibly altered, many of the original materials remain intact and are slated for preservation. Most of the resources that make up the rest of the district have been lightly altered over the years, largely to meet growing demands, to change use as the properties changed ownership, and to keep buildings in good shape. The latter is often done by replacing existing materials to keep the house livable and accessible. While newer and cheaper materials were often used, this is indicative of the personality of the neighborhood.

The following aspects of integrity will be given greater emphasis in evaluating the Horse Cave Residential Historic District's overall integrity: integrity of location, setting, materials, and design. The conclusion that the district contains sufficient integrity of location, setting, materials and design, will cumulatively allow for the conclusion that the Horse Cave Residential Historic District has Integrity of **Association**, which becomes the primary basis for National Register eligibility according to the terms of Criterion A: it is important as a "Property [that] is **associated** with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history."

The Horse Cave Residential Historic District retains integrity of **location**. When Horse Cave was flourishing around the turn of the twentieth century, the location of the primary residential development was important as it grew around, and was informed by, the commercial corridor, which in turn thrived because of the cave and the railroad line. This locational aspect has remained the same and the resources in the district remain in their historic location. Moreover, the physical makeup of the neighborhood has remained relatively unchanged over the last hundred years and nearly all original buildings are still extant. Additionally, the overall layout and major

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<sup>34</sup> United States Department of the Interior. *National Register Bulletin #15: Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning*. (Washington D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, 2002.)

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thoroughfares are intact. While some of the residential streets have expanded as necessitated by some ongoing development, the district appears much as it did when it was laid out. Because of this, the district retains integrity of **setting**. From its inception, the district has been mostly residential with a few religious buildings. The current physical makeup of the district retains the setting of a modest residential neighborhood that surrounds a city's key commercial corridor and abuts a railroad line, which was integral to the city's survival and growth.

The Horse Cave Residential Historic District also retains integrity of **design**. The overall design and layout of the district has been largely unchanged. This can be noted in the layout of the streets and the size of the historic parcels with the city's major thoroughfare dissecting it and the railroad line bounding it. In addition to the historic integrity of the design is the integrity of **materials**. When evaluating the district's material character, through the lens of Criterion A with an emphasis on the property's identity as a modest, small-town residential development that arose in support of a city's commercial growth, the practicality of historic and present materials become important definers of that identity. Some changes have been made to the materials over time, but the new materials are used for practical purpose and effect, just as the original materials were.

The **feeling** and **association** of the Horse Cave Residential Historic District is retained. The resources within the district, consisting of both modest and practical housing types, and more elaborate, ornamental high-style houses, are extant. The integrity of location, setting, materials, and design, allow the extant features of the district to convey a strong sense of what a small-town's residential growth around a commercial core looked like. The larger lots, consistent setbacks, both the presence and absence of ornamentation, all combine to give the district its distinct character.

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**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):** Various, see table above

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** Approximately 89-acres

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 37.181810 | Longitude: -85.904700 |
| 2. Latitude: 37.179178 | Longitude: -85.903869 |
| 3. Latitude: 37.178356 | Longitude: -85.906270 |
| 4. Latitude: 37.175019 | Longitude: -85.908166 |
| 5. Latitude: 37.177479 | Longitude: -85.904234 |
| 6. Latitude: 37.176441 | Longitude: -85.897687 |
| 7. Latitude: 37.178630 | Longitude: -85.897408 |
| 8. Latitude: 37.181109 | Longitude: -85.899747 |



**Verbal Boundary Description**

Beginning at the intersection of Maple Ave and Ruth Thomas St, extending south along Maple Ave. and encompassing the lots of all historic dwellings on the west side of the street to the intersection of Altsheler and Maple Aves. Then turning north, the boundary encompasses the entirety of the parcels associated with the historic resources on the southeast corner of the intersection of Maple and E. Kathleen Aves., including all the parcels on this portion of E. Kathleen and the three northernmost parcels on Maple Ave. The boundary then extends north from the intersection of E. Kathleen Ave and Cave Street and encompasses all of the parcels on the east side of Cave Street, then continues east to encompass all parcels on the south side

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of College St from Cave St. to Yancey Ave, then along College Street to the intersection of College St and Comer Ave. The boundary then continues south and east to include all parcels on the south side of College St and the northernmost resource on this block of Comer Ave. all the way to Green Street where it continues east to Hart Ave and then north along Hart Ave to E. Main St. The boundary then goes west along E. Main St to the western boundary of the Horse Cave Municipal Cemetery and then north along Cemetery Ave. to Margaret Ave. The boundary then travels north enough to encompass the entirety of the parcels on the north side of Walthall St. and then continues west to W. Dale Heights Dr. The boundary then continues north along W. Dale Heights Dr. and then west to encompass all historic parcels on the northside of Walthall St between W. Dale Heights Dr. and N. Dixie St. The boundary then extends south along Guthrie St, extending further to the west only far enough to encompass the parcels associated with the three historic dwellings on the northwest corner of Guthrie St. and Woodlawn Ave. The boundary then follows the northern, eastern, and southern boundaries of the existing Horse Cave Historic District to the beginning point, excluding only the parcels on the north side of E. Main St between Guthrie and Vial Streets.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries for the Horse Cave Residential Historic District include what is considered the extent of the earliest residential development around the Horse Cave commercial district, as shown on early historic maps. While there is some residential development that extends further, this district marks the original extent. Construction dates range from the early settlement of Horse Cave and continue to the modern day, showing that this area continues to be a primary area of residential development supporting the City of Horse Cave.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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**Photographs**

**Photo Log**

Name of Property: Horse Cave Residential Historic District  
City or Vicinity: Horse Cave  
County: Hart County  
State: Kentucky  
Photographer: Wes Cunningham  
Date Photographed: January 24, 2024

- Photo 1 of 26, 305 Maple Ave, camera facing northeast.
- Photo 2 of 26, 307 Maple Ave, camera facing southeast.
- Photo 3 of 26, 208 Cave St, camera facing west.
- Photo 4 of 26, 206 Cave St, camera facing northwest.
- Photo 5 of 26, 203 Cave St, camera facing northeast.
- Photo 6 of 26, 115 Cave St, camera facing southeast.
- Photo 7 of 26, 113 Cave St, camera facing east.
- Photo 8 of 26, 207 College St, camera facing south.
- Photo 9 of 26, 210 Edwards Ave, camera facing southwest.
- Photo 10 of 26, 304 E. Main St, camera facing northwest.
- Photo 11 of 26, 311 E. Main St, camera facing south.
- Photo 12 of 26, 312 E. Main St, camera facing north.
- Photo 13 of 26, 400 E. Main St, camera facing northeast.
- Photo 14 of 26, 314 Walthall St, camera facing northeast.
- Photo 15 of 26, 202 Edwards Ave, camera facing southeast.
- Photo 16 of 26, 301 E. Main St, camera facing west.
- Photo 17 of 26, 120 Cave St, camera facing northwest.
- Photo 18 of 26, 117 E. Kathleen St, camera facing south.
- Photo 19 of 26, 106 Yancey Ave, camera facing northwest.
- Photo 20 of 26, 320 Walthall St, camera facing northwest.
- Photo 21 of 26, Modern Non-Contributing Resource at 120 Cave St., camera facing west.
- Photo 22 of 26, 309 Woodlawn Ave, camera facing south.
- Photo 23 of 26, Representative Streetscape along Maple Ave, camera facing southeast.
- Photo 24 of 26, Representative Streetscape along Yancey Ave, camera facing northwest.
- Photo 25 of 26, Representative Streetscape along E. Main St, camera facing east.
- Photo 26 of 26, Representative Streetscape along Vial St, camera facing southeast.