

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic name: The KFC White House Building

Other names/site number: The White House, JF 3726

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & number: 1441 Gardiner Lane

City or town: Louisville State: Kentucky County: Jefferson

Not For Publication: NA Vicinity: NA

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:

X national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B ___ C ___ D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title: Craig Potts/SHPO 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 ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p> <p>_____ Signature of commenting official: _____ Date _____</p> <p>_____ Title : _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</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>2</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

Commerce/Trade: Business

Current Functions

Commerce/Trade: Business

Recreation and Culture: Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY CLASSICAL REVIVALS/COLONIAL REVIVAL

-

Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property: white brick veneer, slate tile roof, wooden columns with steel interior

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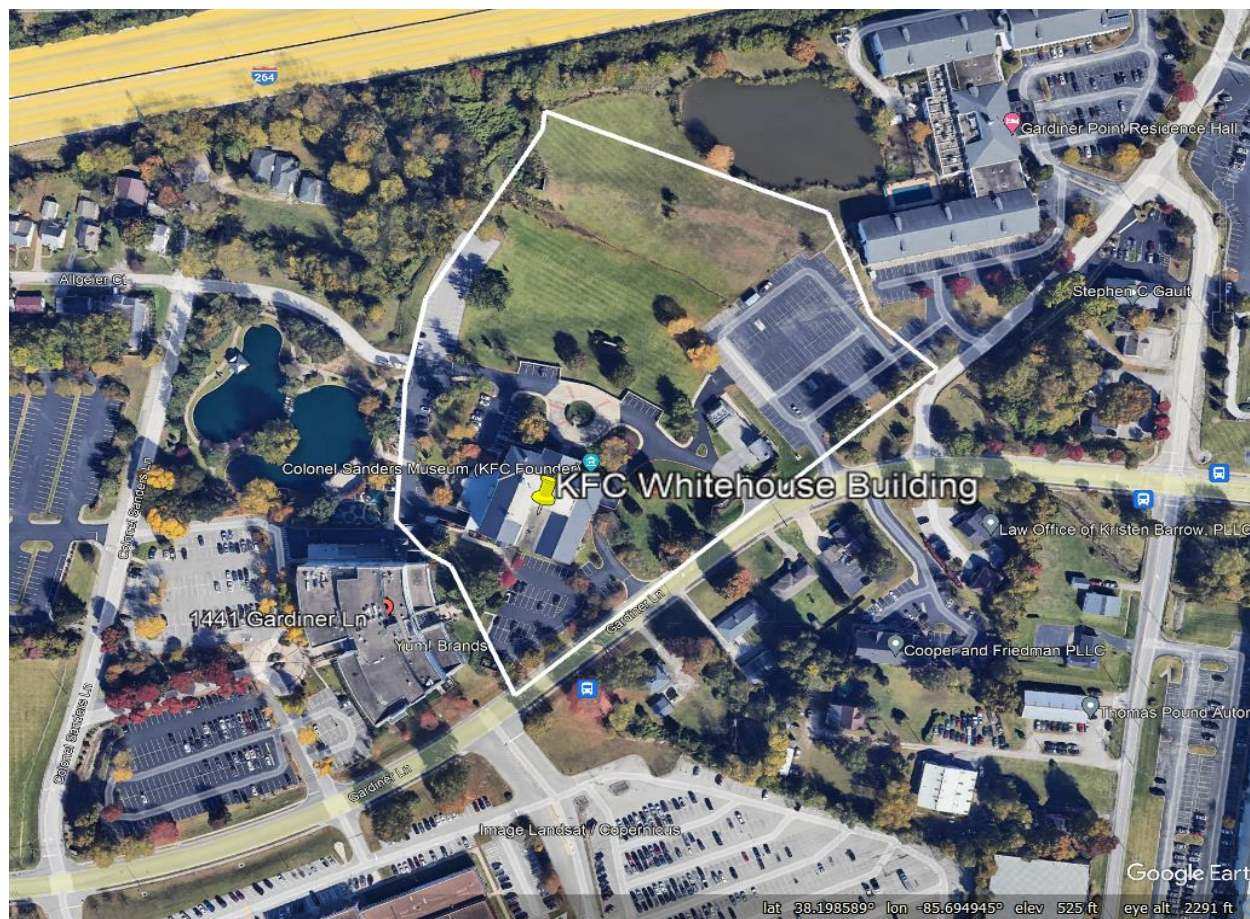
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Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The KFC White House Building (JF 3726) and nearby gatehouse were completed in 1970 and are currently owned by the multinational corporation Yum! Brands, Inc. (“Yum! Brands”), the parent company of Kentucky Fried Chicken (“KFC”) and several other restaurant companies. The property sits just outside of Interstate 264 (Watterson Expressway), a ring-road circling Louisville, about 4 miles south of the downtown center. The building has been the corporate headquarters and main office for Kentucky Fried Chicken (and later Yum! Brands) since its construction and was expanded in 1986 into a second building located on a parcel to the southwest. The White House currently serves as both corporate offices and a museum. The building was styled to evoke a southern plantation, with an impressive portico held up by six columns, which alludes to a sentimental Kentucky past that had become synonymous with the image of Kentucky Colonel Harland Sanders (“Colonel Sanders,” “Sanders,” or “the Colonel”), KFC’s founder whose image was used in KFC advertising and restaurant branding. Opened on the Colonel’s 80th birthday, some accounts attribute the building’s design inspiration to John Y. Brown (“Brown”), the company’s CEO at the time, who had political ambitions and called for the building’s exterior to signal that aspiration. The property proposed for listing is the entire tract that the White House sits on, 11.63 acres, which consists of two contributing buildings, and one non-contributing building.



KFC White House Building, Jefferson Co., KY Latitude 38.198589° Longitude -85.694945°

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Photograph 1, KFC White House Building, North Façade, captured by Janine Webb, 2024

Character of the Site

The White House is located in a commercially developed area directly south of downtown Louisville, Kentucky. The built area of the White House campus is upon a slight promontory bounded by Interstate 264, Gardiner Lane and Colonel Sanders Lane. The primary vista of the White House deliberately occurs from the Interstate by the interruption of dense, adjacent commercial development with a great lawn, approximately 750 feet long by 600 feet wide, that provides a broad open parklike expanse. The apex of the property and terminus of the view correspond with the classically proportioned, porticoed façade of the White House. A circular roundabout drive, on axis with the building's front, geometrically connects the green space to the building. Emanating from this formal core, parking, walks, and landscaping reacts to natural changes in the terrain.

The great lawn is of irregular shape and meadowlike. Curvaceous walks provide trails to parking, water features, outdoor dining, and a gazebo and playground. Small, irregular parking lots belie the overall expanse of needed parking. Landscaping of varying form and colors contrast the symmetry and stark formal façade of the White House.

Three vehicular entries to the campus are accessed from Gardiner Lane. The scale of the campus buildings and ample landscaping provide a welcome transition from the adjacent, large US Postal Service facility and nearby much smaller commercial buildings. The original entry drive to the campus provides an oblique view of the columned entry portico of the White House and is

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construction. Typical exterior wall construction is painted brick. A continuous band of projecting brick align with the bottom of the entablature of the portico providing a shadow line and compatible composition to the walls. Windows with wooden shutters are provided with brick rowlocks and in a style more common of American neoclassical vernacular. Two chimneys project from the roof of the primary wing.

The double front doors include sidelights and elliptical fanlight transom with leaded panes forming geometric and radial joints for glazing. A shallow, wide balcony spanning three bays of the portico occur at the second floor. The balcony is accessed by double doors including sidelights and rectangular transom. The eastern end of the primary wing includes a porte cochere that includes Tuscan columns with classical entasis, projecting cornice with requisite frieze bedmold and corona. A low Chippendale balustrade traverses the length of the cornice.

The primary structure of the building includes reinforced concrete foundation, wooden columns with steel cores, and ribbed concrete elevated decks. Roof construction includes steel framing with an exterior of slate roof tiles.



Photograph 2, KFC White House Building, North Façade, photographer unknown (KFC archives), 1970

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Thoughtful placement of the building upon the site results in unique architectural elements on all sides while maintaining the typical building fabric and details identified on the primary (north) facade. As previously remarked, most observers experience the White House while traversing Interstate 264. A fleeting view of the large white building, shadowed classical portico and expansive green setting casts an iconic image of the building and the brand. While the north facade is imposing and transitory, the east facade of the White House and those travelers and building visitors on Gardener Lane presents a more complex view of the building. The imposing portico is now a recessive, oblique element accompanied with other architectural constructions that enrich the building composition and reduce the overall imposing size of the building. White brick piers with stone accents, capstones and sections of black metal fencing identify the vehicular entry. A small adjacent gatehouse is a deliberate companion to the White House, utilizing the same white painted brick, classical pedimented entry, chimneys, natural slate roofing and similar window fenestration. Another element of the east facade is the porte cochere. Projecting from the large white mass of the three-story building, it provided a practical function allowing entry during inclement weather but importantly also provides further classical detailing (groupings of two or three Tuscan columns & Chippendale balustrade) and provides a less imposing, human scale to the long, three-story elevation.



Views of the West Facade

The west facade has been altered since original construction with the addition of a basement dining room with rooftop terrace corresponding to the first floor. The addition utilizes similar architectural elements of Tuscan columns and balustrade and painted white brick but remains distinct from the original construction by lesser scale, black copings and an apsidal terrace projection in stark relief to the long, planar west elevation of the original building. The south facade has also been altered by the nearby construction of the Tech Center and basement level connecting gallery. The addition and gallery largely obscure the original elevation but it evidences the same roofline fascia, rhythm of window placement, shutters and projecting brick band below the eave implying an unadorned proportioned entablature. Another alteration typical on all elevations of the original building, are the windows. The original windows were operable, double-hung, wood windows with muntins. Due to wear, improved mechanical conditioning and desire for improved security, the windows were replaced with white, fixed windows. The original window sashes were unequal (top sash smaller than lower sash with the mid-rail aligning to the

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midrails of the adjacent shutters). The original shutters remain and the replacement windows have nearly identical dimensions and appearance of the originals excepting the missing muntins.

White House Interior

The entry foyer of the White House leads visitors down a small staircase to a reception desk and seating area. On the northeast side of the foyer, nearest the main entry, a pair of stained wood doors open to the former office of Colonel Sanders, from the building's opening in 1970 until his death in 1980. Colonel Sander's office was subsequently converted into its current use as the Colonel Sanders Museum. Other offices and conference rooms populate the exterior walls of the first, second, and third floors connected by interior corridors that also lead to interior conference rooms and other support spaces. The basement consists of a kitchen and large dining room, as well as administrative offices and storage spaces.



Lobby, 1970



Col. Sanders Museum entrance in Lobby, 2024

The classical styling of the exterior of the White House is continued into the building interior. Doorways are adorned with crosssetted corner door casings. Many double door openings are surmounted with a broken pediment molding. Painted wooden wainscot and trim traverse hallways and other common spaces. Crown moldings with egg and dart or ogee profiles occur in most public spaces. Senior leadership offices also feature shell niches atop built-in bookcases, as well as marble surround fireplaces. Additional finishes vary depending on the department and office occupants. Carpet flooring extends throughout nearly all administrative portions of the building.

Significant areas of the building include Colonel Sanders's office and the Board Room. Colonel Sanders's office was originally a rectangular room with dark stained, wood wall paneling. It was expanded following the Colonel's death into an adjoining office, effectively doubling its size. Some wood paneling remains, but much of the wall space has been replaced with painted gypsum board. The Board Room is located on the second floor of the building in an interior space. Its original construction was elliptical in shape, but to increase area and occupancy, the

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Board Room has since been renovated to a rectangular shape and modernized for improved function and technology.

The Gatehouse

The gatehouse is located north east of the entrance of the White House, near to the vehicular entrance to the property from Gardiner Lane, and is built in a similar classical style and of similar materials as the White House. A single white door topped with a triangular pediment allows front access. The gatehouse houses mechanical equipment for the upkeep of the grounds and is also used for administrative and storage purposes. The gatehouse has always served a utility purpose only.



Photograph 3, Gatehouse, looking north, captured by Janine Webb, 2024

Non-contributing Building: Colonel Sanders Technical Center

The six-story Technical Center is located just behind the White House to the south west, and is connected to the White House by an underground tunnel. It still functions today as an extension of the White House. It includes collaboration and office spaces, a test kitchen for new recipes, and a replica restaurant for training (complete with a practice drive-through window). Its all-white exterior and horizontally symmetrical windows blend well with the style of the original White House.

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Photograph 4, Technical Center, looking north, captured by Janine Webb, 2024

Changes to the Property since the Period of Significance, Building Extension

The White House exists now in much the same state as at the time of its construction. Regular maintenance and upkeep, including replacement of the original windows, have occurred in the decades since construction, as well as interior reconfigurations of office spaces to meet the needs of employees. The White House also underwent a renovation and addition several decades after its construction, to add the connecting underground tunnel, and to renovate the basement kitchen and expand the dining area on the west side. The extension included an outdoor dining area, with a large veranda covering outdoor dining tables, and a circular garden area that complements the pathway and mimics the large roundabout at the front of the White House. The Colonel's office was also converted into a museum following his death in 1980, and the boardroom, once elliptical shaped, has been renovated to a rectangular shape.

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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

N/A

Areas of Significance

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1970-1980

Significant Dates

1970

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hart, Freeland & Roberts (Architects)

Unknown (Builder)

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Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph

The KFC White House Building (JF 3726), and nearby gatehouse, meet National Register of Historic Places eligibility Criterion A for being the offices and the headquarters of Kentucky Fried Chicken, an early and formative company in the development of the quick service restaurant industry in the United States, one of the most valuable brands in the world, and holder of one of the most closely held secret recipes on earth.¹ Kentucky Fried Chicken was founded by Colonel Harland Sanders and its growth was fueled by John Y. Brown, Jr. Brown and Sanders, in tandem, built Kentucky Fried Chicken from a few hundred franchises into a large global, unified, and well recognized brand with Sanders as its cherished spokesman. Both of these men became important figures in the public's perception of, and growth in, America's quick service restaurant industry. Since the completion of the White House's construction in 1970, the property has been the headquarters and primary office of KFC, and since 1997, of its parent company Yum! Brands. The White House, so named because of its white brick antebellum-style mansion design and its original oval-shaped board room², was designed and constructed under Brown's leadership. Brown, a Kentucky celebrity in his own right, later served as Kentucky's governor and a professional basketball team owner. Sanders kept an office immediately off the lobby in the White House until he died in 1980, which has since been converted into a museum honoring his life and legacy. With Sanders's original white suit on display, the museum walls tell a story of his tenacity and legacy, and the success of Kentucky Fried Chicken around the world. It is an important part of the American history of food and quick service franchised restaurants, powerful branding, and personal and corporate success.

The History of Quick Service Franchise Companies in the United States, 1921-Present

Fast food restaurants (also known as quick service restaurants or "QSR"s) are an American tradition.³ Born from the development of the Interstate Highway System in the 1950s and 60s, the increased affordability of cars, and Americans' "on-the-go" kind of lifestyle, QSRs have exploded across the American landscape over the past seven decades.⁴ QSRs share several characteristics: they provide familiar products of predictable quality, at convenient locations, and above all, they do it quickly.⁵ After nearly a century, QSRs remain as popular as ever, with QSR sales in 2022 reaching a whopping \$382 billion⁶, and polls showing that 80% of Americans eat at a QSR at least once per month.⁷

¹ Danny Klein, *The World's 10 Most Valuable Fast-Food Brands*, QSR Magazine, 2024; Liam Stack, *A Secret Blend of 11 Herbs and Spices Slips Out, but Is It the Colonel's?*, N. Y. TIMES, Aug. 27, 2016, at A13

² Donna Sammons, *Kentucky Fried Chicken Can Cackle Again*, N. Y. TIMES, Mar. 2, 1980.

³ Anna Diamond, *A Crispy, Salty, American History of Fast Food*, Smithsonian Magazine, June 24, 2019.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ See generally, ADAM CHANDLER, *DRIVE-THRU DREAMS* (2019).

⁶ *The 2023 QSR 50: Fast Food's Leading Annual Report*, QSR Magazine, Aug. 1, 2023.

⁷ Luisa Torres, *'Drive Thru Dreams' Explores America's Love-Hate Relationship with Fast Food*, NPR, Aug. 7, 2019.

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Adam Chandler describes QSRs as “a very democratic kind of institution.”⁸ The dining experience at a QSR is designed to be consistent, and is a place where people of all backgrounds, levels of wealth, and opinions regularly converge to eat.⁹ It is one of the few places in society that nearly everyone frequents (96% of Americans eat at a QSR at least once a year, making it a nearly ubiquitous American habit), and everyone has a similar experience.¹⁰

QSRs are also “part of what we would call the quintessential American Dream. [The founders of quick service restaurants] were, by and large, from humble beginnings. They often grew up poor, didn’t achieve success until late in their life, and had all these setbacks. Colonel Sanders is a key example of somebody who struggled his entire life and then struck it rich with a chicken recipe he perfected while working at a gas station in southeastern Kentucky.”¹¹

QSRs are undeniably a large part of American food culture and history. They are regularly visited by most Americans, and “[e]ven for people who haven’t had fast food in five or ten years, they still have fond memories of sneaking out of high school with their friends and going to Taco Bell during their lunch breaks or going to McDonald’s for a birthday party when they were kids.”¹² As one journalist describes, “[quick service restaurants] are national institutions, roadside embodiments [of] America.”¹³

Quick Service

The history of QSRs is crucial to establishing the significance of Colonel Sanders and his Kentucky fried chicken. Before World War I, the United States was a physically and spiritually disconnected land.¹⁴ Indeed, little, if anything, would qualify as quintessentially “American” in a country where different languages, cuisines, and forms of entertainment held together the tangle of ethnic enclaves and immigrant communities.¹⁵ Without a drop of legal booze, the gaze was nationalized during the Roaring Twenties and made this tribalism seem provincial.¹⁶ Then along came the White Castle in 1921.

White Castle restaurant opened in Wichita, Kansas in 1921.¹⁷ White Castle featured steam-cooking technology to prepare its hamburgers, which made the cooking process quicker and uniform.¹⁸ And when White Castle expanded to additional locations beginning in 1922, it became the first restaurant company to standardize the look and feel of its stores, with white painted walls and interiors, shiny metal countertops, and windows into the kitchen area, all to emphasize

⁸ Kate Bernot, *Talking America’s Complicated Fast-Food Feelings with a Guy Who Sorted Through Them*, The Takeout, July 31, 2019.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ Torres, *supra* note 7.

¹¹ Diamond, *supra* note 3.

¹² Torres, *supra* note 7.

¹³ Rachel Sugar, *Fast Food Restaurants Represent the Best and Worst of America*, Vox, June 26, 2019.

¹⁴ Drive-Thru Dreams, p. 16.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ CHANDLER, *supra* note 5, at 16.

¹⁸ *Id.*

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cleanliness.¹⁹ The consistency and quality of food and branding offered by White Castle signaled dependability and trustworthiness to customers, and no matter the location or the day, White Castle delivered the same dining experience to customers.²⁰

White Castle “lowered the drawbridge for American fast food”²¹ by pioneering consistent products and uniform restaurant design, but when automobiles became more affordable and the Interstate Highway System was built in the 1950s and 1960s, customer preferences began to change.²² Americans increasingly emphasized speed in making their dining decisions, and QSRs began to cater directly to customers in cars by developing drive-up, and later drive-thru dining. And as televisions became more affordable and were present in more American homes, advertising for QSRs also took off, creating opportunity for QSRs to differentiate themselves through effective marketing.²³

Franchising

The next decade brought another revolution in the restaurant industry, when Howard Johnson’s ice cream restaurants began franchising: licensing their trademarks and system of restaurant operations to third parties to run their own Howard Johnson restaurant.²⁴ Franchising was an innovation that allowed restaurant companies to expand rapidly by utilizing third parties with ready capital, dedication, and enthusiasm to open their own stores, but following a uniform method of operation, and proprietary food products that ensured customers always had a consistent experience at any location. Many quick service restaurants today have expanded through a franchise model, including KFC, which the Colonel expanded through partnership with franchisees throughout the United States.²⁵

Colonel Sanders as QSR Innovator

Colonel Sanders and his recipe and method for cooking Kentucky Fried Chicken were transformative in the burgeoning QSR industry. Indeed, John Cox, KFC’s former public relations director, described Colonel Sanders as “if not the father, then one of the fathers of fast food.”²⁶ “Kentucky Fried Chicken created a whole new section of fast food for chicken . . . it sold chicken dinners to take home and put on the family dinner table. No other restaurant chain was doing that.”²⁷

¹⁹ *Id.* at 12.

²⁰ *Id.* at 13.

²¹ CHANDLER, *supra* note 5, at 15.

²² NRHP Registration Form, Sanders, Harland, Café, July 5, 1990.

²³ CHANDLER, *supra* note 5, at 13.

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ NRHP Registration Form, *supra* note 19.

²⁶ ROBERT DARDEN, SECRET RECIPE: WHY KFC IS STILL COOKIN’ AFTER 50 YEARS at 148 (2002).

²⁷ *50 Years Later: the Deal for KFC*, LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER, Aug. 4, 2014 at 1C.

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Colonel Sanders perfected a blend of eleven herbs and spices for his fried chicken in 1939, but also innovated the quicker method of cooking using a pressure cooker instead of pan frying. This innovation meant that traditional, home cooked, Sunday dinner could be available quickly and affordably to American families in a way that was not previously possible, especially after Brown helped to transform the business from a diner-style to a QSR-style format.²⁸ A traditional southern food, “[f]ried chicken was a symbol of hearth and home, not fry baskets and drive-throughs”, but Colonel Sanders and Brown were able to bring it to the masses, and Kentucky Fried Chicken became “the restaurant to copycat” because of its tremendous success.²⁹

Colonel Sanders was also one of the early restaurateurs to develop Kentucky Fried Chicken through franchising, which enabled the rapid expansion of KFC restaurants all over the United States. And KFC further pioneered the use of an individual founder in their marketing by using the Colonel’s distinctive image on television and print advertising, making him recognizable and associated with high quality and delicious fried chicken. This resulted in a consistent, recognizable product at all Kentucky Fried Chicken locations and the success and expansion of the KFC brand. Today, Kentucky Fried Chicken is a leader in sales of quick-service chicken with over 30,000 restaurants in 150 countries, and has been recognized as one of the 100 Best Global Brands for 20 years.³⁰

History of Harland Sanders and the Kentucky Fried Chicken Corporation

Harland Sanders’s Early Life

Harland David Sanders was born on a small farm near Henryville, Indiana on September 9, 1890.³¹ Sanders’s father died when he was six years old, after which he took on a caretaking role for his siblings, including learning to cook for them, while his mother worked two jobs to support their family.³² Sanders quit school after the sixth grade (allegedly claiming “algebra’s what drove me off”) and embarked on a string of different adventures and careers including farm hand, streetcar conductor, soldier (serving in Cuba), steamboat ferry operator, railroad fireman, secretary, insurance salesman, tire salesman, and amateur midwife.³³ He even practiced law for a short period of time until his participation in a courtroom brawl with his client brought his legal career to an abrupt end.³⁴

The Colonel’s Secret Recipe and Rise to Prominence

In 1930, Sanders opened a service station in Corbin, Kentucky that was frequented by travelers between Detroit, Cincinnati, Columbus, Chattanooga, Atlanta, and Miami.³⁵ On the Dixie route

²⁸ Advertisement, *COURIER J.*, May 5, 1968, at 156.

²⁹ JOHN T. EDGE, *THE POTLIKKER PAPERS: A FOOD HISTORY OF THE MODERN SOUTH* 116, 119 (2018).

³⁰ *KFC’s 30,000th Restaurant Opened in Rome, Italy*, KFC (accessed April 18, 2024); *KFC Makes Interbrand’s 100 Best Global Brands List for the 20th Consecutive Year*, KFC, Oct. 27, 2021.

³¹ William Whitworth, *Profiles: Kentucky Fried*, *NEW YORKER MAG.*, Feb. 14, 1970.

³² *Id.*

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ NRHP Registration Form, *supra* note 19.

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through Corbin, Sanders shared his family cooking with customers at a six-person table in a lunchroom behind his service station, and he quickly garnered a reputation as an excellent chef.³⁶ Sanders particularly enjoyed preparing the food his mother had taught him to make: pan-fried chicken, country ham, fresh vegetables, and homemade biscuits.³⁷ Demand for Sanders's cooking rose, and in 1937 he opened the Sanders Café, a 142-seat restaurant and motel, across the street from his service station.³⁸

His cooking became so famous that celebrities of the day, including Bing Crosby, Fred Astaire, and Shirley Temple visited his illustrious restaurant.³⁹ But all were welcomed, with Sanders saying, "I fed truck drivers and millionaires at the same table...I don't care if I had truck drivers sitting down there and here come a doctor. I didn't know who he was. I thought everybody could eat at the same table. I didn't know anything, only to be friendly. So that was my first restaurant."⁴⁰

Fried chicken always featured prominently on the menu at his restaurant, and he experimented with methods and ingredients until perfecting his recipe of eleven herbs and spices in 1939.⁴¹ Unhappy with the 45-minute cook time for a batch of fried chicken in an iron skillet, Sanders also developed a new method for cooking the chicken in a modified pressure cooker.⁴² He sought to avoid the crunchy and dry texture of a deep-fried chicken and found that cooking in a pressure cooker kept the chicken crispy and moist.⁴³

After trying Sanders's legendary cuisine, Kentucky Governor Ruby Laffoon commissioned Sanders as a Kentucky Colonel in 1934 (he was re-commissioned in 1950 by Governor Lawrence Wetherby⁴⁴), and though the title was honorary, the Colonel used the moniker proudly for the rest of his life.⁴⁵ In the 1950s Sanders perfected his signature look in keeping with his Colonel title, growing a white mustache and goatee, and wearing a white suit, string tie, and black shoes.⁴⁶ He maintained this instantly recognizable look for the rest of his life, with one reporter explaining, "[b]ehind the all-American, slightly caricatured exterior there was a salesman and an entrepreneur of genius."⁴⁷

³⁶ William Grimes, *From Colonel Sanders: Roots and Chicken*, N. Y. TIMES, Aug. 26, 2012, at TR4; Orrin Konheim, *One-Man Brand*, AMERICAN HISTORY, Dec. 2021, at 52; Victoria Dawson, *How Colonel Sanders Made Kentucky Fried Chicken an American Success Story*, SMITHSONIAN MAG., July 6, 2015.

³⁷ KFC Corporation, ENCYCLOPEDIA, May 18, 2018.

³⁸ John E. Kleber, THE KENTUCKY ENCYCLOPEDIA 796 (1992).

³⁹ Konheim, *supra* note 33, at 52.

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ *Harland Sanders*, BRITANNICA, Britannica.com/biography/Harland-Sanders, Dec. 23, 2023.

⁴² Louise Kramer, *Col. Harland Sanders*, NATION'S RESTAURANT NEWS, Feb. 1996 at 138; *Patent of the Day: Process of Producing Fried Chicken Under Pressure*, SUITER SWANTZ INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, Sept. 26, 2016; Matthew Yglesias Slate, *The Colonel's Real Secret of KFC's Success*, TRIB. DEMOCRAT, Oct. 18, 2013.

⁴³ Whitworth, *supra* note 27; Konheim, *supra* note 33, at 52.

⁴⁴ Elinor J. Brecher, *Colonel Harland Sanders*, COURIER J., Dec. 17, 1980, at 12.

⁴⁵ Anthony Harkins, *Colonels, Hillbillies, and Fightin': Twentieth-Century Kentucky in the National Imagination*, REG. OF THE KY. HIST. SOC'Y., Spring/Summer 2015, at 444.

⁴⁶ *Id.*

⁴⁷ J.Y. Smith, *Col. Sanders, the Fried-Chicken Gentleman, Dies*, WASH. POST, Dec. 17, 1980.

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In 1939, the restaurant was listed in Duncan Hines' "Adventures in Good Eating".⁴⁸ But tragically, the restaurant burned to the ground the same year, and Sanders was once again forced to start over.⁴⁹ But Sanders, who had become a prosperous, self-made man despite the Great Depression, had gotten a taste of success.⁵⁰ He rebuilt his café in 1940 along with an adjacent seventeen-room motel.⁵¹ The Sanders Café and Court opened on the Fourth of July with red-checked gingham napkins and a country ham breakfast served with biscuits, red-eye gravy, fresh grits, and eggs.⁵² Although the motel no longer stands, the restaurant has survived for over eighty years and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Harland Sanders Café (NRIS 90001169).⁵³

Pivoting to Franchisor

In the early 1950s, bad luck struck again when the construction of Interstate 75 threatened to divert traffic away from the Sanders Café, and his restaurant and motel suffered an immediate and devastating drop in their value.⁵⁴ In 1956, he sold his business at auction for barely enough to pay his taxes and outstanding debts.⁵⁵ The Colonel was forced to scrape by for a time on savings and a Social Security check of \$105 per month.⁵⁶

But the ever-adaptive Colonel pivoted his career once again by traveling across the country selling franchises of his fried chicken recipe and doing demonstrations on-site at promising restaurants to prove his method and the delicious taste.⁵⁷ If he found one, he would walk inside and try to convince the owner to let him cook some chicken for the restaurant's employees.⁵⁸ If they approved, he would suggest cooking for the restaurant's customers for a few days.⁵⁹ Colonel Sanders's business started to grow, with the Colonel selling his secret spice mix and pressure fryers to franchisees, and earning five cents per chicken sold under his "Kentucky Fried Chicken" mark and method.⁶⁰ It was exhausting work requiring relentless travel but the Colonel's persistence paid off as he grew his empire to a few hundred franchisees who sold Kentucky Fried Chicken.⁶¹

John Y. Brown Purchases KFC

⁴⁸ Grimes, *supra* note 33, at TR4 (stating that Duncan Hines described the Sanders Café as a "very good place to stop en route to Cumberland Falls and the Great Smokies . . . [with] sizzling steaks, fried chicken, country ham, hot biscuits."); OZERSKY, *supra* note 45, at 24.

⁴⁹ OZERSKY, *supra* note 45, at 24.

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² *Id.*

⁵³ The NRHP listing can be read here: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/123851051>. When the Sanders Café was accepted into the NRHP, the acceptance reviewer noted that "Sanders was one of the earliest proponents of the fast food industry, which has had a profound impact on American culture. This is the building where he invented his secret recipe and the image of 'Colonel Sanders.' This is an excellent nomination." NRHP Registration Form, Sanders, Harland, Café, Jul. 5, 1990.

⁵⁴ Smith, *supra* note 44.

⁵⁵ Grimes, *supra* note 33, at TR4.

⁵⁶ Smith, *supra* note 44.

⁵⁷ Whitworth, *supra* note 28.

⁵⁸ *Id.*

⁵⁹ *Id.*

⁶⁰ Konheim, *supra* note 33, at 54.

⁶¹ Whitworth, *supra* note 28.

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In 1963, a meeting between Colonel Sanders and John Y. Brown Jr. changed the trajectory of the KFC business. Brown was a young attorney whose father, John Y. Brown Sr., had been a US Congressman, and who was increasingly active in the Kentucky Democratic Party, serving as the head of John F. Kennedy's Kentucky presidential campaign in 1960, and head of the Young Democrats for Edward Breathitt in 1963.⁶² Though he had earned a law degree from the University of Kentucky in 1960 and joined his father's private law practice, he had interest and ambitions in business.⁶³



Photograph 6 Jack C. Massey, John Y. Brown, Colonel Sanders, and Don Hines, photographer unknown (KFC archives) 1964

Colonel Sanders and Brown met at a Kentucky Derby breakfast event in 1963, and began discussing a potential partnership.⁶⁴ Though they originally discussed Brown's working for Sanders to oversee and expand a barbeque business, Porky Pig Houses, Brown recognized the power of the Colonel's recipe and image and ultimately persuaded the Colonel to sell KFC to himself and a small group of investors including Jack Massey, and the Colonel's first (and later one of his largest) franchisee, Pete Harman, for \$2 million.⁶⁵ The sale also included the Colonel serving as a lifetime ambassador, quality controller, and franchise operations trainer for the brand

⁶² John Ed Pearce, *A Young Tycoon at the Crossroads*, COURIER J., Dec. 12, 1971, at 198; *John Y. Brown, Jr.*, REG. OF THE KY. HIST. SOC'Y., Spring 1980, at 95-97.

⁶³ *John Y. Brown, Jr.*, *supra* note 59.

⁶⁴ *Entrepreneurs: John Brown's Buddy*, TIME, Aug. 28, 1972; Pearce, *supra* note 59, at 198. However, some sources describe Colonel Sanders and John Y. Brown's first meeting differently. See Beverly Fortune, *Fifty Years Later: The Tale of the KFC Business Deal*, LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER, Aug. 10, 2014, at D4.

⁶⁵ Marlyn Aycok, *Sanders Selling for \$2,000,000*, COURIER J., Jan. 27, 1964, at A1; Glenn Fowler, *Jack C. Massey, an Entrepreneur in Hospitals and Food, Dies*, N. Y. TIMES, Feb. 16, 1990, at D18. See also *Col. Sanders Signs Papers*, COURIER J., Mar. 7, 1964, at B12; Konheim, *supra* note 33, at 55.

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at a per-year salary of \$40,000 (which later rose to \$200,000).⁶⁶ During this time, the headquarters for KFC was moved from Shelbyville, Kentucky to Nashville, Tennessee.

KFC's Celebrity Spokesman

Brown helped transform KFC from a diner-style restaurant to a quick service-style format that we know today.⁶⁷ He recognized the Colonel's celebrity and charisma and began promoting him, explaining that "we had two things to sell. One was a product – Kentucky Fried Chicken. The other was Colonel Sanders himself."⁶⁸ As John Brown explained, "The Colonel wasn't just the face of the company; he *was* the company. . . He wasn't just a trademark. He wasn't just somebody that the adman had made up, like Aunt Jemima, Colonel Morton, or Betty Crocker. He was a real, live human being and a colorful, attractive, persuasive one. My job was to get him before the American people and let him sell his own product."⁶⁹

The Colonel began appearing on national television shows (including "the Johnny Carson Show," "What's My Line?" and even a dancing appearance on "The Lawrence Welk Show"), in commercials, and on billboards and marketing materials.⁷⁰ He was in his first appearances little known - when he appeared on "What's My Line?" the show's panelists were not able to guess the food with which he was associated.⁷¹ But with each subsequent television appearance, his celebrity increased, likely due to his being very natural in front of a camera and in the spotlight.⁷² As Brown described, "We'd be backstage, waiting for him to go on, and I'd keep reminding [the Colonel] to say this and say that, and he'd say, 'John, quit worrying. I know what to do.' And when his time came, he just pranced out there like he'd been facing the footlights all his life."⁷³ Brown and the Colonel were pioneers of utilizing the founder of the company as a spokesman who guaranteed the quality of the product they were selling.⁷⁴ Not only did the Colonel's celebrity increase, but sales increased too, with Brown considering the Colonel's television appearances to be a turning point in the growth of the KFC business.⁷⁵

Brown also spearheaded a unification effort for KFC restaurants.⁷⁶ He transformed Kentucky Fried Chicken from a menu item at independent restaurants to a system of freestanding restaurants that emphasized takeout, all utilizing the same signage, architecture, and now-distinct red and white striped color pattern.⁷⁷

⁶⁶ Aycock, *supra* note 62, at A1; *Success Story: Potential Ruin is Turned to Boom*, N. Y. TIMES, Mar. 22, 1964, at F28; Brecher, *supra* note 41, at 12.

⁶⁷ Whitworth, *supra* note 28.

⁶⁸ Pearce, *supra* note 59, at 198; OZERSKY, *supra* note 45, at 75-76.

⁶⁹ OZERSKY, *supra* note 45, at 76.

⁷⁰ Whitworth, *supra* note 28.; Henry Allen, *Review – Books: The American Way of Eating*, WALL ST. J., May 5, 2012; Pearce, *supra* note 59, at 198; DARDEN, *supra* note 23, at 90.

⁷¹ OZERSKY, *supra* note 45, at 77.

⁷² *Id.* at 78-79.

⁷³ DARDEN, *supra* note 23, at 90.

⁷⁴ *Id.* at 148.

⁷⁵ *Id.* at 90.

⁷⁶ OZERSKY, *supra* note 45, at 76.

⁷⁷ Whitworth, *supra* note 28; OZERSKY, *supra* note 45, at 76.

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Photograph 7 Colonel Sanders in front of a Kentucky Fried Chicken Restaurant, date & photographer unknown (KFC archives)

The Colonel as a Continuing KFC Leader

After Colonel Sanders sold KFC in 1964, in addition to serving as a face for KFC, he remained an integral part of the KFC business. Colonel Sanders sometimes had frustrations with Brown, and a tense relationship with the later KFC parent company, Heublein. But as Robert Darden explained in his biography of Colonel Sanders, Colonel Sanders was “fiercely independent, a perfectionist, a short-tempered genius, an artist [who] often found himself at odds with the men and women trying to turn his dream into an empire. It was a collision between vastly different cultures that often barely understood each other. They were two sometimes feuding forces united only by a single aim – to serve the best damn fried chicken in the whole world.”⁷⁸ Anthony Tortorici, the former director of public affairs for KFC, remarked in 1976 that “we’re very grateful to have the Colonel around to keep us on our toes. . . The Colonel has very high standards of personal conduct and for his product.”⁷⁹

The Colonel had very close and direct relationships with franchisees, even as Heublein’s relationship with franchisees became “frosty.”⁸⁰ Indeed, before the Colonel would agree to sell KFC in 1964, he sought franchisee input, especially from Pete Harman, his first franchisee, and the parties signed the purchase agreement at Harman’s restaurant in Salt Lake City.⁸¹ And the Colonel traveled extensively (over 250,000 miles a year), all over the world, to open new outlets

⁷⁸ DARDEN, *supra* note 19, at 104.

⁷⁹ *Id.* at 122.

⁸⁰ *Id.* at 129.

⁸¹ *Id.* at 82.

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and promote the KFC brand.⁸² Reports include that he was in Iran just before the Shah was overthrown to help address a trademark infringement problem, and that he was en route to Russia to meet with Nikita Khrushchev and teach him about cooking chicken when he learned that Khrushchev had died.⁸³

The Colonel was an active and at times cantankerous presence in the Kentucky Fried Chicken business well after he sold it to John Y. Brown. He was directly involved and vocal about matters of quality control, maintained close relationships with franchisees, and actively advertised and promoted the Kentucky Fried Chicken brand throughout the 1960s and 1970s. He remained a key leader who was passionate about the business and dedicated his time and extraordinary efforts to ensure that it was the best it could be.

Kentucky Homecoming at the White House

Four years after Brown purchased KFC from Colonel Sanders, they moved KFC's headquarters from Nashville, Tennessee to Louisville, with Brown declaring "I'm proud to announce that we're comin' home . . . it is only proper that we be located in Kentucky."⁸⁴

KFC's Kentucky White House headquarters (so named because of its white brick antebellum-style mansion design and its original oval-shaped board room⁸⁵) were designed by Hart, Freeland & Roberts of Nashville, Tennessee in the style of an idealized Southern colonial mansion.⁸⁶ Some speculate that the White House was constructed to resemble the Presidential White House because of Brown's political aspirations. Brown was later elected as Kentucky's governor, and while there was some buzz about Brown running for president, he never launched an official bid for the oval office.⁸⁷ The plans for the White House building and land originally included a Colonel Sanders Hospitality Inn, two restaurants, a service station, and an office building for assembling chicken cookers, although not all of these buildings came to fruition.⁸⁸

Construction was completed in September 1970 and the building was celebrated with a grand opening just after the Colonel's 80th birthday.⁸⁹ David Holt, of the *Courier-Journal*, described the festivities as "a sort of 'Welcome back to Kentucky, KFC – Happy Birthday, Col. Sanders'

⁸² *Id.* at 142.

⁸³ *Id.* at 125-126.

⁸⁴ *Fried Chicken Firm Plans \$2-Million Home Office*, COURIER J., Oct. 15, 1968, at B11; *see also* John Ed Pearce, *A Young Tycoon at the Crossroads*, COURIER J., Dec. 12, 1971, at 199 ("Kentucky's my home, and I thought the business belonged here, close to the Colonel, and in the state it represented.").

⁸⁵ Sammons, *supra* note 2, at F3 (calling the White House "an impressive structure . . . erected on a gentle slope just off Louisville's Watterson Expressway, the oversized white brick antebellum-style mansion is replete with leather couches, working fireplaces and an oval-shaped board room").

⁸⁶ *The Colonel Goes Colonial*, COURIER J., July 1, 1969, at B12.

⁸⁷ Andrew Wolfson, *John Y. Brown Jr., dashing KFC millionaire who became Kentucky governor, dies*, COURIER J., Nov. 22, 2022.

⁸⁸ *Planners Back Fried Chicken Complex Along Gardiner Lane*, COURIER J., Oct. 25, 1968, at B28; *Fried Chicken Company Granted Zoning Change*, COURIER J., Nov. 14, 1968, at B20.

⁸⁹ David Holt, *For KFC and Colonel: A Southern Wingding*, COURIER J., Sept. 17, 1970, at C10.

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wingding” that was attended by Kentucky governors, mayors, and several other government and civic leaders:

Pretty hostesses dressed in long, flowing dresses conducted tours of the white, spacious building, which has six large columns in front and an interior designed to “retain the charm of antebellum Southern mansions.” Sanders posed for pictures with KFC franchise holders who came from all 50 states and several foreign countries, according to a KFC spokesman. It was described as, “clearly the Colonel’s day.” Smiling broadly from behind his snow-white goatee and mustache, Sanders watched as Louisville’s Brown Hotel employees wheeled out a massive birthday cake in the shape of the new headquarters building and after hearing speaker after speaker praise him for his success so late in life, joked that “it was pretty near as bad as an obituary meeting.”²⁸ Still, I guess it’s nice to hear nice things about you instead of the real record.”⁹⁰

A year later, just after the Colonel’s 81st birthday, a bust of the Colonel designed by his daughter, Margaret, was installed in front of the White House and dedicated to the employees of KFC. The plaque beneath reads “A man will rust out faster than he’ll wear out,” one of the Colonel’s favorite sayings, which he was known to follow with “I aim to keep shuffling around enough to keep the rust off.”⁹¹



Photograph 8 the lobby of the KFC White House building, photographer unknown (KFC archives), approximately 1975

⁹⁰ *Id.*

⁹¹ Elinor J. Brecher, *Admirers Remember Sanders’ Spirit*, COURIER J., Dec. 17, 1980, at 12.

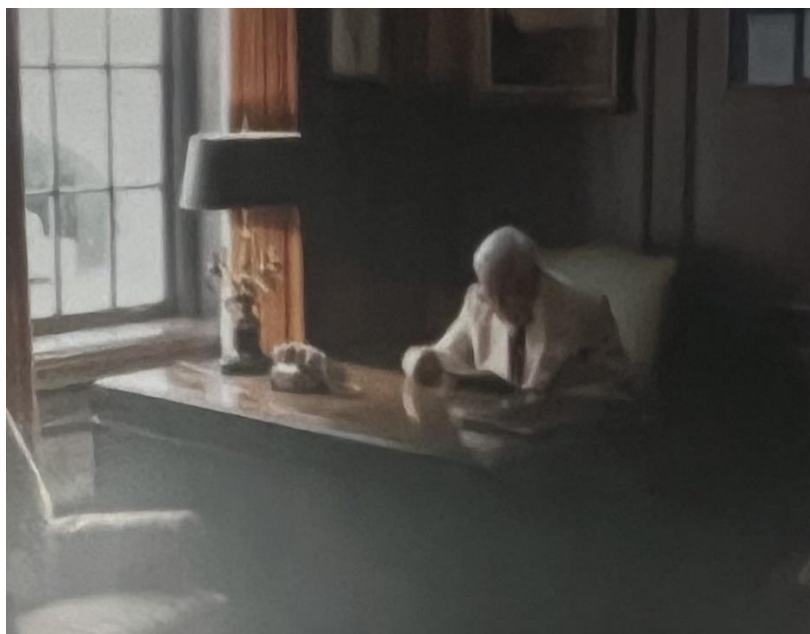
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The Colonel's Office at the White House

The Colonel's office in the White House was located on the first floor, just to the left of the front door, where he could see everyone and everyone could see him. It was a relatively small office, paneled in dark wood with rust and beige-colored furniture and décor.⁹² Sanders was generally in his office every day that he was not traveling or making public appearances, and was known for personally visiting restaurants to check the quality of the food. According to his grandson Trigg Adams, "to him [Sanders], life was work."⁹³

Most KFC executives had offices on the second floor, and the Colonel was said to humorously block fellow elevator riders who looked to get off at the second floor with his cane, saying "You don't want to get off here, you'll only get in trouble if you get off here."⁹⁴



Photograph 9 Colonel Sanders in his office at the KFC White House, photographer unknown (KFC archives) approximately 1975

⁹² Elinor J. Brecher, *He was an American Original . . . He's Irreplaceable*, COURIER J., Dec. 19, 1980, at 1.

⁹³ Venessa Wong, *Everything You Don't Know About the Real Colonel Sanders*, BUZZFEEDNEWS, July 9, 2015.

⁹⁴ DARDEN, *supra* note 23, at 144.

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Photograph 10 Colonel Sanders's office in the KFC White House, photographer unknown (KFC archives) approximately 1975

KFC Goes Public

In the 1960s and 1970s, the KFC business enjoyed rapid growth and expansion into new markets (“a finger licking global empire” according to one journalist).⁹⁵ Brown’s plan of expanding the KFC business through franchising was so successful that it “became the model for an entire industry.”⁹⁶ And by 1968, Kentucky Fried Chicken was the largest quick service restaurant company in the country.⁹⁷ KFC stock began trading publicly on the New York Stock Exchange (“NYSE”) in January 1969, making it only the sixth Louisville-based company to be publicly traded on the NYSE at that time, and one of the youngest and largest food corporations to be listed.⁹⁸

KFC’s stock price rapidly increased, generating enormous wealth for the KFC employees and franchisees who had built the business into an empire. One book characterized KFC’s success as “inspir[ing] the nation, [with r]umors spread through Nashville and Louisville of employees who became overnight millionaires when their stock split.”⁹⁹ Indeed, by the early 1970s, Brown had 19 millionaires reporting to him, with even the Colonel’s personal secretary reported as having more than \$3 million.¹⁰⁰ And a newspaper article in 1971 identified 150 “KFC millionaires” who

⁹⁵ Pearce, *supra* note 59, at 193.

⁹⁶ Matt Schudel, *John Y’s Secret Recipe*, WALL ST. J., Sept. 25, 1994.

⁹⁷ Bill Carey, *Sweet Taste of Success*, The Tennessee Magazine, Apr. 2007.

⁹⁸ *Business in Louisville Set Record in November*, COURIER J., Dec. 20, 1968, at B15; Advertisement, COURIER J., Jan. 16, 1969, at B10; *Kentucky Fried Chicken Goes on the Big Board*, COURIER J., Jan. 17, 1969, at B15.

⁹⁹ EDGE, *supra* note 24, at 121.

¹⁰⁰ *Fifty Years Later: The Tale of the KFC Business Deal*, LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER, Aug. 4, 2014.

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had benefited from the meteoric rise of KFC stock, including Dave Thomas, the later founder of Wendy's restaurants, who had been a KFC franchisee.¹⁰¹

In 1969, Louisville's *Courier-Journal* reported that in the few years since Brown took over as KFC's leader, "Kentucky Fried Chicken has become the kingpin of the fast food industry, with nearly 2,500 outlets, sales well over \$100 million a year and a number of new ventures aimed at sustaining this rapid rate of growth."¹⁰² In the early 1970s, KFC launched an extensive global expansion overseen from the White House building, including new entries into South Africa, Hong Kong, the United Arab Emirates, the Netherlands, and Jamaica.¹⁰³ KFC was the first quick service restaurant in many global markets, including Mexico, which Colonel Sanders personally oversaw, with one historian describing KFC's opening day as "the day fast food arrived."¹⁰⁴

Brown had much to be proud of in his leadership of KFC, but had political ambitions he wanted to pursue, and sold his interest in KFC to Heublein, a liquor and food conglomerate, for \$284M in 1971, generating a personal profit of nearly thirty million dollars at the time. All told, Brown served as KFC's CEO for seven years and transformed the business from a few hundred restaurants to a worldwide brand with over 4,500.¹⁰⁵ He later became the fifty-fifth governor of Kentucky and enjoyed several noteworthy business ventures, including owning three professional basketball teams: the Kentucky Colonels, Boston Celtics, and Buffalo Braves (currently known as the Los Angeles Clippers).¹⁰⁶

New Parent Company Heublein, the Colonel's White House Cooking Lesson

Like Brown, Heublein hired the Colonel to be a "goodwill ambassador" to the brand (and even considered launching a chain of motor hotels using the Colonel's likeness).¹⁰⁷ And at the time of the sale in 1974, Colonel Sanders was named the second most recognizable celebrity in the world with over 98% of surveyed American adults recognizing him; the KFC brand was abound with potential.¹⁰⁸ But tensions quickly grew between the Heublein executives and Colonel Sanders. The Colonel complained that they were making changes to his famous recipes, and made statements in public like describing the gravy as "wallpaper paste" that "ain't fit for my dogs" and referring to the Heublein executives as "a bunch of booze hounds," explaining "when they don't listen and are

¹⁰¹ Phil Norman, *Kentucky Fried Chicken Merger: New Spirit and Money*, COURIER J., July 18, 1971, at 1; EDGE, *supra* note 24, at 121.

¹⁰² Rod Wenz, *Investors Swarm to the Fast-Food Chuck Wagon*, COURIER J., July 20, 1969, at F6.

¹⁰³ Press Release, KFC Global, KFC Africa Commits to Eliminating Plastic Straws in all 900 Restaurants by July 1 (June 20, 2019)(on file with KFC Corporation); William Mellor, *Local Menu, Managers are KFC's Secret in China*, WASH. POST, Feb. 20, 2011; Rym Ghazal, *Dishing up the UAE's Past*, THE NATIONAL NEWS, Nov. 30, 2013; Suzanne De Heer, *KFC for Forty Years in the Netherlands*, MISSETHORECA, June 8, 2012; *History*, KFC Uwi Mona, kfcuwimona.weebly.com/history.html (accessed Apr. 28, 2024).

¹⁰⁴ Raul Bringas-Nostti, *Colonel Sanders Goes to Mexico: the First Venture of the Fast Food Industry into the Developing World, 1963-1975*, The Business History Conference (2017).

¹⁰⁵ John Y. Brown, Jr., *supra* note 59, at 97.

¹⁰⁶ Sam Roberts, *John Y. Brown Jr., KFC Mogul and Kentucky Governor, Dies at 88*, N. Y. TIMES, Nov. 25, 2022.

¹⁰⁷ *Kentucky Fried Chicken Plans Chain of Motels*, COURIER J., Sept. 6, 1969, at B11.

¹⁰⁸ *Our Heritage: The Colonel Sanders Story*, KFC, (accessed Jan. 2, 2024); Konheim, *supra* note 33, at 57.

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putting out a product you don't like it makes you mad, particularly when they are using your name."¹⁰⁹

Amid their dispute, Sanders and his wife opened a new restaurant called "Claudia Sanders, the Colonel's Lady Dinner House" and made plans to expand it through franchising. Heublein sued, asserting that they held the exclusive rights to the Colonel's name.¹¹⁰ The parties eventually settled in 1975, with Heublein paying Sanders and his wife \$1M, and the restaurant was rebranded to "Claudia Sanders Dinner House."¹¹¹ But most importantly to Colonel Sanders, the settlement included that the Heublein executives agreed to a cooking lesson. On Saturday, September 6, 1975, they gathered at the White House to watch the Colonel cook fried chicken and sides, with the Colonel saying, "I proved to them that it could be done. They were just as interested in quality as I was but didn't know how to go about it."¹¹²



**Photograph 11 Colonel Sanders cooking fried chicken, photographer & date unknown
(KFC archives)**

A New Era

¹⁰⁹ Whitworth, *supra* note 28; *Col. Sanders' Chicken War Ends*; N. Y. TIMES, Sept. 12, 1975, at 46.

¹¹⁰ *Col. Sanders' Chicken War Ends*, *supra* note 105, at 46.

¹¹¹ *Id.*

¹¹² *Id.*

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In 1982, R.J. Reynolds Industries took over Heublein following speculation that General Cinema had purchased Heublein stock with the intent of taking it over.¹¹³ Soft-drink giant PepsiCo, Inc. (owners of Pizza Hut and Taco Bell chains) subsequently bought KFC in 1986 for \$840 million.¹¹⁴ That same year, KFC opened a \$22 million, six-story Technical Center building to foster new product development.¹¹⁵

KFC's years with PepsiCo were marked by further expansion and change. In 1987, KFC became the first Western quick-service restaurant chain to enter China, beating competitors like McDonalds to the market by at least three years.¹¹⁶ In January 1997, PepsiCo announced plans to spin off their restaurant division comprised of KFC, Pizza Hut, and Taco Bell to create an independent publicly traded company called Tricon Global Restaurants, Inc.¹¹⁷ Tricon changed its name in 2002 to Yum! Brands, Inc. Now comprised of four restaurant concepts: KFC, Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, and the Habit Burger Grill, Yum! Brands is the largest quick-service restaurant company in the world.

KFC continues its global expansion, with a new KFC restaurant opening somewhere in the world every 3.5 hours.¹¹⁸

The Colonel's Secret Recipe and Influence

KFC's menu is still based on the Colonel's secret recipe of eleven herbs and spices. Hailed as "one of the biggest trade secrets in the world," KFC fiercely protects the Colonel's original recipe, including in the White House.¹¹⁹ The Colonel's recipe, handwritten on a single, yellowing sheet of notebook paper in pencil and signed by the Colonel, is safely guarded in the White House by a 770-pound safe encased in two feet of concrete and guarded by video cameras and motion detectors described as "the Fort Knox of fried chicken."¹²⁰ And while many have claimed to have discovered or reverse-engineered the recipe in KFC's long history, Yum! Brands and KFC maintain that the real recipe remains secret.¹²¹ Only two company executives have access to the recipe at any time, and their identity remains secret.¹²² KFC utilizes multiple suppliers to produce parts of the full blend of spices so that no one of the suppliers knows the entire contents.¹²³

¹¹³ See Ben Z. Hershberg, *Heublein, Reynolds Trading Halt Rekindles Merger Speculation*, COURIER J., July 29, 1982, at B14; *Reynolds, Heublein Agree to Merge in \$1.3 Billion Deal*, COURIER J., July 30, 1982, at B7; Sandra Salmans, *R. J. Reynolds Wins Heublein*, N. Y. TIMES, July 30, 1982, at D1.

¹¹⁴ Richard W. Stevenson, *Pepsico to Acquire Kentucky Fried: Deal Worth \$850 Million*; N. Y. TIMES, July 25, 1986. See also, Advertisement, COURIER J., Oct. 2, 1986, at A13.

¹¹⁵ Ric Manning, *KFC Researchers Gain Room to Spread Wings*, COURIER J., Sept. 8, 1986, at 16; Jim Thompson, *KFC to Break Ground in Louisville for \$22 Million Technical Center*, COURIER J., Sept. 21, 1984, at 21.

¹¹⁶ Emily Guzman, *This Day in History: China's First KFC Opens by Tiananmen Square*, THAT'S, <https://www.thatsmags.com/shanghai/post/21133/this-day-in-history-first-kfc-in-china>, Nov. 12, 2021.

¹¹⁷ See also OZERSKY, *supra* note 45, at 116-117 (2012).

¹¹⁸ *KFC Celebrates Global Growth with Major Milestone Restaurant Openings*, KFC, Dec. 6, 2023.

¹¹⁹ Stack, *supra* note 1; see also Sandra Chartrand, *Patents: Many Companies Will Forgo Patents in an Effort to Safeguard Their Trade Secrets*, N. Y. TIMES, Feb. 5, 2001, at C5.

¹²⁰ *Colonel's Secret Recipe Gets Bodyguards*, CNBC, Sept. 9, 2008; Stack, *supra* note 115, at A13. See also OZERSKY, *supra* note 45, at 93-94.

¹²¹ Stack, *supra* note 115, at A13.

¹²² *Colonel's Secret Recipe Gets Bodyguards*, *supra* note 116.

¹²³ *Id.*

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The Colonel's Legacy Beyond Chicken

Sanders (refusing to “rust”) believed in hard work and continued to lead and advance the KFC brand until his death in December 1980 at age 90.¹²⁴ Brown, who was then the Governor of Kentucky, ordered flags to be flown at half-staff throughout the state.¹²⁵ Colonel Sanders was honored at a service at the Kentucky State Capitol rotunda, where he lay in state two days before his funeral.¹²⁶ In his eulogy, Brown called the Colonel “a Kentuckian, entrepreneur, philanthropist, and friend,” and praised the Colonel’s incredible life, saying “[o]ut of the back of a kitchen in Corbin, Kentucky, an idea would be developed that would change the eating habits of the world.”¹²⁷ Brown remarked that Sanders was “not only our founder and our creator, he was our leader . . . a living example that the American Dream still exists.”¹²⁸ Former Governor A. B. “Happy” Chandler further remarked “[Colonel Sanders] took it all. Life knocked him down enough times that he should have just lain down and quit; but he didn’t.”¹²⁹

The next day, Colonel Sanders’s body was moved to the White House where KFC employees, franchisees, and members of the public could pay their respects.¹³⁰ An estimated 1,000 to 1,200 people filed past the Colonel’s coffin in the White House lobby – so many that KFC has to commission special bus service to accommodate the crowds.¹³¹ Colonel Sanders was buried the following day at Cave Hill Cemetery in Louisville, wearing his signature double breasted white suit and string tie.¹³² A yellow line, specially painted, now traces the route from the entrance road of Cave Hill Cemetery to the Colonel's grave.

The White House Museum

After the Colonel’s death, his office in the White House was turned into a museum. Located in the first room to the left of the White House entrance, the Colonel Sanders Museum is open to the public and helps tell the story of the man who revolutionized the quick service food industry.¹³³ The museum features a talking animatronic Colonel Sanders figure, and includes such heirlooms and memorabilia as Colonel Sanders’s white suit, the desk he used in the White House, one of his

¹²⁴ Smith, *supra* note 44.

¹²⁵ Brecher, *supra* note 88, at 1.

¹²⁶ Bill Owinski, *Capitol Service Honors the Colonel's Memory*, COURIER J., Dec. 19, 1980, at 17.

¹²⁷ *Id.*

¹²⁸ CHANDLER, *supra* note 5, at 76.

¹²⁹ Owinski, *supra* note 122, at 17, 22.

¹³⁰ Elinor J. Brecher, *Colonel's Burial may be Cemetery's Largest Service Ever*, COURIER J., Dec. 20, 1980, at 9.

¹³¹ *Id.*

¹³² Elinor Brecher, *1,000 Bid Col. Sanders a Final Farewell*, COURIER J., Dec. 21, 1980, at 10; *Col. Sanders Buried in Louisville in the White Suit he Wore in Ads*, N. Y. TIMES, Dec. 21, 1980, at 44.

¹³³ See Jennifer Files, *Buckets of Nostalgia at Colonel Sanders' Museum in Kentucky*, DALLAS MORNING NEWS, Apr. 18, 1999.

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original pressure cookers¹³⁴, historic KFC marketing materials, and historic photographs that document the Colonel's extensive travels and experiences.¹³⁵

Photos of the Colonel's first national television appearance on "What's My Line?" are on display and some of his early commercials are played on loop. The Colonel smiles at visitors from a portrait of him painted by Norman Rockwell that hangs near his old desk in the corner of the museum.



Photograph 12 Colonel Harland Sanders painting by Norman Rockwell inside the Colonel Sanders Museum in the KFC White House, captured by Janine Webb, 2024

In 1980, then-Governor Brown presented the Colonel with the Governor's Distinguished Service Medallion which is also displayed in the White House Museum.¹³⁶ At the ceremony for the award, Brown announced that he had also commissioned a bust of the Colonel's likeness to be placed in the Kentucky State Capitol with such other famous Kentuckians as Abraham Lincoln and Henry Clay.¹³⁷

The Colonel left a legacy that spans decades and continents. "I guess you'd say that [Colonel Sanders] is one of my heroes . . . there's a great story there, that old fellow. He proves it can be done. He's one of life's lessons in himself."¹³⁸ The Colonel no longer roams the halls of the White

¹³⁴ Brecher, *supra* note 41, at A16 ("In the lobby of the Kentucky Fried Chicken headquarters in Louisville sits a very ordinary, yet very special pot. The chicken first prepared in this pot back in 1939 has become famous all over the world. The chicken is Kentucky Fried Chicken and the man responsible is Colonel Harland Sanders, its founder. . . [w]e wish to salute the Colonel, a man whose contribution to the economy and fame of the Commonwealth of Kentucky is immeasurable. This is a great and much deserved honor for a grand gentleman.")

¹³⁵ Alan Rappeport, *Finger Lickin' All Over the World*, FIN. TIMES, June 4, 2012 at 16.

¹³⁶ Leslie Ellis, *A Capital Honor for the Colonel*, COURIER J., Oct. 23, 1980, at 17.

¹³⁷ *Id.*

¹³⁸ Pearce, *supra* note 59, at 201.

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House, but KFC and the White House offices were shaped by his influence and continue to uphold his lasting legacy.

Evaluation of the Significance of the KFC White House within the context of Quick Service Restaurant Franchise Companies in the United States, 1921-Present

Quick service restaurant franchise companies have revolutionized the way Americans eat. Colonel Sanders was at the forefront of that revolution with his secret recipe and innovative cooking method that opened up an entire category of QSRs with fried chicken. While other quick service restaurant companies emerged before and after the Colonel founded his business, it is difficult to think of a founder whose face is as synonymous with their brand as the Colonel is with KFC.

John Y. Brown, who recognized the power of the Colonel's image (as well as his recipe), led a unification campaign for KFC restaurants into the recognizable locations around the world today, and from his White House office, he furthered his grand ideas for expanding the KFC business. KFC grew into a global enterprise and remains one of the largest quick service restaurant franchise companies in the world. In short, the White House is the Commonwealth headquarters where Sanders, Brown, and the KFC team built KFC from a small enterprise with unfulfilled potential to a global empire.

Evaluation of the Integrity of the Significance of the KFC White House in Light of its Physical Condition Today

A description of the KFC White House's integrity, as the National Register defines the word, requires more than a summary of the building's physical change. The National Register defines "integrity" as "the ability of a property to convey its significance." Further, the National Register declares that historic integrity is the composite of seven qualities: "location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association."

First, the **integrity of location** for the KFC White House remains the same as it did at its construction because it has not moved from its original location, and the nature of the area immediately surrounding the White House, with its large greenspaces and pleasant landscaping, remains much the same as it did in 1970. Except for an addition to the building, the White House remains largely unchanged.

The KFC White House also maintains its **integrity of setting**. Its location, in a less "urbanized" part of Louisville, maintains much of the rural and regal feeling it did 50 years ago. The White House still sits across from the US Postal building constructed over a hundred years ago and the residential areas near the White House have retained their nature and character.

As nearly all of its original design and materials remain today, the KFC White House also retains **integrity of materials and design**. Like any building that has survived at least 50 years, the White House has undergone some changes, but it looks largely the same as it did when it was erected in 1970. Aside from routine maintenance upkeep, and modernization of the interior spaces, there have been few significant revisions to the building. The few noteworthy changes are the basement expansion of the dining room and kitchen area, and the conversion of Colonel Sanders's office to

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a museum following the Colonel's death. While windows have been replaced, the exterior of the building is nearly identical to its original design and condition.

The building also retains ample **integrity of workmanship**. The building maintains its Southern mansion style, impressive portico, and six grand columns as it did 50 years ago. The exterior building and grounds, and interior office areas have been well maintained. And upkeep has been conducted in a professional, workmanlike manner that is consistent with the building's original construction. Further, the extension to the dining room and kitchen (the only significant structural change to the White House) utilized the same exterior painted white brick and Tuscan columns as the building's facade and were constructed consistently with the rest of the building.

Because little about the location, setting, materials, and design of the White House have changed over the years, it has maintained its **integrity of feeling**. The White House (along with the Technical Center) is still the headquarters and home of the KFC business. The Colonel Sanders Museum pays homage to the man behind the vision and the historic pictures of the building and the Colonel line the walls. The façade and roundabout in front of the building still convey the same grandness that it did 50 years ago. The modest change and expansion to the White House cafeteria preserved the character of the building and the original feeling of the White House has not been compromised.

Finally, the KFC White House maintains **integrity of association** because it is still used for the purpose for which it was constructed: to serve as KFC's home and headquarters. The building is forever tied to Colonel Sanders – a local, national, and international fast-food icon. It is impossible to visit the White House without associating the building with Colonel Sanders and KFC – especially with the Colonel Sanders Museum that helps memorialize KFC's success story. Indeed the building still does today what it did back then: protects the Colonel's recipe and furthers his vision to serve the highest quality of delicious fried chicken.

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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): JF 3726

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 11.63 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 38.198589° | Longitude: -85.694945° |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

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UTM References

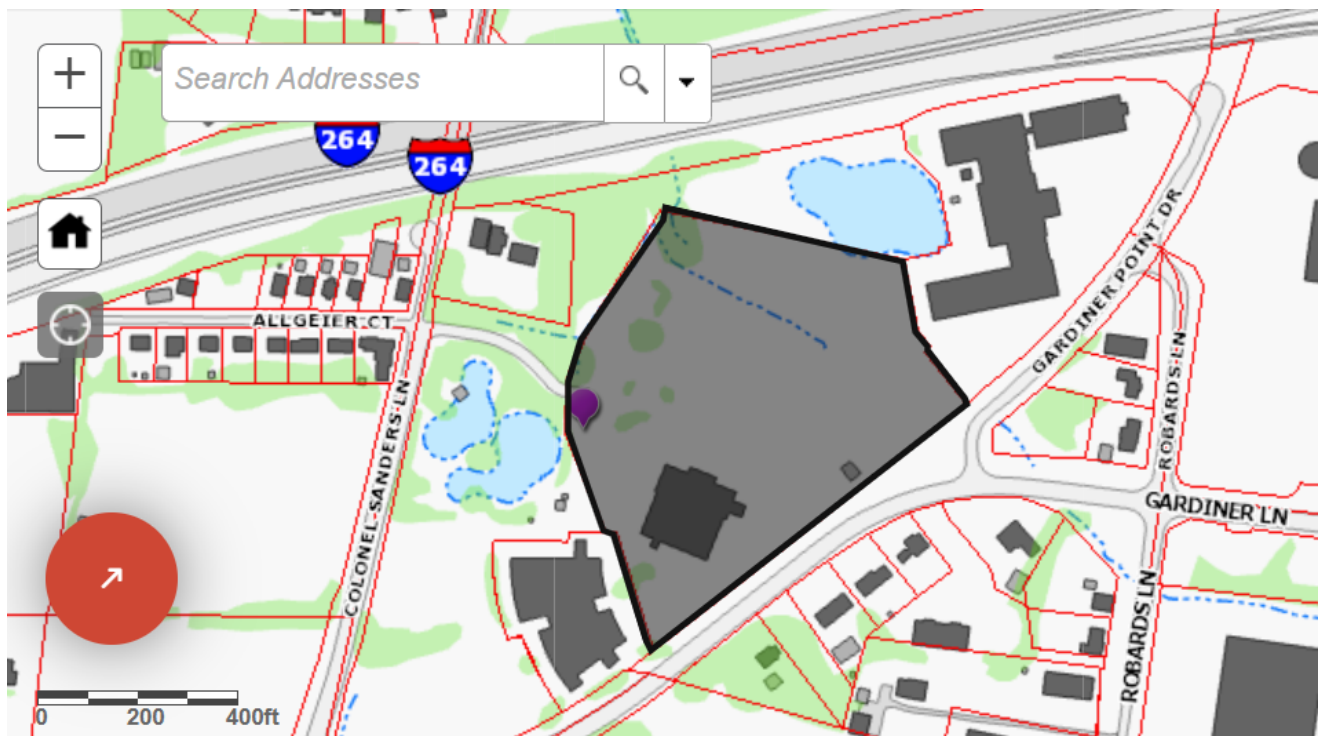
Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description

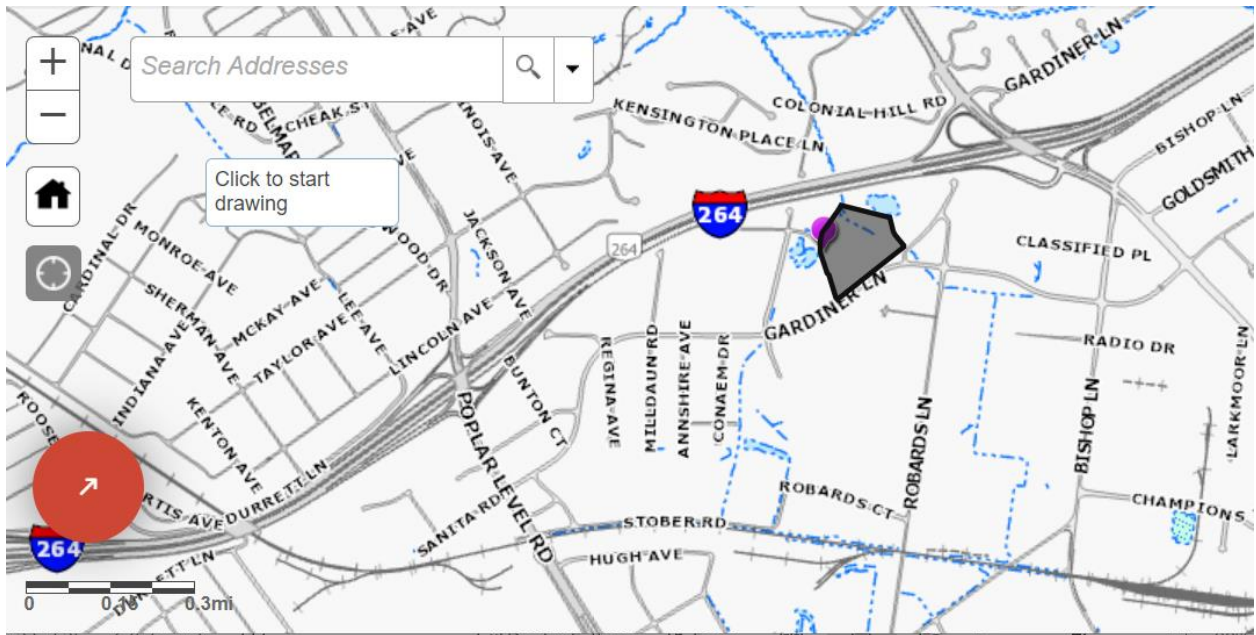
The area proposed for listing on the National Register is the entire parcel defined by the Jefferson County, Kentucky, Property Valuation Administrator as parcel ID 060802350000, a 9.817-acre tract in Jefferson County, Kentucky. That parcel is depicted below in gray shading, using the Jefferson County's LOJIC GIS system mapping.



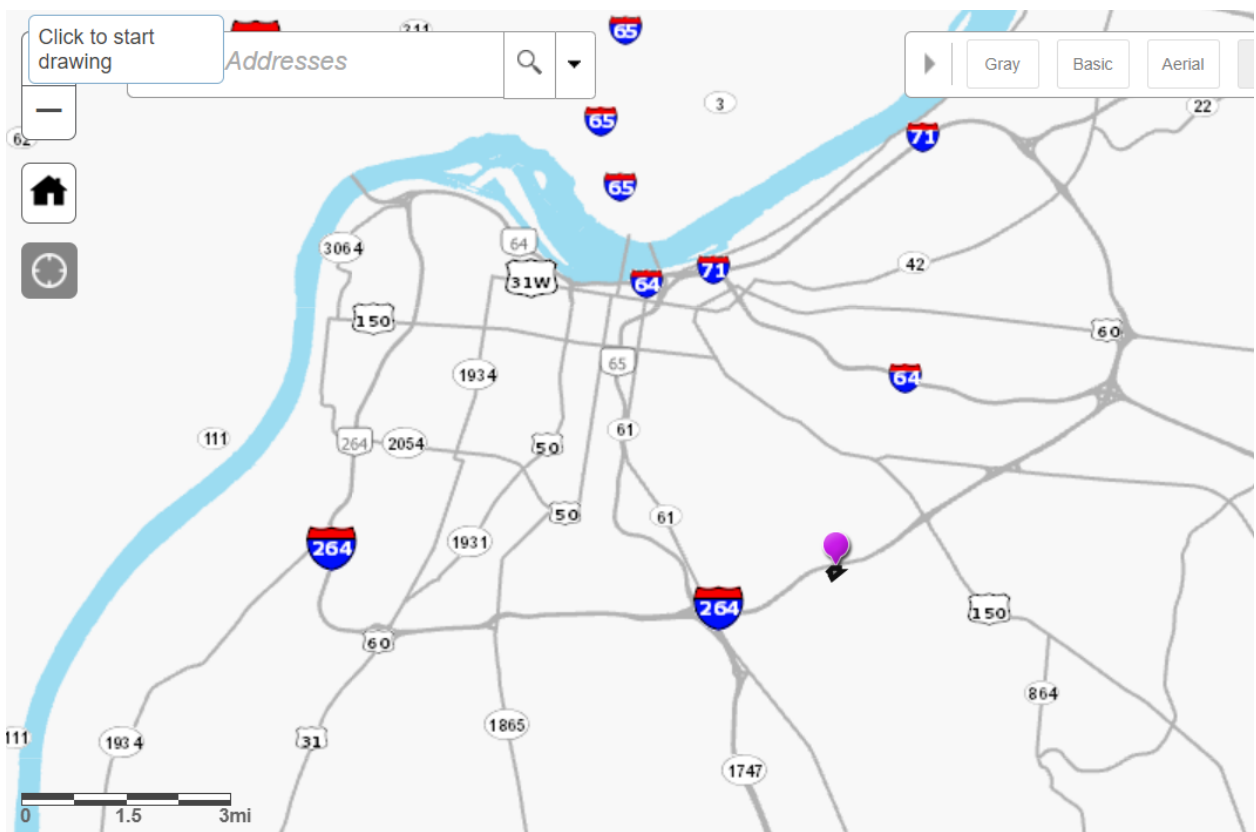
KFC White House in its immediate setting (property marked with purple teardrop and gray shading). The gray shaded area is 9.816 acres. Full 11.63 acres includes the building to the west of the White House, in the unshaded parcel.

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KFC White House near Waterson Expressway (Interstate 264) in Louisville's south



KFC White House in Louisville Metro area (property marked with purple teardrop)

KFC White House Building
Name of Property

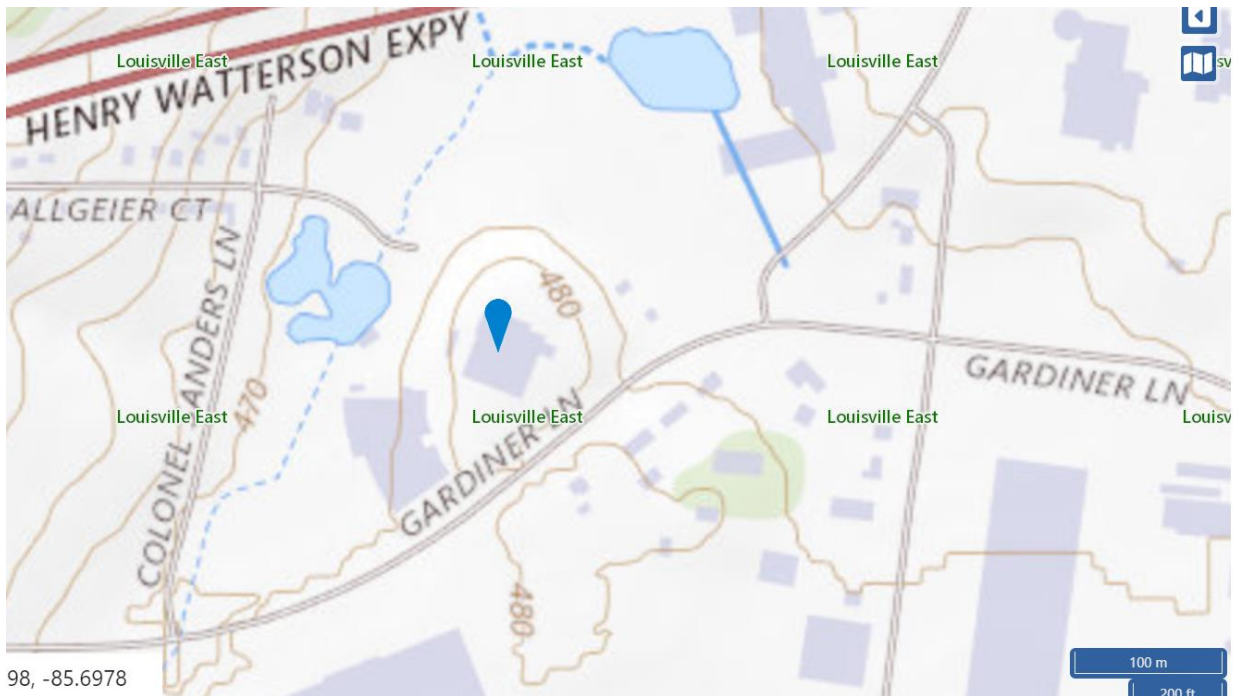
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Boundary Justification

This area is the historic area that has been under corporate ownership since the construction of the White House building in 1970, and contains the integrity of setting by which to recognize the corporate identity.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Lauren Madden, Director, Legal
organization: Yum Brands, Inc.
street & number: 1441 Gardiner Lane
city or town: Louisville state: Kentucky zip code: 40213
e-mail: Lauren.Madden@yum.com
telephone: 502-874-1042
date: May 1, 2024



Louisville East quad detail. Site of White House marked with blue teardrop.

Photographs

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Photo Log

Name of Property: KFC White House Building
City or Vicinity: Louisville
County: Jefferson
State: Kentucky
Photographer: All photographs by Janine Webb unless otherwise noted
Date Photographed: Janine Webb: April, 2024; others: date shown or date unknown

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photograph 1 of 12, KFC White House, North Façade,
Photograph 2 of 12, KFC White House, North Façade, unknown (KFC archives), 1970
Photograph 3 of 12, Gatehouse, looking north
Photograph 4 of 12, Technical Center, looking north
Photograph 5 of 12, KFC White House Building, West Façade
Photograph 6 of 12 Jack C. Massey, John Y. Brown, Colonel Sanders, and Don Hines, photographer unknown (KFC archives) 1964.
Photograph 7 of 12, Colonel Sanders in front of a Kentucky Fried Chicken Restaurant, photographer unknown (KFC archives), date unknown
Photograph 8 of 12, the lobby of the KFC White House building, photographer unknown (KFC archives), approximately 1975.
Photograph 9 of 12, Colonel Sanders in his office at the KFC White House, photographer unknown (KFC archives), approximately 1975
Photograph 10 of 12, Colonel Sanders's office in the KFC White House, photographer unknown (KFC archives), approximately 1975
Photograph 11 of 12, Colonel Sanders cooking fried chicken, photographer & date unknown (KFC archives)
Photograph 12 of 12, Colonel Harland Sanders painting by Norman Rockwell inside the Colonel Sanders Museum in the KFC White House, captured by Janine Webb, April 2024