

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

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: Rose Hill/Mentelle HouseOther names/site number: Ashland Park Stock Farm/B. J. Treacy ResidenceName of related multiple property listing: N/A**2. Location**Street & number: 116 Lincoln AvenueCity or town: Lexington State: Kentucky County: FayetteNot 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

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Craig Potts/SHPO** Date _____
Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office _____
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official: Date

Title : State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

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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

1

1

Noncontributing

1

1

buildings
sites
structures
objects
Total

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

Domestic / house

Education / boarding school

Current Functions

Domestic / house

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Gothic Revival

Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property: _____

Foundation (main section): stone piers, concrete block infill, parging

Foundation (rear ell extension): stone

Walls: clapboard on wood frame

Roof: asphalt shingle

Windows: wood sashes

Chimneys: brick

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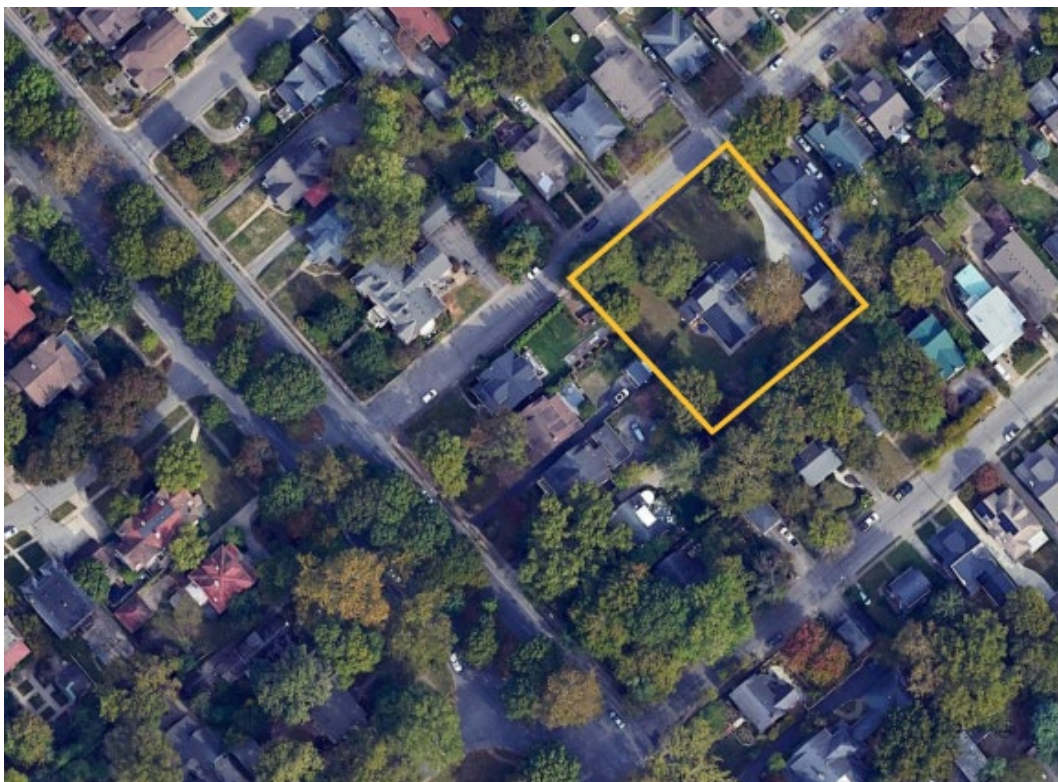
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Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

Built in 1804 and partially reconstructed in the 1840s after a fire, the Mentelle House (FAE-1144) consists of a 1.5-story, cross-gable, central block connected to one-story wings and a one-story rear ell (with attic space above). It is entirely wood-framed with clapboard sheathing. The main mass rests on a foundation that is composed of stone piers with concrete infill, while a fieldstone foundation and dirt-floored cellar lie under the back extension that encompasses the present-day kitchen. A side-gable, three-bay carriage house lies to the immediate east of the residence, but its construction date likely falls outside of the period of significance. Both of these contributing and non-contributing buildings are located on a lot of .57-acres, which is the area proposed for listing. The surrounding land — which formerly functioned as a horse farm — was subdivided into the Kenwick neighborhood in 1909.



Mentelle House, Lexington KY

Latitude: 38.03152, Longitude: -84.47859

Historical Development of Site

In a somewhat unusual arrangement, the noteworthy inhabitants of 116 Lincoln Avenue — the Mentelle family and B. J. Treacy — did not fully own the house nor the land, though they respectively constructed the house and made alterations. Instead, members of the prominent Todd-Wickliffe-Preston family retained legal possession of the property from the late eighteenth century until 1909.

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Photograph of Mentelle House façade, April 2024

While the Mentelle House has experienced few modifications since 1880, its earlier configuration remains a topic of some conjecture. In his private letters, Waldemar Mentelle stated in November 1804 that he “was obliged to build a little house” on a five-acre lot that Mary Owen Todd (later Wickliffe) had granted him and his wife, Charlotte, as a life estate.¹ The circumstances behind this arrangement are explained in this nomination’s Statement of Significance. Later documents attest to the fact that the Mentelles resided at this location for the duration of their lives. The 1838 city directory places Waldemar on Richmond Road one and a half miles from the city center, which conforms to the building’s present coordinates.² At that time, the house — with the appellation Rose Hill — would likely have consisted of a central hall with parlors on each side and a larger common area in the rear. Two bedrooms above the parlors (each with their own fireplaces) accommodated the Mentelles and their handful of boarders. Oriented facing west, the house had prime, unobstructed views of the downtown at the time of its construction.

The next recorded reference to the property dates to 1848. That year, Robert Todd and his fellow heirs brought a suit against Robert Wickliffe, who was Mary’s widower and the owner of the parcel on which the Mentelle House sat. According to Todd, “The land of Mrs. Wickliffe was, as has been described, in great disrepair, not a house but one that a human being could live

¹ The Mentelles received an additional acre in 1839. See Fayette County land records, deed book 16, 484-485.

² Julius P. Bolivar MacCabe, *Directory of the City of Lexington and County of Fayette, for 1838 and '39* (Lexington, KY: J. C. Noble, 1838), 129.

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comfortably in and that was burnt down before the death of Mrs. Wickliffe.”³ This statement is somewhat convoluted, but a reasonable interpretation would suggest that at least part of the Mentelle House suffered a fire before Mary’s death in 1844. Placing this reconstruction between 1838 and 1844 would also account for the building’s Gothic Revival aesthetic. Vertical batten strips — a hallmark of that style — have been discovered under the existing poplar clapboard siding on the central block of the house. The building’s antiquity is further evidenced by the log floor joists that run the entire length of that section and, in some cases, are still bark-covered. After Waldemar passed away in 1846, Charlotte continued to operate her school out of the house and resided there until her own death in 1860. In this period, a Gothic Revival porch with a decorative iron parapet would have extended across the façade. That feature deteriorated and was removed at some point after 1883, though the current owners discovered fragments of it when the porch flooring was replaced.

Historical newspapers provide clear evidence that the nominated property, now at 116 Lincoln Avenue, is indeed the historic Mentelle House. For instance, an 1872 article located horse breeder Richard Lowell’s Mentelle Stables “upon the hill, just back of the old Mentelle Mansion, with the Richmond pike on one side and the Winchester on the other.”⁴ A lease to part of Ellerslie Farm in 1875 further referred to the “‘Mentelle’ place,” which the Simmons brothers were then renting from the Prestons.⁵ Around 1880, famed breeder B. J. Treacy began his long-term tenancy in the Mentelle House, which became his family’s fulltime residence at Ashland Park Stock Farm.⁶ In the 1940s, local historian William Townsend interviewed Treacy’s son, William, who recounted that his father had constructed both extant wings around 1885.⁷ However, Treacy’s correspondence with William Preston indicates that he was already overseeing improvements to the property in late 1880.⁸ The wings were certainly in place by 1883, as they appear in Thomas J. Scott’s painting of the horse McLeod (left quadrant) and a woodcut print of the Ashland Park Stock Farm published in G. W. Ranck’s *Guide to Lexington*. By that time, an extension to the rear ell had also been added to the house.

³ William H. Townsend, *The Boarding School of Mary Todd Lincoln* (Lexington, KY, 1941). A 1901 article added confusion by paraphrasing Todd’s statement and claiming that “The Mentelles lived for many years on the Wickliffe place in a house since burned, just opposite the gate of Ashland.” See “The Mentelle Place,” *Morning Herald*, September 1, 1901.

⁴ “A Peep at the Mentelle Stables,” *Turf, Field, and Farm*, May 7, 1872.

⁵ Fayette County land records, January 30, 1875, deed book 52, 79-81.

⁶ Fayette County land records, August 11, 1880, deed book 61, 387-390.

⁷ William H. Townsend, “Madame Mentelle’s Boarding School ‘Still Lost,’” *Sunday Herald-Leader*, May 25, 1941.

⁸ Randolph Hollingsworth, “She Used Her Power Lightly: A Political History of Margaret Wickliffe Preston of Kentucky,” PhD diss., (University of Kentucky, 1999), 336.

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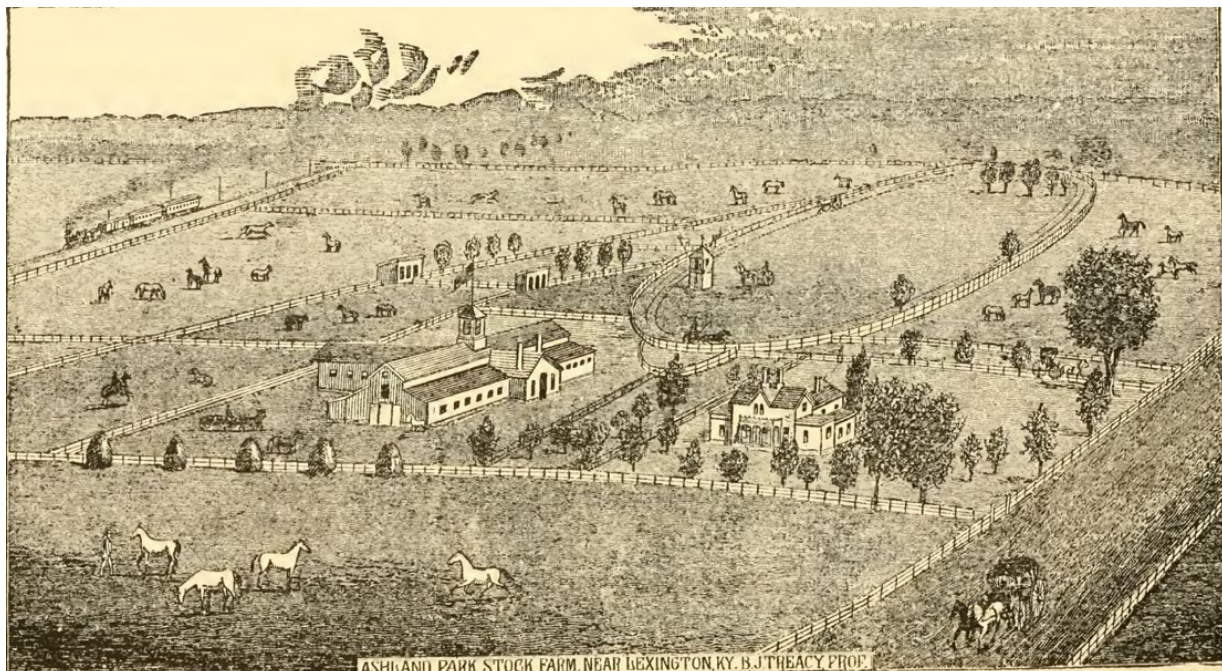
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McLeod

Thomas J. Scott, 1883

Painting of McLeod on Ashland Park Stock Farm, 1883



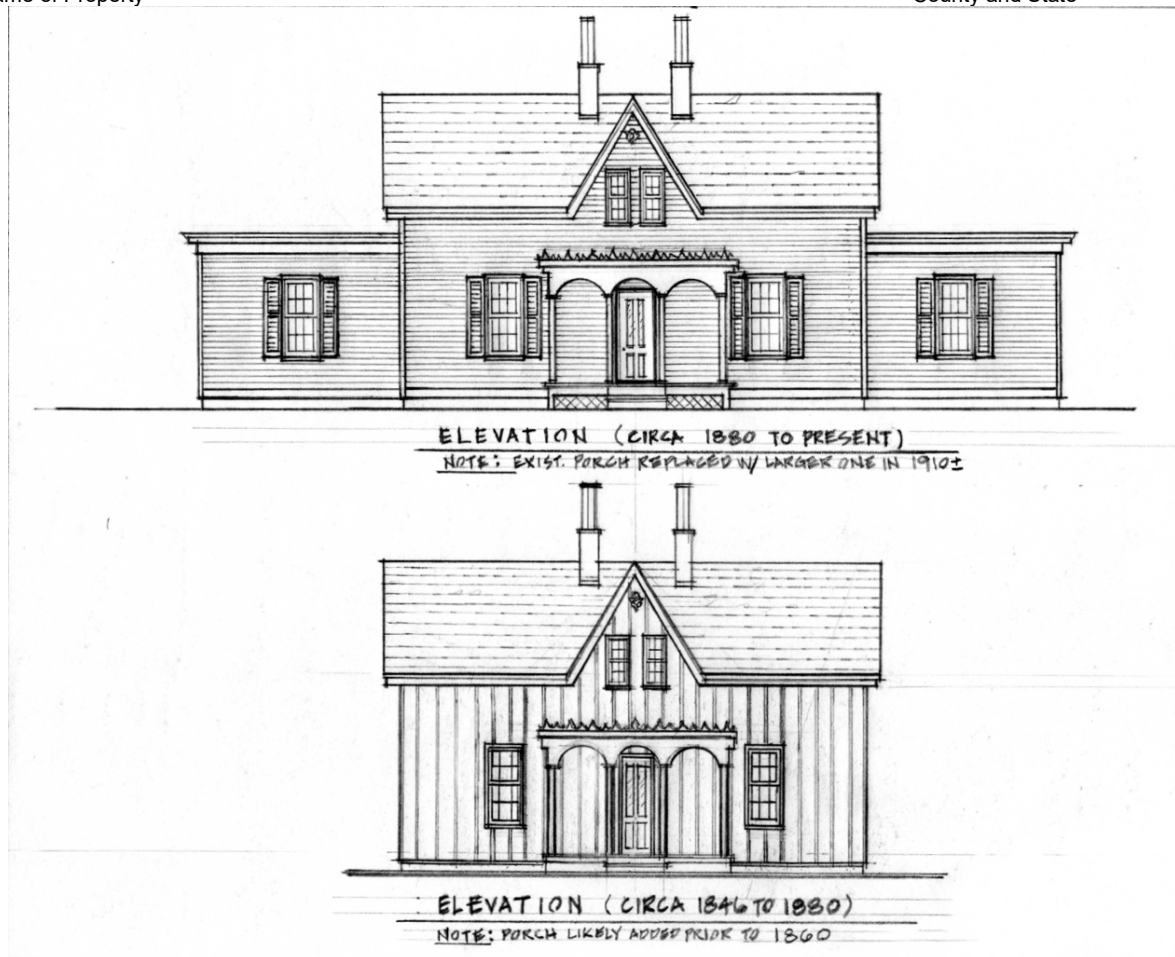
Woodcut print of Ashland Park Stock Farm in G. W. Ranck's *Guide to Lexington* (1883)

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Historical elevations of 116 Lincoln Avenue drawn by Pat Donahoe

Exterior and Interior Descriptions

The Mentelle House is a vernacular, Gothic Revival house and is one of the only standing properties of this style in southern Lexington. The façade (west elevation) of the house features six-over-six paned windows in each wing and on each side of the central entry. Windows with the same dimensions are present on the ends of the wings, which are surmounted by wooden parapets with heavy overhanging cornices. Doors on the rear of each wing lead to small porches. Six-over-six windows are also located in the north and south gables, though these are ornamented with wooden crowns. The narrower four-over-four paned windows in the gable of the façade and the triangle-in-trefoil decorative vents that punctuate each of the four gables are characteristic of the local Gothic Revival residential style. The Mentelle House retains its five historic chimneys, the flues for which are located on each side of the main entry, in each wing, and at the original rear wall in front of the ell extension. A modern glass-pane sunporch runs along the south wall of the ell, while an enclosed porch/mudroom is inset on the north side. The current front porch is composed of four squared columns and replaced an earlier version with cast iron detailing that was original to the property.

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Photograph of 116 Lincoln Avenue, south elevation, September 2024



Photograph of 116 Lincoln Avenue, north elevation, February 2025.

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Original interior features are present throughout the house and reflect its historically modest character. These include wooden flooring (excepting the kitchen), doors and their architraves, chair rails, and fireplace surrounds in the two parlors, dining room, and upper bedrooms. Treacy installed cast-iron fireplace surrounds in the two wings, but these were later replaced with wooden fixtures.



Photograph of original north parlor/study, February 2025



Photograph of original room in rear, February 2025

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Photograph of south bedroom, second floor, February 2025

Changes to Building After Period of Significance (post 1903)

The Prestons' massive Ellerslie Farm was broken up in 1903, and the Wickliffe Land Company proceeded to subdivide the western portion into the Kenwick neighborhood beginning in 1909. That year, it sold the two parcels that included the Mentelle House to Mary and Lawrence Welch (also spelt Welsh); in 1915, they conveyed the property to George and Bettie Bedford, who only remained there for two years.⁹ Amanda Cassell of Brannon, Jessamine County, sold her 120-acre farm in 1917 and moved to the Mentelle House with her children.¹⁰ After she passed away at 116 Lincoln Avenue in 1927, daughters Eugenia and Anna inherited the property. However, a family dispute between Eugenia and Amanda's granddaughter forced the former to sell — and repurchase — her home at a master commissioner's sale in 1929.¹¹ A report of this transaction described the building as a nine-room house, which indicates that it had likely been converted into a duplex with a rear bedroom by this time. James Logan Poole, an automotive mechanic, archaeology buff, and exhibited photographer, then acquired the Mentelle House in 1945 and resided there with his wife, Lillian, until his death in 1973.¹² She sold it to the Donahoe family, who have remained there since.

⁹ Fayette County land records, deed book 157, 241; deed book 177, 229.

¹⁰ Fayette County land records, deed book 184, 608; "Boom Begins on Realty Market," *Lexington Herald*, February 25, 1917; *Lexington City Guide* (Columbus, OH: R. L. Polk & Co., 1919), 172. The former address for the Mentelle House was 103 Lincoln Avenue. Amanda had been widowed in 1900 when her husband, Eugene, was murdered by chicken thieves. See "Killed by Thieves," *Lexington Herald*, January 6, 1900.

¹¹ "Realty Transfers," *Lexington Herald*, April 10, 1929.

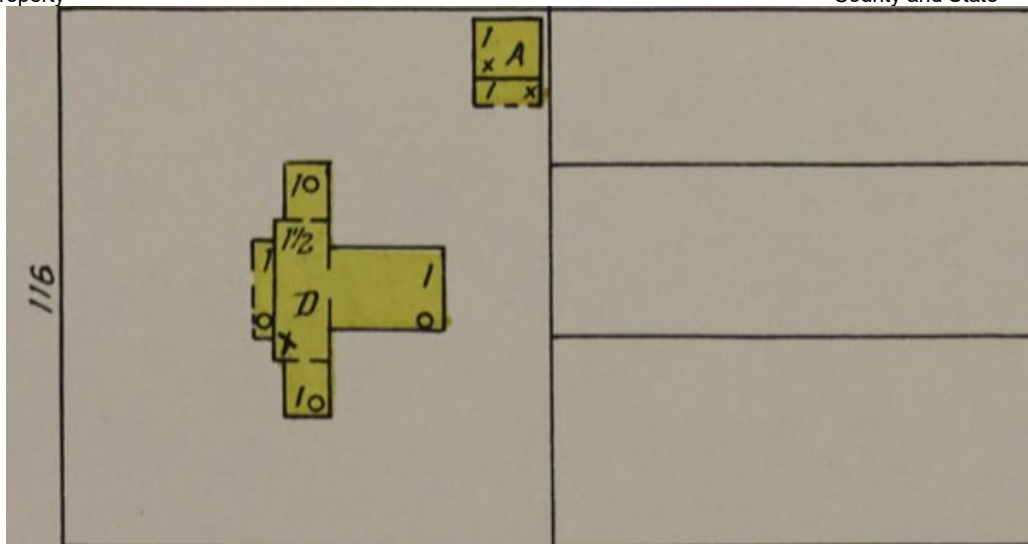
¹² Fayette County land records, deed book 379, 245; "Archaeology Plan Display of Artifacts," *Sunday Herald-Leader*, February 6, 1944; "Featured in Club's Exhibit," *Sunday Herald-Leader*, May 16, 1948; "Obituaries," *Sunday Herald-Leader*, November 18, 1973.

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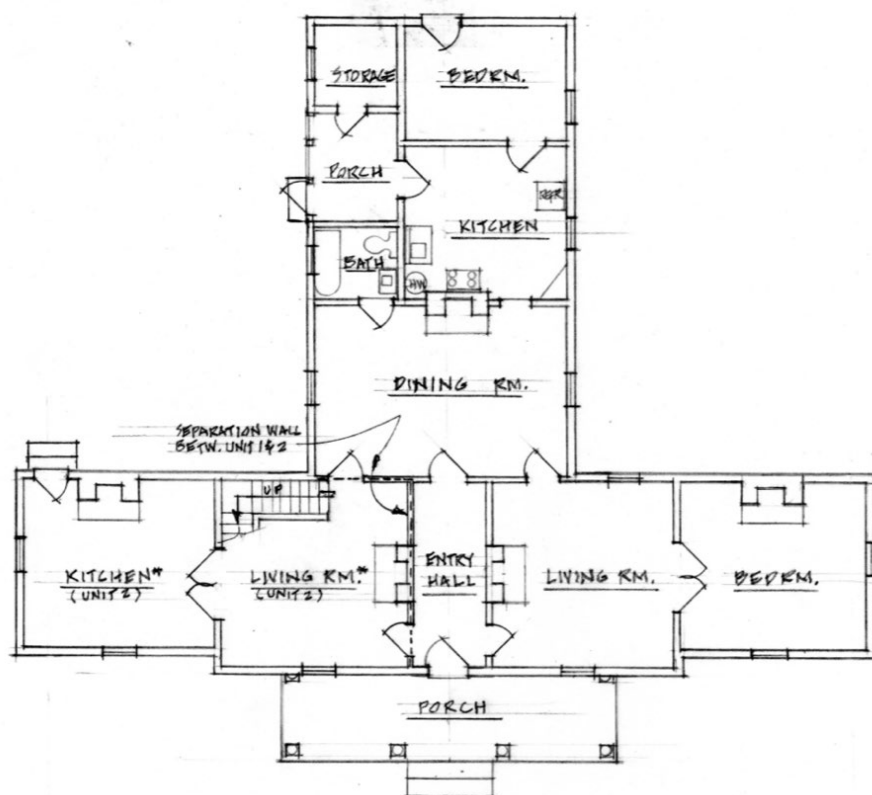
1934 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map



Photograph of 116 Lincoln Avenue, 1941

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1ST. FL. PLAN IN 1973 WHEN PURCHASED

NOTE: HOUSE WAS DUPLEXED @ THAT TIME

Over the past decades, Christine and Pat Donahoe have returned the residence to a single-family configuration, sensitively restoring some of its lost features and facilitating a more practical use of the space. In 1976, they dismantled the non-original staircase that had been erected in the north parlor; they then salvaged a period-appropriate one from the soon-to-be-demolished Gothic Revival house that once stood at 387 Spring Street and installed it in the central passage.¹³ As the Treacy-era rear ell been subdivided into smaller rooms (after the Period of Significance) to form the second apartment unit, the Donahoes removed these partitions and created an enlarged kitchen area. That same year, they repaired the front porch, installing new floorboards and replacing the compromised squared wooden columns in kind. The next notable change occurred in 1988, when the Donahoes constructed a one-story sunroom along the south wall of the rear ell. A similarly proportioned extension is visible in the 1883 woodcut, but it seems to have disappeared by 1934. This addition harmonizes with the house's scale and massing, and it could be disassembled without compromising the core building. Two modern bathrooms have also been placed in the north wing and at the second-floor stair landing.

¹³ For a history of the mass demolition campaign that led to the loss of this resource, see the Blue Grass Trust for Historic Preservation's May 17, 2024, social media post.

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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

Criterion A: Education

Criterion A: Commerce. Subcategory: Horse Breeding and Sales

Period of Significance

1844-1903

Significant Dates

1804, 1871, 1880

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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Summary Paragraph

A well-preserved residence with a storied past, the Mentelle House (FAE-1144) at 116 Lincoln Avenue in Lexington, Kentucky, fulfills Criterion A for significant associations with two areas of activity. First, the property from 1820-1860 functioned as Charlotte Mentelle's boarding school, which offered an unusually cosmopolitan education to young women such as Mary Todd (later Lincoln) at a time when public instruction in Kentucky was in its infancy. That significance is explained in the historic context "Education in Early Kentucky, 1780-1870." After the Mentelles' death, the house began its second term of significance in conjunction with the world-famous Ashland Park Stock Farm. B. J. Treacy, an illustrious trotting horse breeder and local politician, rented the house from 1880 to 1897. That aspect of the property's significance is realized within the historic context "The Standardbred Horse Industry in Kentucky's Inner Bluegrass Region, 1850-1905." During the nineteenth century, the property was owned by members of the Todd-Wickliffe-Preston families, who played a key role in developing early Kentucky and who rose to prominent roles in local and national politics. The Mentelle House's association with these socially and politically elite families does not provide the basis for its National Register eligibility. Rather, the history of this clan as presented in this nomination clarifies National Register associations and speaks to the ever-present power differentials on the property that were based on gender, race, and wealth — both tangible and intangible. The actions of the Todds, Wickliffes, and Prestons profoundly impacted the lives of the Mentelles and Treacy, whose significant activities are the focus of this nomination. As a fire damaged part of the house prior to 1844, a Period of Significance from 1844 to 1903 has been selected to evaluate the integrity between the property's significance and its physical condition.

Introduction: The Todd-Wickliffe-Preston Family as Property Owners

The history of the Mentelle House's occupants is inextricably tied with that of their grantors/landlords: the Todd-Wickliffe-Preston family who owned great swathes of early Lexington. This introductory section will unpack these relationships and establish historical background for the Criterion A assertions of significance.

John Todd, the elder brother of Robert and Levi Todd, was working as a lawyer in Fincastle, Virginia, when he heard rumors of Kentucky's fertile lands. He ventured west in 1775 and assisted with the establishment of the short-lived Transylvania Colony, which encompassed half of contemporary Kentucky.¹⁴ The following year, John lay claim to 1,400 acres near Lexington that extended from what is now Eastern Avenue to the western border of Levi's Ellerslie estate and included the so-called "pond tract."¹⁵ In 1777, John was appointed county-lieutenant of Illinois and dispatched to the seat of government at Kaskaskia.¹⁶ Although he had

¹⁴ Edward G. Mason, *John Todd, John Todd's Record Book, and John-Todd Papers* (Chicago: Fergus Printing, 1890), 155.

¹⁵ Warrant of preemption, November 1799, Kentucky State Archives.

¹⁶ James T. Morehead, *An Address in Commemoration of the First Settlement of Kentucky* (Frankfort: A. G. Hodges, 1840), 174-175.

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set up accommodations for his wife in Lexington's fort by 1780 and was elected as a delegate to the Virginia legislature that year, his military responsibilities still consumed much of his time. Shortly after being appointed a trustee of Lexington in 1782, John perished in the Battle of Blue Licks, leaving his massive holdings to his wife and twelve-month-old daughter, Mary Owen Todd.¹⁷

According to confidante Charlotte Mentelle, Mary Owen Todd enjoyed a bucolic childhood on the forested pond tract that lay two miles south of Lexington. But clouds began to gather once Mary married James Russell, an artistic and congenial suitor who claimed to be related to the Duke of Bedford.¹⁸ Her husband's alcoholism contributed to his early death from epilepsy in 1802. For some years, Mary lingered at the pond tract, but eventually she grew weary of the commute to Lexington and developed a piece of property that had formerly served as a racecourse into her Glendower residence; this house was later referred to as Wickliffe or Preston Place and was bordered by West Second, West Third, and Jefferson Streets. Mentelle's 1850 biographical account of Mary confirms the location of this urban dwelling, as she recalled that the two could "hear howlings of the insane at certain periods of the moon" issuing from the nearby Lunatic Asylum of Kentucky (est. 1824).¹⁹ On account of their enduring friendship, Mary in 1804 granted Mentelle a life estate in the piece of property that included present-day 116 Lincoln Avenue.

Unfortunately, Mary lacked the business expertise to properly manage her sprawling acreage and began to suffer losses. Her 1826 remarriage to Robert Wickliffe, "one of the shrewdest and ablest land lawyers in Kentucky" — and one of the state's largest enslavers — put her on firmer financial footing.²⁰ During this decade, Wickliffe was a dominant figure in state politics, serving as a representative and senator in the legislature.²¹ He was a keen investor in and supporter of key infrastructural and civic ventures, including the Lexington & Ohio Railroad, the Lexington & Big Sandy Railroad, the Lexington Cemetery, the Lunatic Asylum, and Transylvania University.²² Wickliffe's own hefty real estate portfolio included the Ellerslie tract on which Mary's uncle, Levi Todd, had once resided.²³ According to Mentelle, the Wickliffes' marriage was an affectionate one; Mary readily embraced the children Robert had produced with late wife Margaretta Howard and took a particular shine to his daughter, Margaret (later Preston).²⁴ However, Mary had controversially transferred full control of her fixed property — amounting to 1,600 acres — to Wickliffe via a third party in 1827.²⁵

¹⁷ Survey for Mary Owen Todd, 1783, Kentucky State Archives, VA0890, Bundle 21, 3.

¹⁸ Charlotte Mentelle, *A Short History of the Late Mary O. T. Wickliffe* (Lexington, KY: Kentucky Statesman Press, 1850), 5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁰ George W. Ranck, *History of Lexington, Kentucky. Its Early Annals and Recent Progress* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1872), 382.

²¹ *History of Fayette County, Kentucky*, ed. William Henry Perrin (Chicago: O. L. Baskin & Co., 1882), 65.

²² *Ibid.*, 142, 285, 342.

²³ Brother Robert Todd was forced to sell off Ellerslie in 1817. See Catherine Clinton, *Mrs. Lincoln: A Life* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010), 13.

²⁴ Mentelle, *A Short History*, 16-17.

²⁵ Fayette County land records, October 31, 1827, deed book 3, 87-89.

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After Mary's death in 1844, relatives amongst the Todds contended that Wickliffe had wrongfully bilked her of her assets. Robert S. Todd and his emancipationist ally, Robert Jefferson Breckinridge, had politically clashed with Wickliffe for years.²⁶ Shortly prior to Mary's demise, Breckinridge had publicly insinuated that her son, John Russell, had illegitimately fathered a son named Alfred with the family's enslaved girl, Milly. While Mary, in keeping with her advocacy of colonization schemes, had wished to send Alfred and Milly to Liberia, Wickliffe supposedly would only allow it if she signed over her estate to him.²⁷ This scandal reemerged in 1848 when Robert S. Todd and later, young lawyer Abraham Lincoln, unsuccessfully sued Wickliffe to reclaim the Todd family's property.

When Robert Wickliffe died in 1859, he left the Ellerslie and Glendower tracts to daughter Margaret at his late wife's behest.²⁸ By this time, she had wed William Preston, a Mexican-American War veteran with extensive land in the Louisville area that his father and grandfather had amassed.²⁹ While Preston in some respects resembled a caricature of a Southern aristocrat, his political leanings were somewhat more complicated. Like Wickliffe, Preston subscribed to the notion of a natural racial hierarchy and participated in the 1849 state convention that produced the pro-slavery constitution of 1850. Yet he was unusually sympathetic to Catholics and Germans, and in fact sold much of his property in Louisville to these demographics. During the convention, he insisted that "our admixture with our kindred European races have improved and befitted our own" and warned against the rise of the nativist Know Nothing Movement.³⁰ Tearing away "the right of suffrage from the unfriended and defenseless immigrant," he contended, would lay the groundwork for a society in which "the pauper will be disfranchised, and, by degrees, the privilege will be alone enjoyed by the landlord and the capitalist." This ardent defense of immigrants' rights cost Preston a congressional seat in 1855, as election day (Bloody Monday) in Louisville saw a wave of violence against Irish and German residents.³¹

Despite this defeat, Preston maintained key political connections in Washington and was appointed ambassador to Spain during the Buchanan administration. Although he failed to successfully negotiate for the United States' acquisition of Cuba, his protests against a possible Spanish recolonization of Santo Domingo are considered to be a notable evocation of the Monroe Doctrine. When the Southern states first threatened succession, Preston was eager to maintain the Union. However, he soon threw in his lot with the Confederacy and rose to the rank of brigadier general, having seen combat in Alabama, Virginia, and Tennessee.³² An experienced

²⁶ Wickliffe vigorously opposed the Non-Importation Act of 1833 that fined enslavers who brought Black individuals into Kentucky for sale. This stance brought him into conflict with Robert S. Todd. See Sydney Blumenthal, *Wrestling with His Angel*, vol. 2 of *The Political Life of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017), 10, 19.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 34-37. Alfred and Milly did emigrate to Liberia in 1833; Alfred was trained as an Episcopal minister and later served as vice president and president of that country.

²⁸ Hollingsworth, 331.

²⁹ Peter Sehlinger, *Kentucky's Last Cavalier: General William Preston, 1816-1887* (Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society, 2004), xv, 3.

³⁰ William Preston, "Rights of Suffrage to Foreigners and a Defense of Roman Catholics and Immigrants," December 15, 1849, University of Kentucky Special Collections, Preston-Johnston Family Papers, 60M140:2:1.

³¹ Sehlinger, 89.

³² *Ibid.*, 129.

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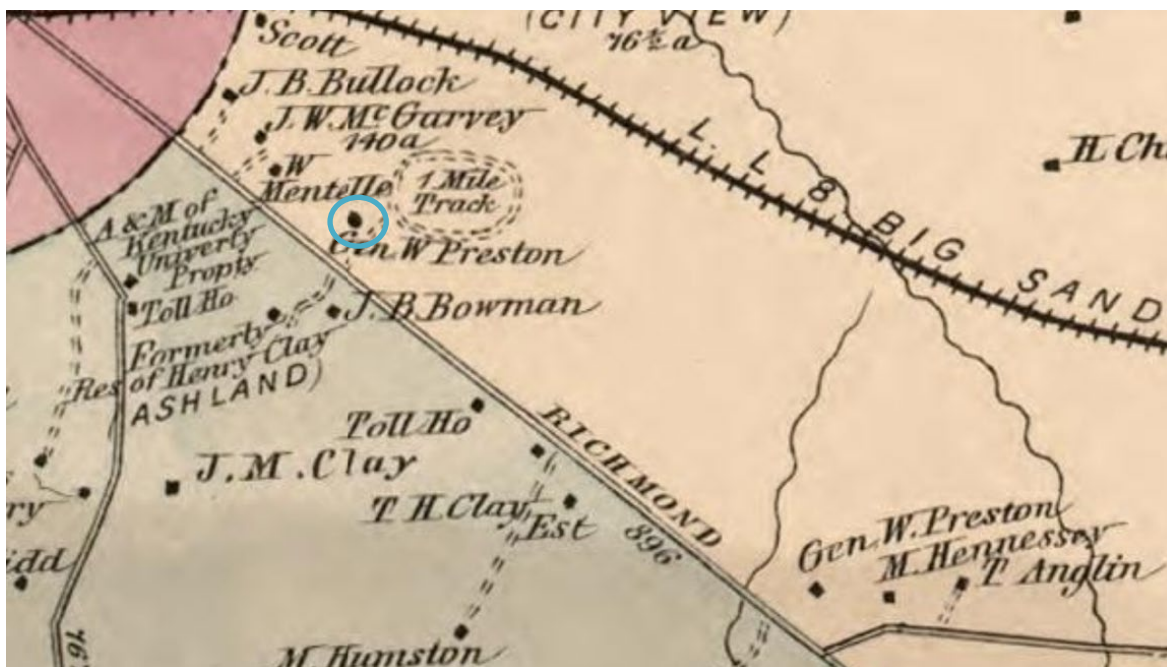
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diplomat, he was then tapped as an envoy to the court of Emperor Maximillian of Mexico. The French government had recently installed this Hapsburg duke as a proxy ruler, and the Confederacy was eager to secure international recognition of its sovereignty.³³ Yet Preston's aggressive approach to persuasion alarmed his superiors, some of whom believed that the South's right to self-determination should be self-evident. He also became embroiled in unorthodox schemes to involve Maximillian and a French ambassador in the working of gold and silver mines in Sonora.³⁴ These machinations came to nought, and Preston was recalled home in 1864.

During Preston's absence from Lexington in the 1860s, Margaret took charge of the family's business dealings and secured tenants for Ellerslie Farm (though Rose Hill was likely vacant at this time). When federal martial law was declared in 1864 following John Hunt Morgan's raids, she feared reprisals and moved with her children to Montreal; they returned to Lexington the following year. The Prestons' financial situation at this time was the source of significant strife. A new trusteeship agreement drawn up in 1866 affirmed Margaret's right to assume management of the Wickliffe-Preston land holdings if she chose to exercise it "as if she were a femme sole, with full power to dispose of the same by deed of will."³⁵ But even with this concession, she balked at William's renovation of Glendower that resulted in an extensive John McMurtry-designed Italianate addition. There, the Prestons lavishly entertained the Lexington elite and facilitated their postwar re-entry into the city's high society.



1877 Beers Atlas showing Ellerslie tract above Richmond Road and Mentelle House (circled in blue). The "W. Mentelle" property refers to a different cottage owned by Waldemar Jr.

³³ William Preston to General Almonte, June 6, 1864, University of Kentucky Special Collections, Letterbook of General William Preston, 1864-1865: 63M349:164:3.

³⁴ "Memorandum," June 26, 1864, University of Kentucky Special Collections, Letterbook of General William Preston, 1864-1865: 63M349:164:3.

³⁵ Hollingsworth, 129.

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After Charlotte Mentelle passed away in 1860, William Preston rented out the house at 116 Lincoln Avenue to formerly enslaved Peter Thompson and his family. This agreement incensed local members of the Ku Klux Klan, who took issue with Preston's decision to accommodate Thompson instead of poor whites.³⁶ In reprisal, these miscreants killed Thompson at his home in January 1871. This event profoundly affected Margaret, who informed her son that the "Kuklux murdered in cold blood poor Peter at the Mentelle place before his wife who was in bed with a new born infant. God will avenge it."³⁷ Following Thompson's murder, "she refused to sleep in a room that had direct access to the outdoors, or to be at Glendower or [her farm] without a night watchman."³⁸

While William and Margaret Preston subscribed to notions of innate white superiority, they did form lasting bonds with some of the individuals they enslaved and reprobated acts of race-based violence. William, for instance, remained close with his childhood playmate, Samuel Giles, who accompanied him on tour during the Civil War even after his manumission. Thereafter, Giles rented a portion of Ellerslie; in one 1868 letter, William notified his son, Wick (Robert Wickliffe Preston), that "Sam Giles is farming, everything is in fine order."³⁹ The Prestons later set Giles up on a farm in Owingsville, and daughter Susan Draper (the wife of Massachusetts manufacturer General W. F. Draper) continued to send him payments three times a year.⁴⁰ As for Margaret, she believed that overt acts of racism tarnished her family's reputation. On one occasion, she reproached Wick for leaving one of his Harvard classes because a Black student was in attendance. How, she asked, "can you with the philanthropic blood of the Howards in your veins object to any of God's creatures getting an education?"⁴¹ While she advised Wick that he "need not make them your equals any more than I do," she still hoped that he "would 'show those northern people that you have more sympathy for the negro than they have.'" The Prestons' attitude towards the African Americans in their orbit was clearly paternalistic, but they also seemed to have understood the necessity of burying the Confederate hatchet.

During the 1870s and 1880s, Margaret frequently lodged apart from her husband at the fashionable Galt Hotel in Louisville. There, she wrote concerned letters to rakish Wick bemoaning his lack of academic progress and professional direction. Wick also amassed his fair share of debts and, in 1872, broached the idea of selling off parts of Ellerslie; William quashed this suggestion, noting that the property was held in trust and could not be divided.⁴² However, in 1884, he reserved 200 acres of Ellerslie for Wick that included the rather dilapidated

³⁶ However, the *Kentucky Gazette* attributed this "most foul assassination" to a band of drunken men who were impersonating Klan members. See "Midnight Assassination," *Kentucky Gazette*, January 11, 1871.

³⁷ Hollingsworth, 312.

³⁸ Ibid, 187.

³⁹ William Preston to Wick Preston, March 29, 1868, University of Kentucky Special Collections, Preston-Johnston Family Papers, 60M150: 2.

⁴⁰ J. M. R., "Noted Negro," *Lexington Leader*, December 11, 1905.

⁴¹ Margaret Wickliffe Preston to Wick Preston, March 6, no year, University of Kentucky Special Collections, Preston-Johnston Family Papers, 60M150:2:21.

⁴² William Preston to Wick Preston, August 18, 1872, University of Kentucky Special Collections, Preston-Johnston Family Papers, 60M150:8.

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Lakewood house (not extant).⁴³ Two years later, Wick urged his father to add 100 acres to this estate, but William regretted that this land was already rented by ice harvester Timothy Anglin and B. J. Treacy, who incorporated his section into the thriving Ashland Park Stock Farm.⁴⁴

Although Margaret willed the Ellerslie estate to her children with the stipulation that it remain intact, they successfully contested this proviso in 1903 and carved up the property. Lot 1, which encompassed 116 Lincoln Avenue, was allocated to son Wick, who in turn conveyed it to the Wickliffe Land Company in 1909 for subdivision. The public auction of these parcels (with racial covenants attached) was a festive one, with burgoo and ham and cheese sandwiches provided to a crowd of 1,000.⁴⁵ There was even a contest for naming the new community: the winner would receive a free lot. Union Station ticket agent S. T. Swift triumphed with the appellation “Ken Wick,” which the committee regarded “as a short easy and not unmusical pronunciation.”⁴⁶



1891 Wallis Map of Fayette County showing Mentelle House (blue), Ellerslie (green), and Mansfield (purple)

⁴³ William Preston to Wick Preston, August 13, 1884, University of Kentucky Special Collections, Preston-Johnston Family Papers, 60M150:2:16.

⁴⁴ Wick Preston to William Preston, September 23, 1886, University of Kentucky Special Collections, Preston-Johnston Family Papers, 60M150:2:17.

⁴⁵ “Wickliffe Land Co. Auction,” *Lexington Leader*, May 11, 1909.

⁴⁶ “Mr. Swift Winner of Wickliffe Lot,” *Lexington Herald*, May 15, 1909.

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Robert Wickliffe Preston at Glendower, 1900
University of Kentucky Special Collections: Preston-Johnston family photographs

THE WICKLIFFE LAND COMPANY

INCORPORATED

WILL SELL AT

PUBLIC AUCTION

On Tuesday, May 11th, 1909, at 10:30 A. M.

Its splendidly located tract of land bordering on the "McDowell Speedway" and immediately in front of historic "Ashland" divided into

Building Lots

Consider the high elevation of this property its surroundings and possibilities, and judge for yourself whether or not it will be profitable to buy a lot in this growing section either for investment or home. Lexington can not go "backward," Northward, Southward, or Westward, but is bound to go and grow EASTWARD.

Terms of Sale
One-fourth cash, balance in four equal installments, payable in 6, 12, 18 & 24 months with six per cent interest, payable semi-annually, and lien reserved.

This addition is just outside of the corporate limits and escapes
CITY TAXES
and is the only suburban property that can get
CITY WATER
It is within a short distance of the E. Main St. car line with seven minute car service.

REFRESHMENTS---MUSIC

J. H. MORROW, Auctioneer

BISHOP CLAY, Agent

"Wickliffe Land Co. Auction," *Lexington Leader*, May 11, 1909.

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Historic Context: Education in Early Kentucky, 1780-1870

The Mentelle's contribution to education in Kentucky is seen within this historic context. The state of education in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Kentucky was decidedly lackluster. Historians attribute this torpor to several factors. On the one hand, the settlers who flocked to the region in search of abundant, cheap lands were focused on establishing their homesteads in the wilderness and equipping their children with practical skills. On the other, the migrant Virginians who hailed from the landed aristocracy sought to recreate a familiar social hierarchy on the western frontier and assert their political control over the malleable, uneducated masses.⁴⁷ Whereas Jefferson's Land Ordinance of 1785, which guided the allocation of acreage in the Northwest Territory, had set aside parcels for the support of common public schools in each township, Kentucky did not enact similar measures until 1798.⁴⁸ This legislation — "An Act for the Endowment of Certain Seminaries of Learning" — dispersed 6,000-acre tracts south of the Cumberland River for the "use and benefit" of several academies. In 1808, another act further enabled counties to apply for these grants to establish their own schools. However, the proceeds from the subsequent land sales were often barely sufficient to cover the cost of building construction.⁴⁹ Education in this early period therefore remained the preserve of the "old field schools," which were often primitive log buildings with windows consisting of greased paper instead of glass panes. Sponsored by their local communities, the teachers at these establishments might very well have been compensated in "tobacco, bear-bacon, corn, whiskey, or some like commodity."⁵⁰

While politicians did not consider local education to be a pressing issue, institutions of higher learning did receive backing from the government. In 1780, the Virginia legislature sequestered 8,000 acres of Loyalist lands at the behest of Kentucky County representative Colonel John Todd. These were reserved for the support of the new Transylvania Seminary, which was officially established in Danville in 1785 as a "public, non-denominational institution."⁵¹ After this school moved to Lexington the following year, the Presbyterian community attempted to co-opt it as a training ground for their ministry. The appointment of Harry Toulmin, a Unitarian advocate of Enlightenment ideals, as the first president of Transylvania perplexed this religious element, who then withdrew and established the rival Kentucky Academy as Pisgah.⁵² After Toulmin's ouster, the two bodies merged to form Transylvania University in 1798. Conflicts between the government and sectarian groups over the governance of this organization periodically flared up until 1856, when the former classified Transylvania as a normal school that would be supported by the state's educational fund.

⁴⁷ Martha Stephenson, "History of Education in Kentucky," *Register of Kentucky State Historical Society* 15 (May 1917): 77.

⁴⁸ Thomas D. Clark, "Kentucky Education Through Two Centuries of Political and Social Change," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 83 (1985): 174-177.

⁴⁹ William E. Ellis, *A History of Education in Early Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 8.

⁵⁰ Stephenson, 70.

⁵¹ William Leavy, "A Memoir of Lexington and its Inhabitants," *Register of Kentucky State Historical Society* 41, no. 134 (January 1943): 44.

⁵² Irvin E. Lunger, "Education on the Early Kentucky Frontier: 1967 Boone Day Address," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 65, no. 4 (1967): 266-267.

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As the nineteenth century progressed, various governors championed the cause of public education, but their entreaties often fell on deaf ears. The General Assembly, for instance, opposed proposals that Governor Gabriel Slaughter's administration (1816-1820) put forward. Slaughter's successor, Governor John Adair, succeeded in creating a "literary fund" derived from profits that the Bank of the Commonwealth generated, but these proceeds were frequently diverted to pay for infrastructural development.⁵³ Adair also secured the appointment of an education committee helmed by W. T. Barry. Published in 1822, his report called for sweeping reforms and the implementation of a county-based education tax.⁵⁴ Although it received endorsements from former presidents Adams, Jefferson, Madison, this scheme was a non-starter. In 1829, the General Assembly tasked two Transylvania educators with surveying the condition of the state's common schools; their report found that only one-third of school-age children were enrolled in classes.⁵⁵ Corrective legislation passed the following year was merely permissive and allowed counties to levy poll and ad valorem taxes to finance educational initiatives.⁵⁶ Some of the money that Kentucky received from the federal surplus distribution in 1837 was placed in a special fund to subsidize local education. This was a necessary precursor to the formal creation of a common school system in 1838. Yet these monies continued to be misappropriated until the 1850 Kentucky Constitution created an inviolable school fund that could not be ransacked for other purposes.⁵⁷

To be sure, these piecemeal efforts to sponsor public education were geared toward the exclusive intellectual improvement of Kentucky's white population. A "common school," for example, was defined in 1851 as "one in which a competent teacher was employed for three months in the year, and which received all white children between the ages of six and eighteen, who resided in the district."⁵⁸ This official disinterest in the education of African American children had persisted since the early days of statehood. At the turn of the century, individuals in domestic enslavement did have occasional access to education at Sunday Schools or other church-related venues. While there was no law on the books that forbade the instruction of enslaved persons, a general fear of abolitionist influences in the 1830s certainly increased resistance to the idea of Black literacy. Innovations in state-sponsored education therefore did not occur until the Reconstruction period. An 1866 act determined that property taxes paid by African Americans should be allocated to a school fund and the upkeep of paupers, but this support was by no means ample. Legislation in 1874 therefore created a "Uniform System of Public Schools for Colored Children of the State" that was more broadly funded by taxes that Black residents paid. Still, the proceeds were only sufficient to fund three months of schooling for Black children, compared to nine months for white pupils.⁵⁹

⁵³ Frank F. Mathias, "Kentucky's Struggle for Common Schools, 1820-1850," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 82, no. 3 (1984): 215-219.

⁵⁴ Ellis, 16.

⁵⁵ Mathias, 220.

⁵⁶ Clark, 179; Stephenson, 75.

⁵⁷ Wes Cunningham, "Historic Public Schools of Kentucky — National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form," 2025, 6.

⁵⁸ C. L. Timberlake, "The Early Struggle for Education of the Blacks in the Commonwealth of Kentucky," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 71, no. 3 (1973): 228. For an account of Reconstruction-era Black schools in Lexington, see the Blue Grass Trust for Historic Preservation's February 11, 2025, social media post on 331 South Mill Street.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 230.

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Amidst the halting process of public education, private academies espousing a wide variety of ideologies and pedagogies remained the principal vehicles for disseminating knowledge. At least 88 such institutions had received charters from their county governments by 1850, but the lack of centralized oversight, inconsistent financial support, and the meddling of inexperienced trustees often led to abrupt closures.⁶⁰ The records of these early academies rarely survive outside of newspaper advertisements and scattered personal correspondence.

It appears that the bulk of schools for young women in Central Kentucky were connected to religious denominations. These included Reverend John Ward's academy, which Mary Todd had attended in 1831.⁶¹ Appointed the second minister of Lexington's Christ Church in 1814, Ward oversaw this body's union with the national Protestant Episcopal Church.⁶² After he gave up this post in 1819, he began operating an academy for boys and girls out of the Frederick Ridgely House (190 Market Street), which his brother-in-law, John D. Clifford, had recently purchased. According to Mary's cousin, Dr. Ward's "disciplinarian" pedagogy put a primacy on pre-dawn recitations; this was a far cry from Charlotte Mentelle's more worldly tutelage.⁶³ Other female educational outfits with religious orientations included St. Catherine's Academy (est. 1834), an Episcopalian day and boarding school run by the "Misses Jackson" (1848), and Hocker Female School (1869), which evolved into Hamilton Female College.⁶⁴ With the exception of the Ridgely House and David Hocker's own residence (now Transylvania University's alumni center), none of these buildings survives.



Ridgely House, April 2025



Hocker House, April 2025

⁶⁰ Ellis, 14.

⁶¹ Samuel M. Wilson, *History of Kentucky*, vol. 2 (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1928), 389.

⁶² "History of Parish is Told by Dean Massie in an Address to the Woman's Club of Central Kentucky," *Lexington Herald*, December 19, 1915.

⁶³ Hackensmith, 192.

⁶⁴ *History of Fayette County*, 313-315. The Episcopalian school, which was located on South Broadway, later housed the Robinson Institute, Fayette College, and the Female Baptist College. See "Fayette College," *Kentucky Gazette*, February 2, 1867; No title, *Kentucky Statesman*, January 7, 1868.

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History of the Mentelle Family and Mrs. Mentelle's School for Young Ladies (est. 1820)

From around 1804 to 1860, members of the Mentelle family resided at Rose Hill, for which Charlotte had obtained a life estate. During this time, they significantly contributed to Lexington's educational sector and were celebrated participants in the city's social and cultural milieu. Accounts of the Mentelles' origins were hazy and contradictory for some time, but Randolph Paul Runyon's recent biography — which is based largely on their French-language correspondence — shines valuable light on their immigration and fortunes in early Kentucky. Born to Edme Mentelle, a teacher of geography and history at the École Militaire who was often received at the Palace of Versailles, Waldemar belonged to elite circles despite his family's recurrent penury.⁶⁵ While historians previously surmised that Waldemar and Charlotte had fled to Kentucky to escape "the ravages of the French Revolution," the truth may be rather more mundane.⁶⁶ Waldemar's father did worry about his son's prospects amidst the rise of republican sentiment, but he also recognized that he could scarcely afford to support him financially. The lure of cheap land, which promoters of French colonization schemes readily publicized, was also irresistible. Disembarking in Philadelphia in 1789, Waldemar hitched a ride with General Arthur St. Clair's military contingent down the Ohio River to Gallipolis, an emerging settlement that was attracting French urbanites with scant agricultural experience.⁶⁷ Charlotte joined him a couple years later and was disheartened by the conditions at that outpost. In 1795, they relocated to Maysville and remained there three years before moving once again to Lexington.⁶⁸

An announcement in the *Kentucky Gazette* on July 18, 1798, heralded Waldemar's arrival in the city, and an advertisement the following week informed readers that "he proposes, with the assistance of his wife, to instruct young people of both sexes, in the French language and dancing."⁶⁹ These classes were offered three evenings a week at the Mentelles' first residence that was likely located near Transylvania University, where Waldemar also worked as a steward (essentially, a boarding house keeper).⁷⁰ But that school's zealously Presbyterian Board of Trustees soon took issue with the Mentelles' French (i.e. Catholic) background and terminated this arrangement.⁷¹ By 1799, the family had moved to a farm owned by General Robert Todd (the uncle of Robert S. Todd) that lay five miles south of Lexington on Bates Creek Road less than a mile from "Mr. Morrison's mills."⁷² There, Waldemar embarked upon a new career as a farrier while continuing to offer his French lessons. As Runyon wryly puts it, the Mentelles at this time "were boarding both horses and students, a combination perhaps unique in the annals of pedagogy."⁷³

⁶⁵ Randolph Paul Runyon, *The Mentelles: Mary Todd Lincoln, Henry Clay and the Immigrant Family Who Educated Antebellum Kentucky* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2018), 15.

⁶⁶ Ellis, 10.

⁶⁷ Runyon, 34, 63.

⁶⁸ During the family's time in Maysville, they seem to have acquired 217 acres in Adams County, Ohio, which they sold in 1805. See Fayette County land records, deed book B, 170.

⁶⁹ "French School," *Kentucky Gazette*, July 25, 1798.

⁷⁰ "An Evening French School," *Kentucky Gazette*, October 24, 1798.

⁷¹ Runyon, 71.

⁷² "Strayed," *Kentucky Gazette*, May 7, 1802.

⁷³ Runyon, 74.

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The family's fortunes changed once again in 1804 when Charlotte secured her life estate in a portion of the pond tract. On this parcel, Waldemar constructed the log house that was the first iteration of the extant building at 116 Lincoln Avenue.⁷⁴ Now in closer proximity to the city center, he expanded his business portfolio once again; a true jack of all trades, he reportedly produced the first stoneware kiln in the state with assistance from horse breeder Robert Alexander of Woodford County.⁷⁵ Waldemar also operated a commission store at various locations downtown where he sold white lead, cotton by the bale, dried fruit, fish, linens, Pittsburgh beer, and patent medicines.⁷⁶ Outside of these commercial ventures, he repaired mirrors, gilded frames, and even painted the occasional house.⁷⁷ By 1817, he had shifted careers once again and was working as a porter at the United States Bank in Lexington.⁷⁸ Given the fluctuations of these income streams, it is hardly surprising that Charlotte capitalized on her own academic talents and joined the workforce as an instructor of French at Mary Beck's Academy for Young Ladies (est. 1805).

Although several girls' academies in Lexington pre-dated Beck's venture, hers is still regarded as a "startling innovation in female education in Kentucky."⁷⁹ Born in France to a jurist (who ended up in Gallipolis), Mary wed celebrated British painter George Beck in 1786. An artist in her own right who exhibited at the Royal Academy, she drew from her cosmopolitan life experience and sought to expand the traditional curriculum for girls by offering a bespoke, seven-year course of study that included lessons in "Writing, Arithmetic, Composition, Grammar, Geography, and Astronomy." One gentlemanly "examiner" observed

that young Ladies from every part of the State are here not only made perfect in the elegant and useful arts of reading, and spelling, and writing and accompts, and drawing and music, but...have also infused into them with great care the first principles of geography, and astronomy, and logic, and rhetoric, and natural philosophy.⁸⁰

In 1808, Beck hired Charlotte to teach French at the school and may very well have employed Waldemar as a dancing instructor as well. This was a boon for the headmistress, as Charlotte by this time had translated a history of the French Revolution into English, which John Bradford published. As Runyon notes, her critiques of royalism, religious fanaticism, and the oppression of women invariably colored her editorial voice in that text.⁸¹ Charlotte kept her position at the academy until 1815.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 135.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 136.

⁷⁶ No title, *Kentucky Gazette*, January 15, 1811; "Lee's Patent Medicine Store," *Kentucky Gazette*, September 17, 1811; No title, *Kentucky Gazette*, June 15, 1813

⁷⁷ No title, *Kentucky Gazette*, August 28, 1806.

⁷⁸ *History of Fayette County, Kentucky*, 260.

⁷⁹ Edna Talbott Whitley, "Mary Beck and the Female Mind," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 77, no. 1 (1979): 15.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 20.

⁸¹ Runyon, 78, 84. In 1821, Charlotte contributed to the cataloging of books in the town library. She may also have published a 300-page anthology in 1841 entitled *New Tales of Real Life* that consisted of translations and original work. See *History of Fayette County, Kentucky*, 384; "Proposals," *The Commonwealth*, November 23, 1841.

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Mary Beck was rather peripatetic and operated her school out of numerous downtown buildings (that no longer stand) from its founding throughout the 1820s. George died in 1812, and it appears that she encountered financial difficulties thereafter; in 1816, she put the entirety of her household furniture, several musical instruments, and a number of her late husband's paintings up for sale at public auction.⁸² Still, Mary endeavored to keep George's memory alive and, in 1818, was seeking subscriptions to publish a collection of his poetical translations so as to "exhibit to the world a proof of Kentucky genius."⁸³ By 1826, Mary had relocated to Lancaster and set up a new female academy there. But despite her "distinguished reputation," a newspaper ad regretted that "her patronage has as yet not been great, owing to the interference of other schools in the neighbourhood and to the obscurity of the place."⁸⁴ While talented, scholarly women such as Mary Beck could secure a degree of independence in the private academic sphere and even receive acclaim, economic stability was by no means guaranteed.

Trained by Beck, Charlotte was well-placed to open her own School for Young Ladies in 1820 "at her residence immediately opposite Ashland, the residence of Mr. Clay." There, she provided instruction in "Grammar, Geography, History, Arithmetick, French, &c."⁸⁵ Aside from her exotic background, Charlotte's personal traits and disposition rendered her a singular force amongst Lexington's high society and undoubtedly helped her attract students to her academy. Her doctor father had a hand in this, purposefully exposing her to experiences not typical for nineteenth century women; he reportedly went so far as to trap her in a room with a cadaver to bolster her fortitude. One visitor from Cincinnati confirmed in 1823 that she "was accomplished in all virile exercises such as hunting, fencing."⁸⁶ A talented violinist, she was also "skilled in abstract politics and the science of government with which knowledge she combines a familiar acquaintance with the proceedings of European natives." An obituary for daughter Rose further described Charlotte as "a woman of great strength of mind" whose "memory was looked upon as a textbook in history by her friends in the early part of the century."⁸⁷ Surely, the Mentelles' worldly background, intellectual achievements, and eccentricity boosted their social capital locally, as Lexington's Francophilic citizens actively sought to enhance the culture of their frontier town.

Given the Mentelles' proximity to Ashland, it is hardly surprising that they formed enduring relationships with members of the Clay family. In 1837, these bonds were solidified through the marriage of their daughter, Mary, to Thomas. H. Clay; the couple resided in the National Register-listed "Mansfield" residence (NRIS 82002689) that prominent architect Thomas Lewinski designed. Soon after, Thomas Clay entered into a short-lived business partnership with the Mentelles' son, Waldemar Jr.⁸⁸ These interfamilial networks endured for decades. On June 14, 1850, Lewinski provided Charlotte with a check made out to cash that was

⁸² "Sale at Auction," *Kentucky Gazette*, October 7, 1816.

⁸³ "Proposals by Mary Beck," *Western Monitor*, August 1, 1818.

⁸⁴ "Communicated, Mrs Mary Beck," *The Reporter*, April 17, 1826.

⁸⁵ "Mrs. Mentelle," *Western Monitor*, August 8, 1820.

⁸⁶ Runyon, 174.

⁸⁷ "Miss Mentelle Dead," *Kentucky Leader*, February 6, 1893.

⁸⁸ In 1854, Waldemar Jr. purchased fourteen acres to the northwest of his parent's property (now Mentelle Park) on which he constructed a cross-gable, Gothic Revival cottage. See Fayette County land records, deed book 35, 615. The land records confuse Waldemar Sr. with Waldemar Jr.

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almost certainly intended for his daughter Mary's tuition.⁸⁹ The 1850 federal census does list a "Mary Lewinsky" and three girls from the Winters family (Jane, Hannah, and Emma) as boarders at the house, along Charlotte and her two adult daughters. Thomas Lewinski would have been well-acquainted with the school, as he designed the keeper's cottage at Ashland and oversaw the reconstruction of the main house.



Photograph of Mansfield, 1938

(University of Kentucky Special Collections: Lafayette Studios Photographs, 1930s decade)

Yet Charlotte's most famous pupil was undoubtedly young Mary Todd, who boarded at the school on weekdays from 1832 to 1836. In an interview conducted in 1874 by William Herndon, one of Abraham Lincoln's first biographers, Mary recalled that she "was educated by Mme. Mentelle, a French lady, opposite Mr. Clay's. She was well educated: was French: spoke nothing else: scholars not allowed to."⁹⁰ Half-sister Emilie Todd Helm similarly related in 1921 that Mary was "beautifully educated, having been a pupil of the celebrated Mr. Ward, and later a student at Madame Montelle's select French school, where she learned to dance charmingly and speak the purest Parisian."⁹¹ Historians concur that Charlotte helped kindle Mary's fondness for poetry and recitation; she was also obliged to act in plays by "Racine, Corneille, and Molière," often excelling as the star of the show.⁹² Immersed in the language, Mary "developed an intimate knowledge and a deep love of French because of Madame Mentelle's instruction."⁹³ Reflecting

⁸⁹ Thomas Lewinski account book, 1845-1853, University of Kentucky Special Collections, Henry Clay Memorial Foundation papers.

⁹⁰ "Mr. Lincoln," *Courier-Journal*, January 17, 1874.

⁹¹ "Has Lexington Forgotten Mary Todd Lincoln?" *Lexington Leader*, February 13, 1921.

⁹² Runyon, 182.

⁹³ C. W. Hackensmith, "Family Background and Education of Mary Todd," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 69, 3 (1971): 195.

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upon Mary's admission that her "early home was truly at a boarding school," Catherine Clinton concludes that

the Mentelles' academy at Rose Hill was not merely a finishing school, but a place of learning that shaped young women. Mary Lincoln found the experience bracing, and acknowledged Madame Mentelle's significant influence on her during her formative years.⁹⁴

Another scholar has posited that Mary Todd and Margaret Preston were close companions at Mentelle's school, though other histories give a differing account of Preston's educational background.⁹⁵

On account of its longevity and reputation, Mentelle's venture ranks highly amongst the handful of forward-thinking academies that were able to flourish in a political environment that was often apathetic — if not downright hostile — to education. Institutions of a similar stature included the Science Hill Female Academy (Shelbyville, NRIS 75000831) and the Choctaw Academy (Blue Spring, Scott County, NRIS 73000835), as well as the building at 333 South Upper Street that lies within Lexington's South Hill National Register Historic District. This latter property, which was constructed in 1817, originally housed J. P. Aldridge's Lexington Female Academy and possibly his co-ed Lancastrian School, where accomplished students would teach lessons to their peers.⁹⁶ Principal Col. Josiah Dunham bought the building at public auction in 1824 and continued to oversee the school's operation. Its name was changed to the Lafayette Academy the next year in commemoration of General Lafayette's visit to the establishment.⁹⁷



To left: Postcard of Science Hill Female Academy (University of Kentucky Special Collections, Postcard Collection)



To right: Photograph of Choctaw Academy, 1985 (University of Kentucky Special Collections: Carolyn Murray-Wooley color transparencies)

⁹⁴ Clinton, 16.

⁹⁵ Blumenthal, 32; Joan Marie Johnson, *Southern Women at the Seven Sister Colleges: Feminist Values and Social Activism, 1875-1915* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 185.

⁹⁶ "Education," *Western Monitor*, March 14, 1818.

⁹⁷ Margaret Anne Browne, "Josiah P. Dunham's Academy — Kentucky Historic Resources Individual Inventory Form," 1987.

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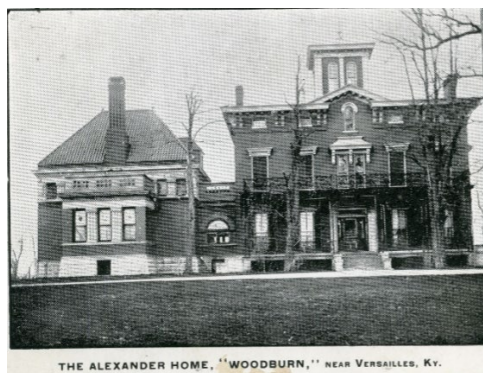
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Historic Context: The Standardbred Horse Industry in Kentucky's Inner Bluegrass Region, 1850-1905

B. J. Treacy, Ashland Park Stock Farm, and Kentucky's Standardbred Horse Industry

The existing scholarship on the origins of the Standardbred, or harness horse, in America resembles the compilation of an aristocratic lineage. Historians trace this breed to Messenger, a British horse who was transported to America in 1788. In the early nineteenth century, harness racing — which entails attaching a two-wheeled sulky to the horse — gained popularity in New York state and cities such as New Orleans. Leading entrepreneur John Wesley Hunt attempted to introduce this pastime to Kentucky in the late 1830s and dispatched William T. Porter, the editor of *Spirit of the Times*, to New York to select two stallions of Messenger's line.⁹⁸ Although the venture did not pan out, it locally kindled a spark of interest in large-scale breeding. In 1850, James B. Clay (the son of Henry Clay) tried his luck at importing a Standardbred from New York and returned with Mambrino Chief, who found fame as a leading sire in Kentucky.

Several years later, Robert Alexander began “systematically” breeding harness horses alongside his Thoroughbred stock at his massive Woodburn Farm near Frankfort. This earned him some derision from reactionary Kentuckians who considered trotting to be a “Yankee sport.”⁹⁹ After purchasing the racehorse Lexington for a record \$15,000 to sire, Alexander produced the legendary Almont, a descendant of Messenger's great-grandsons Mambrino Chief and Hambletonian. Tragically, Confederate raiders seized a number of Alexander's prized stock in 1865, the trauma of which may have contributed to his passing two years later.¹⁰⁰ Woodburn House, a c. 1847 mansion that the Alexander family acquired in 1855, still stands at 2250 Old Frankfort Pike and is a contributing building in the Big Sink Rural Historic District.¹⁰¹



Woodburn House as an Italianate



Woodburn House after Classical Revival remodel

⁹⁸ These were Commodore and Abdallah. See Ken McCarr, *The Kentucky Trotting Horse* (Lexington, KY: University of Press of Kentucky, 1978), 6-9. Kentucky's first millionaire, Hunt made his fortune as a hemp manufacturer and wholesale merchant. Hopemont, his 1814 residence, still stands on Gratz Park.

⁹⁹ William Preston Mangum II, “Disaster at Woodburn Farm: R. A. Alexander and the Confederate Guerilla Raids of 1864-1865,” *Filson Club History Quarterly* (April 1996): 148.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹⁰¹ Christine Amos, “Big Sink Rural Historic District — National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form,” 1994, section 7, 11-12. Alexander's brother and nephew resided at Woodburn House until their respective deaths in 1902 and 1929. Although the building's core was reportedly Greek Revival in style, it received substantial Italianate and Classical Revival alterations. See “Services for Dr. Alexander will be Held Tuesday,” *Lexington Leader*, March 11, 1929; Bettye Lee Mastin, “Woodburn: House has seen various incarnations,” *Herald-Leader*, November 17, 1999.

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Image sources: Woodburn as Italianate: University of Kentucky Special Collections: Postcard Collection;
Woodburn as Classical Revival: University of Kentucky Special Collections: J. Winston Coleman Jr. collection on slavery in Kentucky

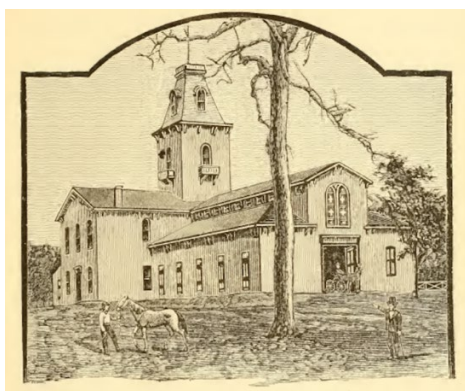
Almont was eventually acquired by Colonel W. T. Withers, whose Fairlawn Farm lay on approximately 150 acres north of Loudon Avenue between North Limestone and Russell Cave Road.¹⁰² A veteran of the Mexican-American War, Withers raised and commanded the Mississippi Light Artillery during the Civil War, as his wife owned a plantation in that state.¹⁰³ At the end of that conflict, the governor of Mississippi tasked Withers with securing a pardon for Confederate soldiers who were not included under the general amnesty.¹⁰⁴ He thereafter established a company to sell vacated lands in the South and, for a time, managed estates that Northern capitalists had bought up. With dwindling financial and political capital, Withers relocated to Lexington and established Fairlawn in 1875. Having purchased Almont, he bred stallions such as Happy Medium, Aberdeen, C. M. Clay Jr., and Ethan Allen, and sold their offspring far afield. King Kalakaua of Hawaii was apparently a favored customer and even stayed at the main house at Fairlawn; Withers' horses were also "sent to Canada and Prince Edward Island, to Oregon, to Australia and New Zealand, to Italy and to the Russian province of Bessarabia."¹⁰⁵ To garner this global following, Withers employed novel promotional techniques. As one scholar of the horse industry remarked in 1907, he

was a liberal advertiser, and he was the first of large breeders to issue a catalogue fully describing each animal and naming the price at which it would be sold. Horses were sold by correspondence from Fairlawn, literally from Maine to Texas, and the business was remunerative.¹⁰⁶

By 1880, Fairlawn was truly a "world-renowned" operation, for Col. Withers had won acclaim as "one of the best-posted of all the trotting horse breeders in America."¹⁰⁷



Photograph of Dudley-Withers House, January 2025



Woodcut print of Fairlawn Farm primary stable, 1883

¹⁰² Withers' stallions were kept on this main acreage, while his broodmares occupied a separate 500-acre farm off-site.

¹⁰³ "Death of General Withers – Lessons of his Breeding Experiences," *Wallace's Monthly* 15 (1889): 380.

¹⁰⁴ William Elsey Connelly and E. M. Coulter, *History of Kentucky*, vol. 3 (Chicago and New York: American Historical Society, 1922), 188.

¹⁰⁵ "Among the Bluegrass Trotters," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 67, no. 401 (1883): 720.

¹⁰⁶ Hamilton Busbey, *Recollections of Men and Horses* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1907), 308.

¹⁰⁷ Simon W. Parlin, *The American Trotter: A Treatise on His Origin, History and Development* (Boston: American Horse Breeder Publishing Co., 1905), 182.

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Historical photograph of Dudley-Withers House (Source: Ken McCarr, *The Kentucky Harness Horse*, 39)

Fairlawn Farm itself consisted of multiple buildings including Withers' main house (906 North Broadway), an 1850s Italianate residence that eminent surgeon and racing enthusiast Dr. Benjamin Dudley had previously inhabited. From its library, one could observe a "commodious training track, laid out like one of those mythical fairy circles."¹⁰⁸ Withers' principal stable resembled a kind of "horse cathedral" with its tower, hardwood floors, and colored glass windowpanes. An earlier nineteenth-century, one-story building with parapeted gables (900 North Broadway) lay to the immediate south of the residence. One article from 1901 claimed that Dudley, a professor of anatomy and physiology at Transylvania University, had used this space as a dissecting and operating theater.¹⁰⁹

Despite Withers' substantial investment, Fairlawn was a fairly short-lived enterprise. Before his death in 1889, the Belt Land Company was already attempting to acquire the southern border of the farm for its planned rail line.¹¹⁰ Fairlawn sold later that year for \$105,000 and was lauded in the papers as "one of the most beautiful dwelling places in Lexington, to say nothing of the stock-breeding establishment."¹¹¹ Yet new owner A. Smith McCann faced obstacles for the outset; in 1892, vandals set fire to the aforementioned stable, leading to the death of five trotters and the loss of that majestic building.¹¹² Shortly thereafter, McCann resold part of Fairlawn to Withers' widow.¹¹³ At the time of this nomination, Withers' residence has not been listed on the

¹⁰⁸ "Among the Bluegrass Trotters," 718-719.

¹⁰⁹ "Fairlawn Stock Farm," *Morning Herald*, September 29, 1901.

¹¹⁰ "Through by Torchlight," *Kentucky Leader*, July 23, 1889.

¹¹¹ "Fairlawn Sold," *Kentucky Leader*, September 27, 1889.

¹¹² "Vandals Set the Barn of A. Smith McCann on Fire," *Kentucky Leader*, May 2, 1892.

¹¹³ "Fairlawn Stock Farm," *Morning Herald*, September 29, 1901.

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National Register nor inventoried for the Kentucky Historic Resources Survey. This may be attributable to the sizable, modern brick extension that has been added to the rear of the house.

As Fairlawn was taking off in the 1870s, other horse enthusiasts in the Bluegrass region were developing their own trotting horse breeding enterprises. These included Major Henry Clay McDowell, a native of Fincastle, Virginia, who had moved to Louisville with his family in 1838. The son of a physician, he was also a relative of Dr. Ephraim McDowell, the famous surgeon whose house still stands in Danville. Henry saw active duty in the Civil War with the federal Army of the Cumberland and was appointed U.S. marshal for the District of Kentucky from 1862-64.¹¹⁴ During combat, he contracted a serious fever that led to lasting health complaints and reportedly accelerated his decline.

In 1870, McDowell acquired the 430-acre Woodlake Farm seven miles north of Lexington on Georgetown Pike and began raising Standardbreds.¹¹⁵ He soon attained fame as “one of the leading turfmen of Kentucky” and, in 1877, was elected President of the National Association of Trotting Horse Breeders.¹¹⁶ In this period, Woodlake’s expansive grounds included a stone, cross-gable, Gothic Revival mansion, a keeper’s cottage, and numerous outbuildings. McDowell left Woodlake in 1882 and relocated his breeding enterprise to Lexington’s Ashland estate; the following year, he notably brought the horse Dictator there to sire.¹¹⁷ This choice of residence was fitting, as McDowell was married to one of Henry Clay’s granddaughters. Under his stewardship, Ashland was transformed into a “mecca of the admirers of Henry Clay” and regularly hosted “visiting delegations from the East.”¹¹⁸ Aside from managing his stud farm, McDowell was also active in the city’s civic affairs. At the time of his death in 1899, he was serving as president of the Lexington & Eastern Railroad, a commissioner of the Eastern Kentucky Lunatic Asylum, and a director of the Kentucky Trotting Horse Breeders’ Association.



Photograph of Woodlake Farm main house, rear, undated

¹¹⁴ “Leaning on the Arm of the Servant of Death, Major H. C. McDowell Passes into the Presence of His Maker,” *Morning Herald*, November 19, 1899.

¹¹⁵ “Fine Trotting Stock at Col. H. C. McDowell’s Woodlake Farm,” *Tri-Weekly Yeoman*, April 6, 1875.

¹¹⁶ No title, *Weekly Yeoman*, December 11, 1877.

¹¹⁷ “Maj. M’Dowell,” *The Leader*, January 7, 1896.

¹¹⁸ “Leaning on the Arm of the Servant of Death.”

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Image Source: University of Kentucky Special Collections: Henry Clay Memorial Foundation papers)

As for Woodlake Farm, it remained under the ownership of John C. Noel, the longtime president of the Farmers Bank of Frankfort.¹¹⁹ The Gothic Revival residence burned in the early 1920s and was replaced by a two-story, Craftsman-style dwelling (6000 Georgetown Road). When Noel died in 1941, the farm passed to his daughter, Mary Anne Hockensmith, who resided there until her death at the age of 97 in 2021.¹²⁰

From his vantage point at Ashland, McDowell could likely view another harness-horse breeding operation that was flourishing on the Prestons' Ellerslie estate. Through a partnership with brothers W. L. and Z. E. Simmons, W. H. Wilson had brought famed horses George Wilkes and Honest Allen to Lexington in 1873 and rented out the portion of Ellerslie that included the former Mentelle lands for his Ashland Park Stock Farm.¹²¹ Periodically, manager David Muckle opened this facility's gates to the public and orchestrated "the grandest display of stallions to be seen in any part of the world."¹²² In 1874, Wilson ventured out on his own and relocated to Cynthiana, where he set up Abdallah Park. Thereafter, he played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Kentucky Trotting Horse Breeders' Association and was an active member of the National Trotting Association prior to his death in 1892.¹²³

B. J. Treacy and the Apotheosis of Ashland Park Stock Farm

After the Simmons brothers moved their operation to Old Frankfort Pike,¹²⁴ Preston leased the 160-acre portion of Ashland Park Stock Farm that lay to the immediate north of the Mentelle House to the colorful Bernard J. Treacy.¹²⁵ A native of Roscommon County, Ireland, who had emigrated in 1842 (possibly on account of the famine), Treacy developed his knowledge of horses at the Camp Nelson stables alongside veterinary surgeon Dr. R. Underwood. After the Civil War, Treacy branched into the horse trade and occupied Underwood's former stables for a time. He then acquired the lease to Ashland Park in 1877 and soon "brought his establishment to the most admirable points of perfection, in organization and detail."¹²⁶ The following year, Louisville's *Courier-Journal* reported that the "stable of horses at Ashland Park is probably without an equal in America" and that "the trotting-horse interest of Central Kentucky has no more useful man connected with it than Mr. B. J. Treacy."¹²⁷ In 1880, Treacy expanded his holdings by renting the adjoining parcel that extended to Richmond Road and encompassed the Mentelle House. As part of this agreement, Preston forbade Treacy from altering the house and its vegetation without permission or subleasing it to his laborers.¹²⁸ By 1887, Treacy's 300-horse farm was "considered the best equipped of its kind in the State, and

¹¹⁹ No title, *Frankfort Roundabout*, October 21, 1882.

¹²⁰ "John C. Noel," *State Journal*, January 20, 1951.

¹²¹ McCarr 29, 118; "George Wilkes and Honest Allen, at the Ashland Stud Farm," *Kentucky Gazette*, March 11, 1874.

¹²² "The Horse Show. Magnificent Display," *Kentucky Gazette*, April 15, 1874.

¹²³ Busbey, 91-92.

¹²⁴ "Removal," *Kentucky Gazette*, November 29, 1876.

¹²⁵ Fayette County land records, January 1, 1877, deed book 56, 313-316.

¹²⁶ *History of Fayette County*, 723.

¹²⁷ "The Trotter in Kentucky," *Courier-Journal*, July 4, 1878.

¹²⁸ Fayette County land records, August 11, 1880, deed book 61, 387-390.

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[was] in every department furnished with every improvement to add to the health and comfort of the stock.”¹²⁹ Meanwhile, the track to the north of the Mentelle House was “one of the finest and safest in Kentucky, and the competence and experience of the men employed is in keeping with the unrivalled position this model establishment holds among the first and best known in the land.”



Horsemen's Headquarters & Ashland Park Stock Farm advertisement

Like Withers, Treacy was as astute at marketing his horses as he was at breeding them. The Horsemen's Headquarters in downtown Lexington, which he co-owned with partner G. D. Wilson, was the nerve center of his commercial trade. For a quarter century, “it was the scene of the greatest sales of horses and the favorite gathering place for all the celebrated turfmen of the country.”¹³⁰ Treacy also produced extensive catalogs — some of which ran up to 300 pages — that identified his trotting stallions, broodmares, and youngsters for prospective buyer. The trade publications were soon remarking on an “almost unprecedented circumstance”: although Treacy had “sold costly horses to gentlemen in all parts of the country, no horse has every yet been returned to him.”¹³¹ This feat partially can be attributed to Treacy's selection of legendary racehorses as sires, which included George Wilkes, Mambrino Pilot, Honest Allen, and Almont.¹³² During the 1880s, Treacy's “name and fame gained distinction not only in the United States but in the capitals of Europe, where some of the products of his Ashland Park Stock Farm became celebrities of the turf and stud.”¹³³ His clients included the Mayor of Dublin, who “pull[ed] the reigns over a colt bred by Treacy,” as well as noted Melbourne-based racer J. J.

¹²⁹ George Ranck, *A Review of Lexington as She Is* (New York: John Lethem, 1887), 49.

¹³⁰ Connelly and Coulter, 901; “Horseman's Headquarters,” *Lexington Weekly Press*, February 13, 1878. This building has not survived.

¹³¹ J. D., “Ashland Park and its Proprietor,” 5.

¹³² “A New Catalogue,” *Kentucky Leader*, September 17, 1889; J. D., “Ashland Park and its Proprietor,” *Farmer's Magazine* (August 1879): 8.

¹³³ Connelly, 900.

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Miller.¹³⁴ An 1887 article first published in the *St. Louis Republican* confirmed that Treacy's stables "contain the finest young trotting stock in the country the year around. Wealthy buyers from the East and West, from the Pacific Coast and the Territories, come to these stables to purchase."¹³⁵ Newspapers in distant Baltimore similarly identified Treacy as "possibly the most extensive breeder of harness horses in the world."¹³⁶



Title page of *The Horseman* 8, no. 13 (March 29, 1888)

Always attentive to an advertising opportunity, Treacy regularly welcomed visiting politicians, dignitaries, and delegations to Ashland Park Stock Farm. Along with the Lexington Cemetery and Ashland, it became a key stop on the city's tourism circuit. Midwestern chapters of the Grand Army of the Republic, former senators, and even President Chester A. Arthur came to marvel at Treacy's facilities and impressive stock.¹³⁷

3. B. J. Treacy's Political Career and the Decline of Ashland Park Stock Farm

Aside from his horse breeding, Treacy was "one of the strongest factors in Lexington's political life," serving as a longtime councilmember and a leading representative for the city's

¹³⁴ J. K. S., "Ashland Park," *Courier-Journal*, April 22, 1883; "Off to Australia," *Kentucky Leader*, August 14, 1888.

¹³⁵ "The Bluegrass Region," *Courier-Journal*, October 29, 1887.

¹³⁶ "Barney Treacy in Town," *Baltimore Sun*, June 5, 1894.

¹³⁷ "Ingallis," *Kentucky Leader*, August 10, 1891; "G. A. R. Visitors," *Kentucky Leader*, September 13, 1895.

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Irish community.¹³⁸ One writer for the *Courier-Journal* praised Treacy's "veneration, for his native land" and noted that "he never ceases to sing the praises of Burke, Gratton, Curran, and a long list of other patriots and statesmen." Treacy emulated these luminaries by serving as President of the Irish National Benevolent Association, a charitable organization that received its charter from the state in 1870.¹³⁹ He kept his finger on the pulse of Irish politics and, in 1880, volunteered as treasurer for a new Irish Relief Association "formed...for the purpose of raising funds...for the famine stricken people of Ireland."¹⁴⁰ Treacy was also eager to invite leading Irish MP Charles Stewart Parnell to Kentucky and was elected president of the Lexington branch of the Irish National League in 1890. In that capacity, he vowed to support Parnell, who was suffering political setbacks following the revelation of his adulterous relationship with English aristocrat Kitty O'Shea. In fact, Treacy went so far as to transmit a telegram reassuring Parnell that his "leadership is prior in time, paramount in title and supreme in the hearts of Irish Kentuckians."¹⁴¹

A Democrat, Treacy was first elected to the city council in 1872 as a representative for Ward 3. Seven years later, his constituents returned him to office "by the largest vote ever polled in the ward"; he won this seat once again in the 1890s.¹⁴² Yet Treacy's political career was hardly smooth sailing. A man of bold views, he was liable to violate the political etiquette of the day. In 1881, a tumult ensued after he and councilmember M. Kaufman "used offensive language toward each other like liar and coward."¹⁴³ His reputation besmirched, Treacy "hit Kaufman a blow in the face," attempted to attack him while brandishing a large knife, and was quickly arrested. In 1892, Treacy was embroiled in another conflict with the Lexington Hydraulic and Manufacturing Company, which sourced its water from a reservoir on the southern portion of the Ellerslie estate.¹⁴⁴ This organization charged Treacy with polluting their supply, as he allowed his horses to roam free and deposit their manure in its watershed.¹⁴⁵ In doing so, he was allegedly violating his lease with Preston that prohibited any contamination of the lands adjoining the reservoir. In response, Treacy insisted that he was a victim of retaliation. The waterworks had once desired a hefty buyout from the city, but he had quashed that deal when serving as council president.¹⁴⁶

Treacy fatefully clashed with his peers once more in 1896, when a councilmember accused him of misrepresenting his place of residence and "illegally holding office."¹⁴⁷ In the most recent city directory, Treacy had provided his Ashland Park address, which was technically located in Athens' Precinct 2. Piling on to this attack, Treacy's opponent upbraided him for

¹³⁸ "Death Ends the Suffering of Capt. Bernard J. Treacy," *Weekly Leader*, September 15, 1897.

¹³⁹ "Irish National Benevolent Association," *Lexington Weekly Press*, June 27, 1875; "Ireland's Holiday," *Lexington Weekly Press*, March 21, 1875.

¹⁴⁰ "Ireland," *Kentucky Gazette*, January 14, 1880.

¹⁴¹ "Stand by Parnell," *Kentucky Leader*, December 8, 1890.

¹⁴² *History of Fayette County, Kentucky*, 725.

¹⁴³ "Two City Fathers Fight," *Courier-Journal*, March 11, 1881.

¹⁴⁴ William Preston had incorporated this company in 1882, though he stepped down from its leadership the following year. See *Historical and Pictorial Review of the City of Lexington and Police and Fire Departments*, ed. R. J. O'Mahoney (1914).

¹⁴⁵ "Mr. Treacy Must Quit," *Kentucky Leader*, October 17, 1892; "The Water Situation," *Kentucky Leader*, October 23, 1892.

¹⁴⁶ "Treacy and Water," *Kentucky Leader*, November 1, 1892.

¹⁴⁷ "Mr. Prather Replies to the Interview of Councilman Treacy," *Kentucky Leader*, April 17, 1895.

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wasting public money and increasing the city's bonded debt. Although Treacy claimed that his furnished — albeit unoccupied — house on East Main was still his primary dwelling, the Judiciary Committee of the Board of Alderman declared his seat vacant in October 1895; Mayor Duncan sanctioned this decision.¹⁴⁸ Still, a letter in the *Morning Herald* signed by various judges and justices advocated for Treacy's eligibility based on the fact that he "refuses to rent out his house on Main Street, that he is engaged in business in Lexington and has voted in Precinct H in said city for many years."¹⁴⁹

The Panic of 1893 hit the horse industry hard, and Treacy's operation was not spared. By February 1896, "the assignment, though not the failure, of Mr. B. J. Treacy, the noted horseman and breeder, ha[d] attracted the attention of breeders and lovers of the horse all over the country." While Treacy's stock was valued at \$153,000, he apparently owed \$71,000 in debts. Still, his backers continued to support him in the columns of the *Morning Herald*, insisting that

he has brought into the town a vast amount of money in the last thirty years, has been public spirited always, has contributed much more than any other one man to build up the town and its interests, and public spirit ought to support him now in his fight to put the horse interest back where it was when it brought millions to Lexington.¹⁵⁰

Industry insiders from Indianapolis, Toronto, Chicago, Michigan, and New York also conveyed their sympathy for Treacy. Although he initially refused to allow his horses to be auctioned, sales commenced in June; the broodmares on offer included "the dams of nearly all the campaigners who have made Ashland Park famous."¹⁵¹ But Lexingtonians continued to rally behind Treacy in his hour of need. Regretting that the horse "trade ha[d] dwindled to comparatively nothing," one article declared that it was in "the interest of Lexington to see a revival and a resumption of business at Ashland Park Stock Farm."¹⁵² In October, horsemen from across America and Europe arrived in the city to purchase Treacy's remaining inventory. The *Morning Herald* hoped that high prices would be offered, as Ashland Park was "the place to which the whole world looks for the standard to be set upon the values of trotters now and for the future."¹⁵³

Despite this sustained international interest in his breeding, Treacy was nevertheless evicted the following spring. Brought to court, he resented the allegations of a Mr. Thornton, the Prestons' attorney, that he was nothing more than a trespasser on their land. "Weighed in any scale in which manhood was weighed," Treacy contended that he was Thornton's equal. Following this statement, Thornton picked up the judge's walking stick and proceeded to strike Treacy on the side of the head, leaving a wound an inch and a half thick; "the stick was broken in three pieces, the metal handle bringing away some of Mr. Treacy's scalp and blood." Summoned back to court, both Thornton and Treacy were fined for contempt, and the latter was ordered to vacate his farm by April 2. That same month, Treacy was also forced to put his Horsemen's Headquarters up for public auction to cover his debts, but long-term partner G. D. Wilson

¹⁴⁸ "Mr. B. J. Treacy," *Kentucky Leader*, October 11, 1895; "Mayor Duncan," *Daily Leader*, December 5, 1895.

¹⁴⁹ "Treacy is a Resident of the City," *Morning Herald*, January 19, 1896.

¹⁵⁰ "Treacy's Troubles," *Morning Herald*, February 16, 1896.

¹⁵¹ "No Sale," *Daily Leader*, April 21, 1896; "Ashland Park Farm," *The Leader*, June 13, 1896.

¹⁵² "Treacy's Sale," *Morning Herald*, September 20, 1896.

¹⁵³ "NY Horsemen Visit Capt. Treacy at Ashland Park," *Morning Herald*, October 5, 1896.

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managed to repurchase it — much to the delight of the assembled crowd.¹⁵⁴ His property sold, Treacy travelled to New England for some rest and relaxation on the seashore. Tragically, his stay — and life — were cut short following a fall on the outdoor stairs of the Beacon Hill residence where he was staying. Somehow, he was impaled on a picket of the iron railing, which went through his eye socket. The papers reported that ““there are hints of foul play and a quiet but thorough investigation is being conducted.”¹⁵⁵

As for Ashland Park Stock Farm, it was thereafter leased to a Colonel Bob Anderson, who was himself evicted for “injuring private property” and pulling up stakes that contractors had laid to mark the new McDowell Speedway (Richmond Road).¹⁵⁶ In 1901, Iowa-based breeder C. W. Williams took over Ashland Park and was fêted in the columns of the *Morning Herald*: “what P. T. Barnum was to the show business, C. W. Williams has been to the trotting track.”¹⁵⁷ Despite this high praise, Williams gave up his lease in 1903 and the stables were soon after converted into tobacco storage barns.¹⁵⁸ In eulogizing Ashland Park Stock Farm, the *Breeder and Sportsman* recalled that Treacy’s operation was “considered the most perfect of its kind in America, and in the heyday of its glory thousands of people visited it every year.”¹⁵⁹



Woodcut print of Horsemen’s Headquarters, c. 1883

¹⁵⁴ “G. D. Wilson Buys,” *Morning Herald*, April 23, 1897.

¹⁵⁵ “Death Ends the Suffering.”

¹⁵⁶ “The Trotters,” *Morning Herald*, May 20, 1897; “Tables Turned,” *Morning Herald*, September 9, 1897.

¹⁵⁷ “C. W. Williams and his Ashland Park Stock Farm,” *Morning Herald*, June 23, 1901.

¹⁵⁸ “Horse Chat,” *Morning Herald*, January 19, 1903.

¹⁵⁹ “Ashland Park Stock Farm,” *Breeder and Sportsman*, 1904.

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Evaluation of the Mentelle House's Significance within the Contexts of Education in Early Kentucky and the Standardbred Horse Industry

The building at 116 Lincoln Avenue served a key educational function in an era when opportunities for learning (especially for women) were few and far between. While most of the small academies and seminaries in early Kentucky were either short-lived, transient affairs or denominational, Charlotte Mentelle's boarding school endured as a fixture in Lexington for decades. Due to her family's social connections and unusual origins, she was able to attract a varied clientele while offering an atypically modern curriculum. Occasionally, students came to her establishment for her immersive, French-language instruction — an optional offering.¹⁶⁰ Others like Mary Todd and Mary Lewinski belonged to leading families that were socially connected with the Mentelles. After the Civil War, the Mentelle House constituted part of the renowned Ashland Park Stock Farm, a cornerstone of the country's trotting horse industry. The property during this time served as the de facto primary residence of B. J. Treacy, an expert breeder and popular — albeit irascible — figure in Lexington city politics. An oft-visited tourist destination, it garnered not only national, but international, attention.

Evaluation of the Integrity between the Mentelle House's Significance and its Physical Condition at Present

Unlike the Withers House, which has received incompatible contemporary additions, or the lost Woodlake Farm mansion, the Mentelle House retains a high degree of architectural integrity. As the only surviving component of the legendary Ellerslie estate, it remains in its original location. The surrounding acreage was carved into residential lots in 1909, but the Mentelle House occupies a premier siting on a spacious parcel unlike the compact bungalows that adjoin it. The integrity of its setting is therefore intact, as one can clearly determine that this property predates the Kenwick subdivision. Structurally, the house conforms to its 1880s-era floor plan, though a contemporary sunporch has been added to the south elevation. Its original windows, stone foundations, and brick chimneys testify to the integrity of its materials. In certain sections, vertical boards and battens are still present under the clapboard siding. While a couple of flamboyant, Gothic Revival manors based on A. J. Downing's schematics do survive in Lexington (Elley Villa, Loudon House), vernacularized examples of this style are few and far between. The Mentelle House is therefore a recognizable, rare specimen of residential Gothic Revival design comparable to Lewinski's keeper's cottage at Ashland or the brick farmhouse at 463 Morgan Avenue (a possible John McMurtry creation). While the former is in excellent condition, the latter received an incompatible modern addition and has long suffered neglect.

¹⁶⁰ Runyon, 184.

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To left: Photograph of Keeper's Cottage at Ashland. 1951 (University of Kentucky Special Collections: Clay Lancaster Kentucky Architectural Photographs)

To right: Photograph of 463 Morgan Avenue, October 2024

The loss of the Mentelle House's original iron porch parapet is lamentable, though it is unlikely that such a feature would have survived into the present day. Within the interior, original door architraves, fireplace surrounds, and flooring reflect the vernacular workmanship of the mid-nineteenth century. The current owners' efforts to restore the original layout, which included the installation of a period-appropriate, salvaged staircase in the central hall, have further enhanced the feeling that the building generates.



Photograph of original, bark-covered joist under house's central block

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Photograph of iron porch parapet elements



Photograph of original newel post location



Photograph of 387 Spring Street [source of salvaged staircase], 1975
(University of Kentucky Special Collections, Carolyn Murray-Wooley collection)

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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 # _____

Mentelle House

Name of Property

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_____ 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): F AE-1144

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .5682

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 38.03152 Longitude: -84.47859

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or

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:

Mentelle House

Name of Property

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property encompasses lots 22, 23, and 24 in the Wickliffe Land Company's Addition to Lexington (plat book 1, 152-153). Beginning 220 feet north of Richmond Road, the property line runs 165 feet north along the east side of Lincoln Avenue. It then extends 150 feet east to a corner point, proceeds 165 feet south, and then returns 150 feet west to the origin of this demarcation.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

These boundaries mirror the legal description of the property in the deed records and include both the main house and the historic, albeit noncontributing, carriage house.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Dr. Zak Leonard, historic preservation manager

organization: Blue Grass Trust for Historic Preservation

street & number: 201 N Mill Street

city or town: Lexington

State: Kentucky

Zip code: 40507

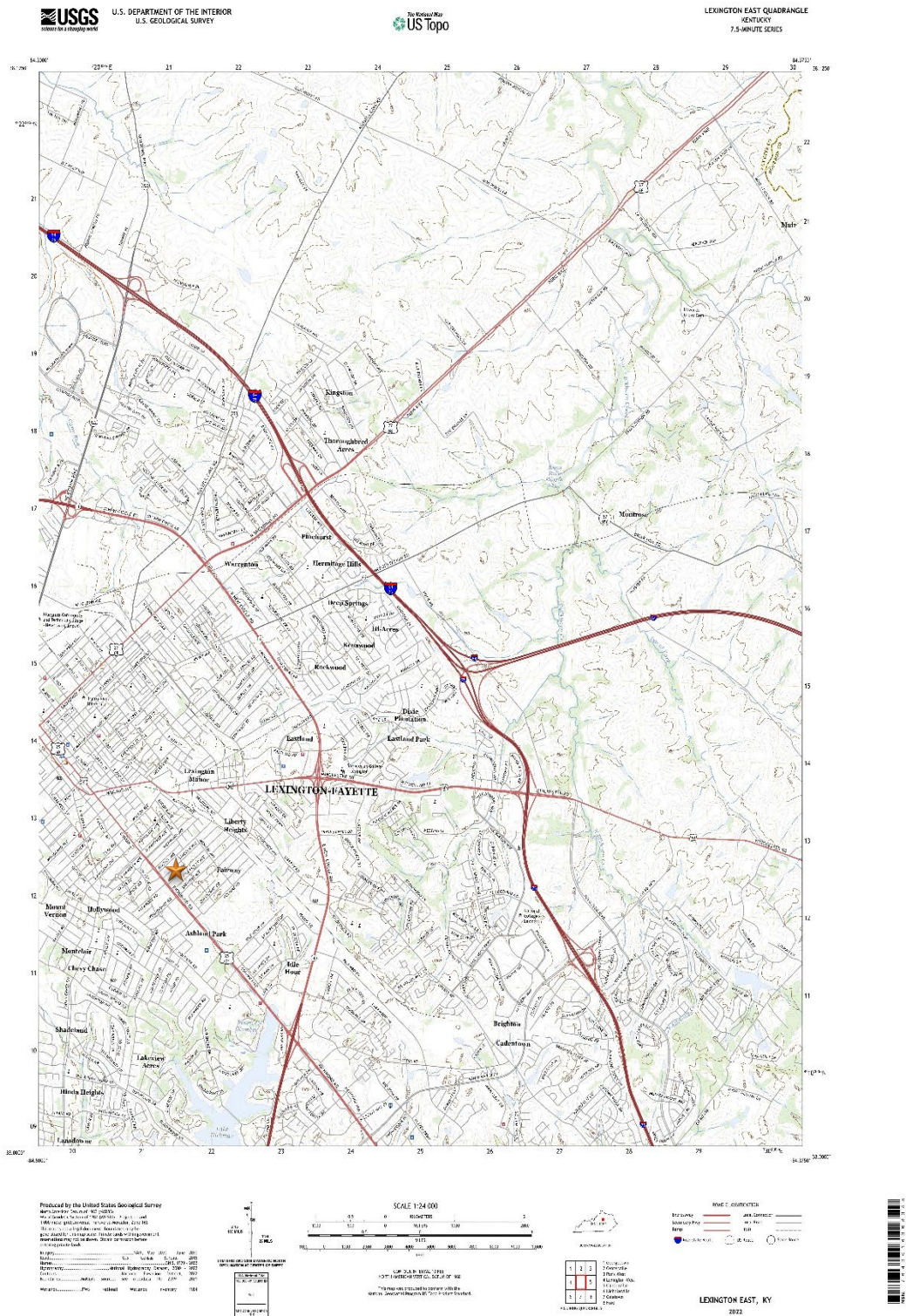
e-mail: zleonard@bluegrasstrust.org

telephone: 781-330-9853

date: March 17, 2025

Mentelle House
Name of Property

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County and State



Mentelle House

Name of Property

Fayette, KY

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Mentelle House
City or Vicinity: Lexington
County: Fayette
State: Kentucky
Photographer: Dr. Zak Leonard
Date Photographed: variable

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

- 1 of 9: View of Mentelle House façade (west elevation), facing east, April 2024
- 2 of 9: View of Mentelle House north and west elevations, facing southeast, February 2025
- 3 of 9: View of Mentelle House north elevation (rear ell) and east elevation (north wing), facing southwest, February 2025
- 4 of 9: View of Mentelle House south façade, facing northwest, September 2024
- 5 of 9: View of Mentelle House north parlor, facing southeast, February 2025
- 6 of 9: View of Mentelle House rear room (original ell), facing northeast, February 2025
- 7 of 9: View of Mentelle House south parlor, facing northwest, February 2025
- 8 of 9: View of Mentelle House south wing, facing southeast, February 2025
- 9 of 9: View of Mentelle House south bedroom, second floor, facing north, February 2025

Mentelle House

Name of Property

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Area Map of Lexington and Surroundings where the Mentelle House is Located