

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Henry Town Historic District

Other names/site number: See Description Inventory

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: Bounded by US 31-W, the CSX railroad tracks, McFerran Street, S.R. 335, Peebles and Smith Streets, and Guthrie Street.

City or town: Horse Cave

State: Kentucky

County: Hart

Not For Publication

NA

Vicinity:

NA

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following

level(s) of significance: 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

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	Noncontributing	
<u>89</u>	<u>41</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>58</u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>90</u>	<u>99</u>	Total

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

RELIGION/religious facility

FUNERARY/cemetery

VACANT/NOT IN USE

Current Functions

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

RELIGION/religious facility

FUNERARY/cemetery

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

LATE VICTORIAN: Queen Anne

LATE 19th AND 20th CENTURY REVIVALS: Colonial Revival

LATE 19th AND 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Bungalow/Craftsman

LATE 19th AND 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Minimal Traditional

MODERN MOVEMENT: Ranch

Materials:

Foundation: Stone, Brick, Concrete

Exterior Walls: Wood, Vinyl, Metal, Brick, Concrete block, Stone

Roof: Asphalt and Synthetics

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Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Henry Town Historic District encompasses an area west of downtown Horse Cave, a city in Hart County, Kentucky. The district straddles West Main Street and is entirely located on the west side of the former Louisville & Nashville (L&N) Railroad, now a line in the Seaboard System Railroad. The district was an area that was historically consigned as the African American part of town. The district eventually came to include residential streets, shops, churches and industry. This District includes the neighborhood known as Henry Town, the heart of the Horse Cave African American community, but it also extends farther than those recognized boundaries to include other areas that were once part of the flourishing Black community. The proposed district covers approximately 150 acres and is roughly bounded by the residential parcels along McFerran Street, Old Dixie Highway, Church Street, Smith Street, and Guthrie Street as well as the L&N railroad line to the east. The district is mainly single-family dwellings. The Henry Town Historic District has resources that range from ca. 1880 through the twenty-first century. Its Period of Significance (POS) begins in 1880, the estimated date of construction for the earliest buildings in the district, and 1975, marking a point 50 years ago. The district features 90 Contributing resources and 99 Non-Contributing resources (41 buildings and 58 sites). All Non-Contributing properties are considered such because they are either vacant lots or were constructed after the POS. The district as a whole conveys its historic identity as an intact African American residential community dating from the mid-to-late nineteenth century in a small rural southern town.

This district has been named the Henry Town Historic District to reflect the fact that the entirety of the Henry Town neighborhood of Horse Cave is included within its boundaries. However, the name is also somewhat misleading, as the district also contains areas outside of the traditional limits of Henry Town, most notably, in Barlow Hill. These resources were included in the district because of the shared association with Horse Cave's African American settlement patterns and the African American community as a whole. Moreover, while Barlow Hill historically was one of the areas in which African Americans could live, it was not wholly segregated, as was Henry Town, especially into the mid-to-late twentieth century. The name Henry Town to Horse Cave citizens, particularly the African American community, is synonymous with the city's Black community, heritage, memory and identity, thus it seemed to be the most accurate and inclusive name for this district.

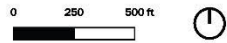
Character of Site

Horse Cave's development was greatly influenced by the railroad line at what became the heart of the community. Along the line can be found the NRHP-listed Horse Cave Historic District (NR #01000796), which extends slightly to the west of the tracks to encompass sites where buildings once stood along the tracks.

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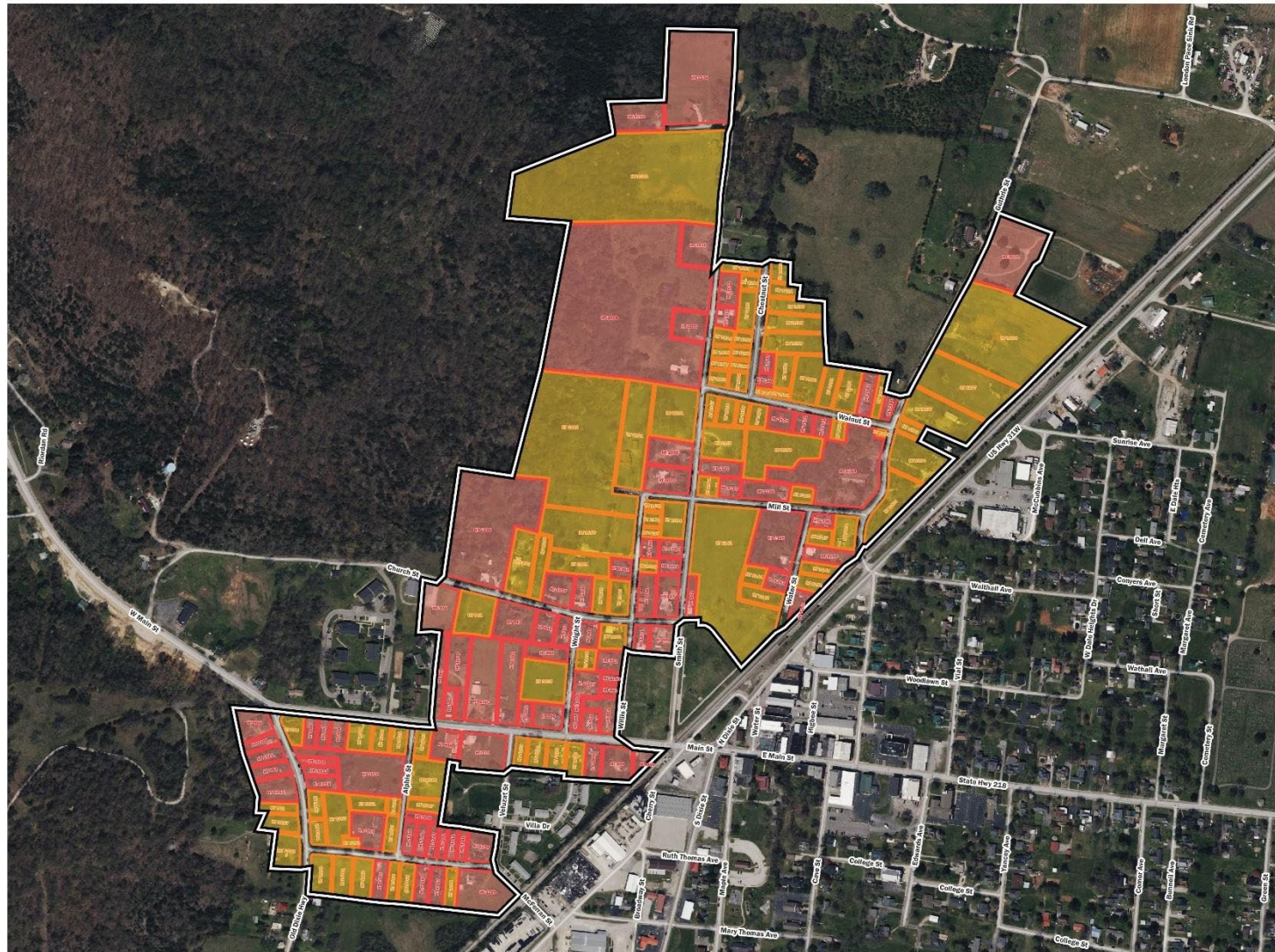
**Henrytown
Historic District**
Hart County, Kentucky
District Sketch Map



Legend

District Parcels

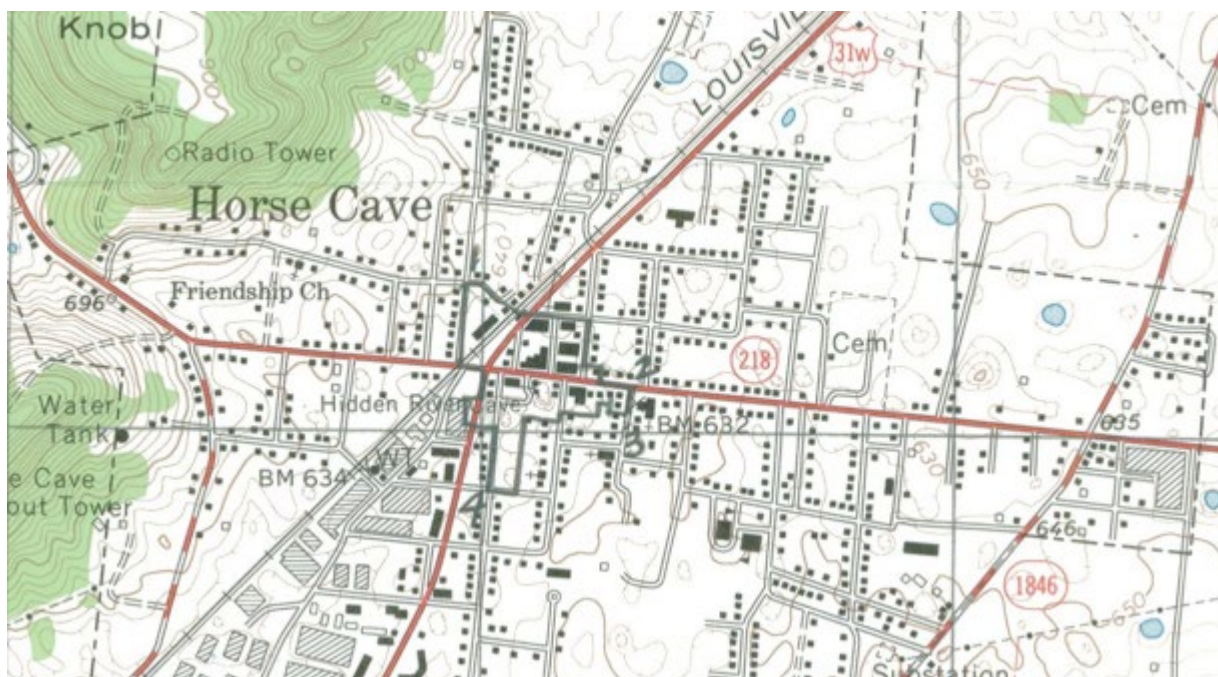
- Contributing
- Non Contributing



District Map Showing Boundaries and Contributing and Non-Contributing Resources

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Horse Cave Historic District boundary (1966 USGS Horse Cave, KY quad)

The Henry Town Historic District is a collection of primarily single-family homes but also includes a church and the city's African American cemetery, that combined make up the area of Horse Cave that was historically reserved for the Black community. The Henry Town Historic District is entirely situated on the west side of the railroad tracks that bisect the city and historically separated its segregated sections. The City of Horse Cave is located at the intersection of US 31-W (Dixie Street) and Kentucky State Route 218 (Main Street), along the former L&N Railroad line. After the mid-twentieth century, the construction of Interstate 65 bypassed the cave town, skirting Horse Cave by nearly 2.5-miles to its west. However, the city's location along a major road (US 31-W) and the presence of the cave entrance on SR 218 allowed the city to endure with little change to the overall population or daily life over the last several decades.

Outside of the proposed boundaries, the district is surrounded by dense forested hills to the north and west, with a smattering of other residential properties, the city's historic industrial sector to the south along the railroad line, and the historic downtown and dense residential development to the east, including the Horse Cave Residential Historic District, determined eligible in 2024 (NRIS SG100010781). There are two major thoroughfares that pass through the district, W. Main Street and Old Dixie Highway., in addition to the former L&N that creates the proposed district's eastern boundary. The boundaries of this district reflect the earliest residential development of the land west of the tracks in Horse Cave. The layout of these streets dates back to the late nineteenth century after the L&N constructed their railroad line and established a presence in Horse Cave and the city began to flourish around the train depot. While there are some residential buildings to the north, south, and west of the district, some of which may fall within the POS, they were not included in this district because they are either outside of the city limits or were not part of the early development of this, the African American part of town.

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This proposed district, while residential in character, is still a largely rural and somewhat casual-appearing residential neighborhood. Its houses vary in form, date, method of construction, and current condition. The houses lack formal styling. The streets lack sidewalks. There is a uniformity in setback and landscaping features, two aspects which indicate its urban nature. The district's qualities are actually commonplace for rural residential enclaves, as well as for developments where progress was gradual, construction was undertaken out of necessity and practicality, with less thought for flourish and display, and where unity existed in the residents and the community more so than in a strict cohesive appearance among the buildings.

The district as a whole is situated in the wooded foothills, which adds to the rural feeling. There are old trees and dense vegetation, as well as collections of buildings standing side by side followed by open undeveloped lots. The houses have modest footprints and the streets are rectilinear, similar to the residential developments on the east side of the tracks. Overall, the general layout and character of the district is that of a typical rural suburban development, albeit one that had inferior infrastructure and resources compared to its counterpart to the east around the commercial corridor.

Description of Resource

The Henry Town Historic District was laid out and inhabited around the same time as the rest of the city and, as such, the general spatial layout and infrastructure of the district was informed by the commercial and residential development around the city center and the commercial corridor. While it is unclear when the Henry Town Historic District was originally platted, or by whom, but it likely occurred at the same time as the rest of the city, around the time when the railroad was constructed. The land, being less desirable due to the topography, was intended for the African American population, but it is unclear whether the African American community, or the white governing body was in charge of the lot lines. However, the various sizes and inconsistent shapes of the lots suggest that the area was settled as needed with official property lines reflecting the properties' use, thus many of the lots are small in size to accommodate just a small residential dwelling, while others are large and stretch into undevelopable, or unworkable, land. The City of Horse Cave as a whole is laid out with the commercial district located adjacent to the railroad line and the industrial development occurring further along the line. Similarly, the residential development on the east side of the tracks, built by and for the white residents of Horse Cave spread out from the commercial corridor, extending only a few blocks to the north, east, and south (all east of the railroad line) at first, before later growth in Horse Cave occurred outside of this central core.

The improvement of the land on the west side of the tracks was similarly influenced by the early elements of Horse Cave's development: the presence of the railroad line, the commercial corridor, and early industry. The railroad line facilitated the west side's growth. The land around the railroad line was the first to be developed on both sides of the line and became the most valuable land due to its proximity to the tracks. Hotels and larger dwellings were constructed west of and closest to the track, but as one moved further away from of the tracks, modest residential structures were built for African American housing. The railroad line and these buildings on the west side of the track served as a physical barrier separating the white side of the town from the African American enclave.

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Some aspects of the district exhibit what is found in other residential neighborhoods: larger houses with nicer elevated styles and uniform setbacks are found along the major thoroughfare of West Main Street. These were typically the more sought after lots, as they provided ease of access to the transportation routes and the rest of the city and surrounding region.

Unlike the residential development around the district's commercial corridor, the residential lots in the Henry Town Historic District are irregular in shape and size. The reason for this character is multi-faceted. The land to the west of the tracks is situated at the base of a huge swath of ridges, knobs, and hills that are characteristic of the cave region, while the land on the other side of the tracks is relatively flat and uniform. The superior ground was chosen for the establishment of the city center and the primary residential development surrounding it, while the inferior and infertile land was less desirable, and so, thought to be fit for the African Americans. Not only topography, but work opportunities, wealth disparities, and enforced segregation led to the development of rural African American communities to occur more organically over time. Modest dwellings were constructed sporadically; lots were subdivided without regard to a rigid plan; and the style, form, and setbacks were chosen less for their aesthetic qualities and uniformity and more for feasibility and usefulness. These factors led to the gradual and natural growth of the Henry Town district, resulting in an eclectic collection of residential resources with a variety of styles and forms and irregular and inconsistent setbacks.



1938 USGS Topographic Map showing the steep topography west of the railroad lines compared to the east.

The two major influences over the district's development are early transportation routes, namely West Main Street and the L&N Railroad line. Horse Cave in general owes its formation and growth to its location along the main L&N line. The L&N began to build the track in 1857-1858 and the town was laid out the year after, which included land for a rail depot. The railroad line's location in the heart of Horse Cave allowed a point for people from the surrounding region to converge to ship produce, tobacco, and livestock with the major vehicular transportation routes.

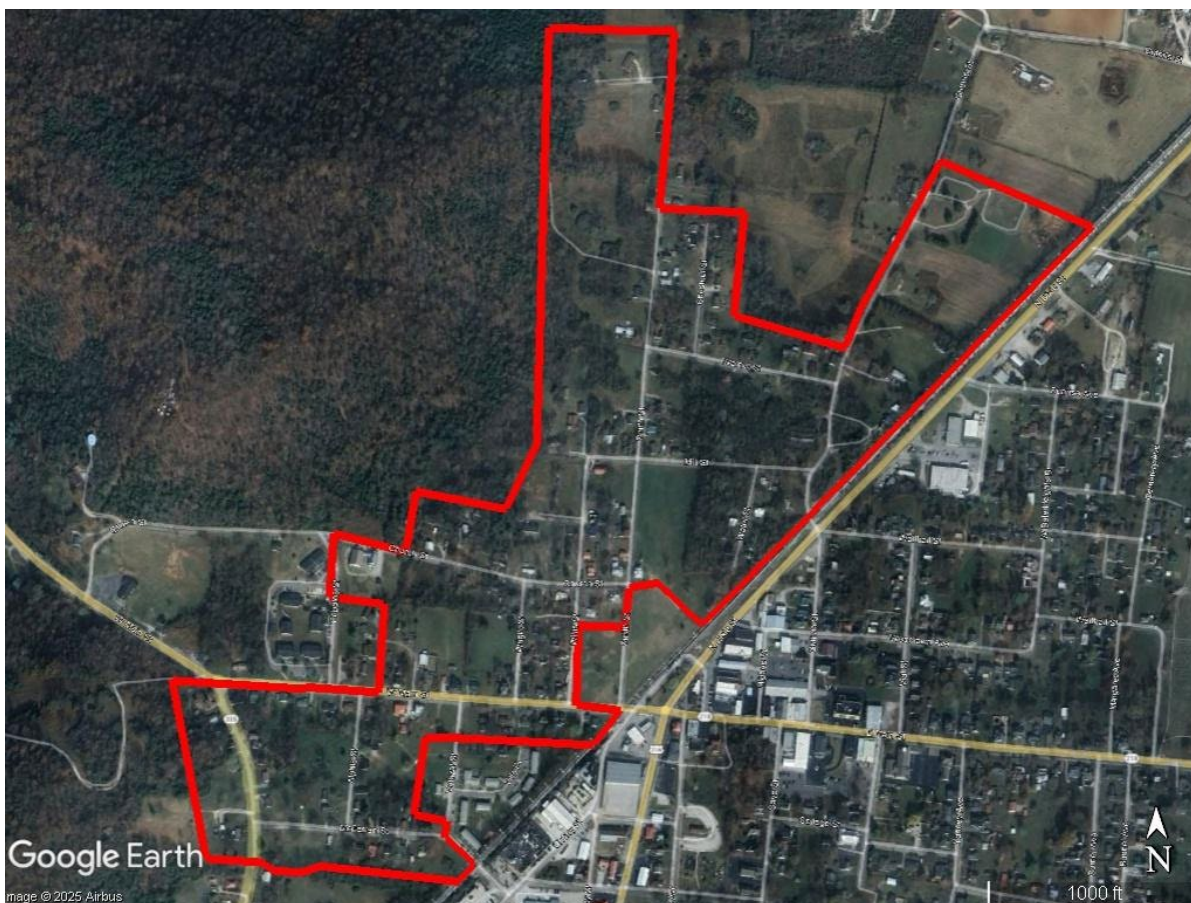
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Immediately east of the railroad tracks, and running parallel to it, is US 31-W, the Dixie Highway. US 31-W never crosses west of the tracks in Horse Cave. In the automobile era, Dixie Street facilitated travel to and from town from the north and south; East Main brought travelers from the east. These transportation routes were integral to the growth and survival of Horse Cave and thus were the focal points of the earliest stages of residential development on both sides of the track. Proximity to these transportation routes and the center of the city's and county's commerce were integral to the residential development, both African American and white alike.



Street pattern on Horse Cave's West Side, west of North Dixie Street

The streets in the Henry Town Historic District are laid out in a truncated grid-like pattern with the key residential arteries branching off W. Main St and running to the north and south. This grid only falters where topographic irregularities and the presence of the railroad line required roads to curve or dead end. The original layout of the district has not changed in over 100 years, with Main Street being the key point of entry into the Henry Town district from Horse Cave proper and all residential side streets branching to the north and south.

Non-Residential District Resources

The Henry Town Historic District consists almost exclusively of single-family residential properties with associated outbuildings, some of which are agricultural in nature, however there are some notable exceptions. The first of these exceptions is the presence of religious facilities.

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Having various churches within the residential enclaves around a rural city is commonplace among small towns in Kentucky. While only one of the historic churches remains within the district boundaries (others have been torn down in the last 150 years with one of them being rebuilt in the 1990s on the original site, however it is outside the district boundaries), the presence of churches among residential buildings is established and expected.

The other obvious exception to the district's residential character is the presence of the Horse Cave Cemetery, established in 1850, which in decades past was also called the Horse Cave Colored Cemetery to differentiate it from the Horse Cave Municipal Cemetery on the east side of town. As the earlier name suggests, this cemetery was reserved for the city's Black burials. The cemetery is located in the northernmost portion, in the outskirts of the district. Similar to churches, it was commonplace for early rural towns to feature cemeteries in close proximity to the residential sections of the city. Closeness was key for ease of access for services and visitations alike. The Horse Cave Cemetery is a picturesque rural cemetery with tree-lined boundaries, winding roads, and a variety of grave markers dating from the late nineteenth century through the present, however, similar to the rest of the Henry Town district, the topography of the land sets it apart from its white counterpart, having a slight grade and dips and valleys while the Municipal Cemetery is flat. .

There is a single commercial building within the district, located at 311 W. Main Street, at the corner of West Main and Old Dixie Highway. This resource is a former grocery and gas station dating to the early decades of the twentieth century that has since been converted into a used car lot. This resource is situated in a strategic location, right at the corner of the two major thoroughfares on the west side of town, uniquely positioned to catch traffic coming to and leaving Horse Cave.

Residential District Resources

The diverse collection of residential resources is an interesting and telling feature of the Henry Town Historic District. There are larger, more stylistically influenced houses along West Main Street, which is to be expected since it is the major pathway connecting the west side of Horse Cave to the east and connecting Horse Cave to the broader region. This small collection of houses, while still much more modest and lacking in ornamentation when compared to the houses along East Main Street, are distinctive among the resources in the rest of the district. These buildings tend to have a larger footprint and similar setbacks, sitting on a slight rise on the north side of the street while sitting slightly below grade on the south. While larger and stylistically apart from those on the smaller side streets, these houses lack excessive flare and embellishment. Instead, they rely on form and subtle architectural features to display their differing styles. These resources serve to almost bridge the gap between the smaller more modest houses throughout the rest of the district and the extravagant and heavily-ornamented houses on the east side of town, even though stylistically, those on West Main Street and those in the Horse Cave Residential Historic District are similar.

There are a few larger dwellings next to the area where hotels once stood, just northeast of the intersection between West Main Street and the L&N. These larger dwellings are remnants of a time when the railroad tracks were an extension of the downtown in terms of commerce and

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activity. While it is unclear if these houses were historically built for African Americans, they have survived as integral parts of the African American neighborhood for over a century.

The majority of the houses in the Henry Town Historic District are modest in style and form, lacking significant additions, ornamentation, or superfluosity. They are nearly all one-story tall, with an occasional one-and-a-half story house interspersed in and even fewer two-story residences. In appearance, the houses can differ significantly with different roof configurations, massing, and shape but they are all unpretentious and practical, with any stylistic influences reminiscent of the era in which the building was constructed. Materials throughout the district are conventional and easily found, such as vinyl and asbestos siding and brick veneer and are representative of accessible materials at the time of construction as well as commonplace replacement materials easily available today. The utilitarian nature of the buildings within the district are characteristic of such residential communities, ones that are disenfranchised and lack the affluence of the wealthier neighbors to the east. Despite the differing styles, forms, and periods during which the resources were constructed, the district as a whole still maintains a sense of cohesiveness and uniformity, with none of the houses seeming out of place, whether it is the 1980s Ranch or the early 20th century one-room cottages.

Changes to the Property Since the Period of Significance

There have been some changes to the district over the years, but only in the built environment, not in the general layout/configuration. Over the last several decades, there have been some instances of new development and construction, but most notably, there has been the loss of historic resources, either due to intentional demolition or demolition by neglect. In many cases, small single-family homes that were once owned by longtime Horse Cave residents who have since passed, fell into disrepair as there was no one to move in or the property was not worth the investment. However, there has been new construction in the last half century, seen in some of this district's Non-Contributing Resources or other buildings that are situated just outside the district's boundaries. Some of the new construction within the district, just outside the POS include houses built for Horse Cave residents, at a time when this area was still predominantly black, by using Community Block Grants, while other instances of new construction are examples of an expanding Horse Cave, as seen in new buildings along West Main Street, and a growing population, visible in multi-family apartment complexes. However, despite some change to the district's built environment, the overall character, layout, and setting remain recognizable.

Project Methodology

When surveying and assessing a neighborhood, certain methodologies must be employed, and thus explained to allow the reader to fully understand the information presented. One of the key elements that must be examined, identified and explained is the POS. The POS for the Henry Town Historic District begins in ca. 1880, the approximate date of construction of the first extant Contributing resource, and ends in 1975.

Once the POS has been identified, a comprehensive list of all resources within the district's boundaries whose construction falls within that time span must be compiled. In order to do this, other datasets must be consulted. Thankfully, the Hart County Property Valuation Administrator (the "PVA," which is the county tax assessment office in Kentucky) has an up-to-date database with each parcel in the county which includes key attributes such as parcel number, if there have

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been any improvements to the property, such as construction of buildings, and other key information about said buildings such as square footage, zoning, owner, and, sometimes, year built. Along with photographs, the key dataset used for the purposes of this nomination is the construction year. The PVA's construction year is often an estimate, based on key identifiers and historic documentation. Common practice for the Hart County PVA when dates are unknowable is to use a placeholder of 1900. This usually indicates a rough approximation, meaning the building could be built thirty years before or after 1900. This historian consulted historic maps of Horse Cave to confirm dates of construction within the district's boundaries. Additional steps were relied upon to identify whether or not that resource will be labeled Contributing or Non-Contributing. These steps are outlined below.

As is commonplace among rural African American communities, especially those that have a history spanning over one hundred years, many of the buildings have undergone some material changes, namely in a replacement of exterior material, small additions, and changes in fenestration. Additionally, some resources have experienced more noticeable and severe changes, such as unsympathetic additions. Many such changes occurred during the historic period and continue to the present. These changes have become a part of the visual character of such neighborhoods, and suggest that the families, while of modest means, demonstrate a pride of ownership by remodeling their house. Often such changes will obscure the original exterior wall cladding with something newer, "prettier," and easier to maintain, such as vinyl siding. The same is true for replacement windows. As such, in the Henry Town Historic District, these alterations are evaluated for their impact on the district's integrity. A building will receive a Contributing evaluation as long as it is still able to convey its identifiable form, features, details, and most importantly, its history as it is associated with the district as a whole. These determinations were made for each building that was built within the POS and are outlined in the table below. Some districts such as this one have undergone a loss of many historic resources. This can be explained as a consequence of the African American diaspora and the desire for younger generations to improve their social standing. This district has instances of the deterioration of houses when older generations pass and younger generations move on, leaving no one to care for the building. Alternatively, this can be seen in the resurgence of building in the District in the 1970s-1980s when the African American residents sought grant money to rebuild and beautify their community. While these circumstances seem to contradict one another, they are each a valuable part of the greater story of African American life in Horse Cave and, as such, resources that contribute to the District's sense of time and place.

The character-defining features of the District become a way to recognize which physical features of the District express the historic context outlined in the Statement of Significance. In the case of the Henry Town Historic District, its location, layout, and irregularities in arrangement are crucial to understanding the historic context, as the setting helps build the framework for the history.

As a whole, the Henry Town Historic District retains sufficient integrity to be eligible for listing on the NRHP. Each resource within the district was reviewed and certain aspects of integrity were weighed more heavily than others because the resources are pieces of a larger, more cohesive district. What defines the significance of the Henry Town Historic District is its relationship to the Horse Cave African American community who settled, lived, and thrived there. The buildings in the District document the decades of racial and economic disparities between the west side and east side of the railroad tracks and how the African American community grew throughout the

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years. This area is the only place in Horse Cave that can adequately and accurately depict or be associated with Black life in Horse Cave.

The following details the architectural ranking system utilized in this nomination to determine which resources were Contributing and which were Non-Contributing, and to explain the basis of judgement and evaluation applied each resource. Even nominations selecting Criterion A as their basis for eligibility require a system to evaluate the contribution of each property, so that a credible judgment on the district's integrity can be given.

In the case for buildings in Henry Town, a resource might have been altered over time; however, those modifications can be just as important as the original historic fabric because they illustrate the cultural value and history of a property. Therefore, if the extant resources retain enough historic features and form to convey their original construction and use, then they should be contributing elements to the Henry Town Historic District. The Historic Integrity Assessment Tool for the Henry Town Historic District (Contributing and Non-Contributing) was utilized to help review the integrity of the resources by ranking each resource in one of four categories.

Rank 1: These properties are contributing as they possess a high level of material and design intactness. They retain historic materials, original window and door openings, character-defining features, and building form. These buildings look very much like they did historically. See photographic examples below.

- Porch enclosures or removals: Porches should be mostly intact and remain unenclosed.
- Replacement cladding: Historic cladding material should be mostly intact.
- Replacement doors and windows: Historic doors and windows should be mostly intact.
- New additions: New additions should be located on the rear elevation and not highly visible from the front façade.



104 Church St



116 Smith St



202 W. Main St

Rank 2: These properties are contributing but have less intactness than a 1 ranking. They retain some historic materials, original window and door openings, character-defining features, and building form. The buildings are more altered than Rank 1 buildings, but they still look very much like they did historically. See photographic examples below.

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- Porch enclosures or removals: The porch remains discernable with the presence of columns or column bases, steps, and/or the use of reversible enclosure materials such as glazing panels.
- Replacement cladding: Deemed acceptable if it approximates historic siding in dimension and reveal.
- Replacement doors and windows: Deemed acceptable if the majority of historic opening locations and dimensions remain intact and the replacement windows and/or doors do not significantly change the building's historic character.
- New additions: New additions should be located on the rear elevation and not highly visible from the front façade.



117 Church St.



108 Wright St



103 Wright St

Rank 3: These properties are those with the lowest level of intactness that still are considered to Contribute. The buildings are more altered than Rank 1 or Rank 2 buildings; however, they retain enough historic materials to be somewhat similar to how they would have looked historically. See photographic examples below.

- Porch enclosures or removals: The porch remains discernable with the presence of columns or column bases, steps, and/or the use of reversible enclosure materials such as vinyl, aluminum, and/or wood siding. Generally, the installation of doors and windows does not detract from the integrity of the enclosed porch because the other porch features remain intact.
- Replacement cladding: Deemed acceptable if it approximates historic siding (vinyl or aluminum) or if it dates to the period of significance such as permastone or asbestos shingle siding.
- Replacement doors and windows: Deemed acceptable if the majority of historic opening locations and dimensions remain intact and/or the replacement windows and/or doors do not significantly change the building's historic character.
- New additions: New additions should be located on the rear elevation and not highly visible from the front façade. However, if additions date to the period of significance and do not substantially alter the building's form or massing, they could retain historic integrity.

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101 Wright St



134 Walnut St



212 Church St

Rank 4: These properties are noncontributing as they have lost their form, window and door openings, and/or many historic materials. These buildings are no longer recognizable as having once been a historic element of the neighborhood. See photographic examples below. Of course, a building which was constructed after the close of the Period of Significance would also be Non-contributing.

- Porch enclosures or removals: The permanent enclosure of porches through the removal of all identifying features and the use of a more permanent siding material like masonry make front porches appear more like additions on the front façade.
- Replacement cladding: Unsympathetic replacement materials, such as brick veneer on frame structures, that date after the period of significance and substantially alter a building's historic appearance.
- Replacement doors and windows: If the majority of the historic fenestration pattern is modified; or if the majority of windows and/or doors are removed and/or relocated; or if unsympathetic replacement doors and/or windows are installed, then this is typically deemed a major, unsympathetic alteration.
- New additions: Additions that are located on the front façade or are substantial in size and alter the building's form and massing, lead to a noncontributing determination. These additions should typically date after the Period of Significance.



312 Smith St



205 Willis St



111 Chestnut St

*****For the Comprehensive List of Contributing and Non-Contributing Resources within the Henry Town Historic District, See Table Below*****

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Note: The District Sketch Map will be found at the end of the nomination form.

Table of Resources within the Henry Town Historic District

KHC #	ADDRESS	YR BUILT	STYLE	TYPE	C/NC
HT 99	116 Smith Street	1900-1924	Greek Revival	Building	C
HT 103	201 Church Street	1900-1924	No Style	Building	C
HT 104	217 Church Street	C. 1880	No Style	Building	C
HT 108	311 W. Main Street	1950-1974	No Style	Building	NC
HT 110	211 W. Main Street	1900-1924	Colonial Revival	Building	C
HT 941	215 Church Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 942	104 Church Street	1925-1949	Craftsman	Building	C
HT 943	209 Church Street	1925-1949	No Style	Building	C
HT 944	203 Church Street	1925-1949	Upright and Wing	Building	C
HT 945	117 Church Street	1925-1949	Craftsman	Building	C
HT 946	110 Church Street	1900-1924	No Style	Building	C
HT 947	106 Church Street	1898	Queen Anne	Building	C
HT 948	103 W. Main Street	1925-1949	Craftsman	Building	C
HT 949	105 W. Main Street	1925-1949	Colonial Revival/Minimal Traditional	Building	C
HT 950	104 Willis Street	1925-1949	Colonial Revival	Building	C
HT 952	108 Willis Street	1900-1924	National Style Gable and Wing	Building	C
HT 953	106 W. Main Street	1925-1949	Craftsman	Building	C
HT 954	108 W. Main Street	1925-1949	Craftsman	Building	C
HT 955	110 W. Main Street	1925-1949	Minimal Traditional	Building	C
HT 956	202 W. Main Street	1925-1949	Craftsman	Building	C
HT 958	108 Wright Street	1900-1924	Saddlebag/No Style	Building	C
HT 959	216 W. Main Street	1925-1949	Craftsman	Building	C
HT 960	214 W. Main Street	1925-1949	Craftsman	Building	C
HT 962	195 Old Dixie Highway	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC

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KHC #	ADDRESS	YR BUILT	STYLE	TYPE	C/NC
HT 963	155 Old Dixie Highway	1925-1949	Saltbox	Building	C
HT 964	101 Old Dixie Highway	1950-1974	Minimal Traditional	Building	C
HT 996	309 W. Main Street	1900-1924	Saltbox/Minimal Traditional	Building	C
HT 997	307 W. Main Street	1925-1949	Shotgun	Building	C
HT 998	305 W. Main Street	1950-1974	No Style	Building	C
HT 999	213 W. Main Street	1950-1974	No Style	Building	C
HT 1000	210 W. Main Street	1925-1949	Minimal Traditional	Building	C
HT 1001	208 W. Main Street	1952	No Style	Building	C
HT 1002	206 W. Main Street	1925-1949	Hen and Chick/No Style	Building	C
HT 1003	204 W. Main Street	1925-1949	Minimal Traditional	Building	C
HT 1004	101 Wright Street	1950-1974	Minimal Traditional	Building	C
HT 1005	107 W. Main Street	1950-1974	Minimal Traditional	Building	C
HT 1009	105 Old Dixie Highway	c. 1940	Craftsman	Building	C
HT 1010	146 Old Dixie Highway	1925-1949	Minimal Traditional	Building	C
HT 1011	135 Old Dixie Highway	1950-1974	Shotgun	Building	C
HT 1012	148 Old Dixie Highway	1950-1974	Minimal Traditional	Building	C
HT 1013	156 Old Dixie Highway	1900-1924	Hall and Parlor/Minimal Traditional	Building	C
HT 1014	168 Old Dixie Highway	1959	T-Plan/No Style	Building	C
HT 1015	173 Old Dixie Highway	1950-1974	Minimal Traditional	Building	C
HT 1017	306 McFerran Street	1950-1974	No Style	Building	C
HT 1018	107 Alphis Street	1975-2000	N/A	Building	NC
HT 1092	302 Smith Street	1925-1949	Ranch	Building	C
HT 1093	302-A Smith Street	1925-1949	Minimal Traditional	Building	C
HT 1094	300 Smith Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1095	304 Smith Street	1925-1949	No Style	Building	C
HT 1096	308 Smith Street	1950-1974	No Style	Building	C

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KHC #	ADDRESS	YR BUILT	STYLE	TYPE	C/NC
HT 1097	Smith Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1098	318 Smith Street	c. 1950	No Style	Building	C
HT 1099	432 Smith Street	c. 1950	Ranch	Building	C
HT 1100	460 Smith Street	c. 1950	No Style	Building	C
HT 1101	312 Smith Street	1950-1974	Mobile Home	Building	NC
HT 1102	468 Smith Street	1975-2000	Mobile Home	Building	NC
HT 1103	480 Smith Street	c. 1935	Bungalow	Building	C
HT 1104	476 Smith Street	c. 1955	No Style	Building	C
HT 1106	Smith Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1107	Smith Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1108	Smith Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1111	Smith Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1112	437 Smith Street	1950-1974	Craftsman	Building	C
HT 1113	435 Smith Street	1950-1974	Minimal Traditional	Building	C
HT 1114	431 Smith Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1115	327 Smith Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1116	Smith Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1117	309 Smith Street	1975-2000	Shotgun	Building	NC
HT 1118	Smith Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1119	305 Smith Street	1977	Ranch	Building	NC
HT 1120	303 Smith Street	1950-1974	T-Plan/No Style	Building	C
HT 1121	301 Smith Street	1982	Minimal Traditional	Building	NC
HT 1122	115 Church Street	1975-2000	No Style	Building	NC
HT 1134	212 Church Street	1920	Craftsman	Building	C
HT 1135	208 Church Street	1975-2000	No Style	Building	NC
HT 1136	206 Church Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1137	204 Church Street	1973	No Style	Building	C
HT 1138	120 Church Street	1973	No Style	Building	C
HT 1139	116 Church Street	1950-1974	Outbuilding	Building	NC
HT 1140	112 Church Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1141	232 Water Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1142	236 Water Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1143	238 Water Street	1900-1924	National Style Gable and Wing/T-Plan	Building	C
HT 1144	Water Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1145	240 Water Street	1900-1924	National Style Gable and Wing/T-Plan	Building	C

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KHC #	ADDRESS	YR BUILT	STYLE	TYPE	C/NC
HT 1146	247 Mill Street	C. 1950	No Style	Building	C
HT 1147	245 Water Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1148	243 Water Street	1925-1949	Craftsman	Building	C
HT 1149	241 Water Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1150	239 Water Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1151	235 Water Street	1925-1949	Saltbox	Building	C
HT 1155	205 Willis Street	1975-2000	No Style	Building	NC
HT 1156	207 Willis Street	1925-1949	National Style Gable and Wing/T-Plan	Building	C
HT 1157	Willis Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1158	Willis Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1159	Willis Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1160	210 Willis Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1161	208 Willis Street	2006	Mobile Home	Building	NC
HT 1162	202 Willis Street	1950-1974	No Style	Building	C
HT 1163	106 Willis Street	1925-1949	No Style	Building	C
HT 1164	310 Guthrie Street	C. 1925	No Style	Building	C
HT 1165	Mill Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1166	150 Mill Street	1950-1974	No Style	Building	C
HT 1167	291 Mill Street	1925-1949	Minimal Traditional	Building	C
HT 1168	Mill Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1169	Walnut Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1170	Walnut Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1171	121 Walnut Street	1925-1949	Minimal Traditional	Building	C
HT 1172	125 Walnut Street	1950-1974	No Style	Building	C
HT 1173	129 Walnut Street	1925-1949	No Style	Building	C
HT 1174	Walnut Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1175	Walnut Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1176	139 Walnut Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1177	134 Walnut Street	1925-1949	Minimal Traditional	Building	C
HT 1178	Walnut Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1179	Walnut Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1180	116 Walnut Street	1982	Minimal Traditional	Building	NC
HT 1181	Walnut Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1182	131 Walnut Street	1975-2000	Ranch	Building	NC
HT 1183	106 Walnut Street	1950-1974	No Style	Building	C

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KHC #	ADDRESS	YR BUILT	STYLE	TYPE	C/NC
HT 1184	Walnut Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1185	102 Walnut Street	1950-1974	Ranch	Building	C
HT 1186	15 Chestnut Street	1950-1974	No Style	Building	C
HT 1187	29 Chestnut Street	1970	No Style	Building	C
HT 1188	43 Chestnut Street	C. 1980	N/A	Building	NC
HT 1189	65 Chestnut Street	1992	Ranch	Building	NC
HT 1190	77 Chestnut Street	1985	Ranch	Building	NC
HT 1191	Chestnut Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1192	111 Chestnut Street	1980	Ranch	Building	NC
HT 1193	116 Chestnut Street	1980	Ranch	Building	NC
HT 1194	96 Chestnut Street	1980	Ranch	Building	NC
HT 1195	Chestnut Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1196	Chestnut Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1197	Chestnut Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1198	Chestnut Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1199	22 Chestnut Street	1985	Mobile Home	Building	NC
HT 1200	8 Chestnut Street	1975-2000	No Style	Building	NC
HT 1201	310 Mill Street	1975-2000	Minimal Traditional	Building	NC
HT 1202	410 Mill Street	1975-2000	Minimal Traditional	Building	NC
HT 1203	Guthrie Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1204	305 Guthrie Street	1925-1949	No Style	Building	NC
HT 1205	100 Walnut Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1206	403 Guthrie Street	1976	Ranch	Building	NC
HT 1207	Guthrie Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1208	409 Guthrie Street	N/A	Vacant Lot/Barn	Site	NC
HT 1209	Horse Cave Cemetery	N/A	Cemetery	Site	C
HT 1217	103 Wright Street	1925-1949	Minimal Traditional	Building	C
HT 1218	105 Wright Street	1995	Minimal Traditional	Building	NC
HT 1219	106 Wright Street	1975-2000	No Style	Building	NC
HT 1229	303 W. Main Street	C. 1980	Ranch	Building	NC
HT 1230	223 W. Main Street	1980	Ranch	Building	NC
HT 1231	219 W. Main Street	C. 1980	Ranch	Building	NC

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KHC #	ADDRESS	YR BUILT	STYLE	TYPE	C/NC
HT 1232	217 W. Main Street	C. 1980	Ranch	Building	NC
HT 1233	W. Main Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1234	205 W. Main Street	1990	Ranch	Building	NC
HT 1235	201 W. Main Street	1989	Ranch	Building	NC
HT 1236	109 W. Main Street	1988	Ranch	Building	NC
HT 1239	200 McFerran Street	1925-1949	No Style	Building	C
HT 1240	202 McFerran Street	1925-1949	Craftsman	Building	C
HT 1241	204 McFerran Street	1925-1949	Craftsman	Building	C
HT 1242	206 McFerran Street	1925-1949	No Style	Building	C
HT 1243	208 McFerran Street	1925-1949	T-Plan/No Style	Building	C
HT 1244	210 McFerran Street	1950-1974	Shotgun	Building	C
HT 1245	212 McFerran Street	1950-1974	Craftsman	Building	C
HT 1246	109 Alphis Street	1950-1974	Shotgun	Building	C
HT 1247	107 Alphis Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1249	Rhodes Alley	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1250	McFerran Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1251	Alphis Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1252	308 McFerran Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1253	McFerran Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1254	198 Old Dixie Highway	1989	Ranch	Building	NC
HT 1255	190 Old Dixie Highway	1989	Ranch	Building	NC
HT 1257	215 Old Dixie Highway	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1258	215 Old Dixie Highway	1995	Mobile Home	Building	NC
HT 1259	Old Dixie Road	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1260	McFerran Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1261	309 McFerran Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1262	305 McFerran Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC

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KHC #	ADDRESS	YR BUILT	STYLE	TYPE	C/NC
HT 1263	303 McFerran Street	1925-1949	No Style	Building	C
HT 1264	301 McFerran Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1265	207 McFerran Street	1977	No Style	Building	NC
HT 1266	205 McFerran Street	C. 1950	Minimal Traditional	Building	C
HT 1267	203 McFerran Street	1925-1949	Craftsman	Building	C
HT 1268	203 McFerran Street	1977	Ranch	Building	NC
HT 1269	201 McFerran Street	1900-1924	National Style Gable and Wing	Building	C
HT 1270	Chestnut Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1271	109 Willis Street	1950-1974	No Style	Building	C
HT 1272	Horse Cave Cemetery	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	C
HT 1273	355 Guthrie Street	N/A	Vacant Lot	Site	NC
HT 1274	Water Street	1996	No Style	Building	NC

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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

ETHNIC HERITAGE/Black

Period of Significance

1880-1975

Significant Dates

NA

Significant Person

NA

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Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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Summary Paragraph

The Henry Town Historic District meets National Register Criterion A and is significant in the area of Ethnic Heritage: Black within the historic context “African Americans in Horse Cave, Hart County, Kentucky.” Within this context, the Henry Town Historic District signifies the area of town that was historically associated with the Black community, located quite literally on the “other side of the tracks” from the heart of Horse Cave. The Henry Town Historic District marks the land directly on the west side of the historic L&N line, with the exception of a few buildings along the tracks that have been demolished but were associated with commerce and the burgeoning downtown and not the Black community. The L&N railroad line acted as a physical barrier segregating the African American part of town and the rest of Horse Cave. This area has been associated with the African American community of Horse Cave since the city’s earliest years, dating back to the years immediately following the Civil War. In the 150 years that followed, the Henry Town Historic District served as the heart of the Black community, featuring dwellings, religious facilities, and, at one point in its history, commercial structures. Into the mid-to-late-twentieth century, as the City of Horse Cave became more accepting of integration and the close relationship and proximity between the white and black communities, this proposed district continued to be predominantly African American. Horse Cave residents remember that by the mid-twentieth century, race relations in the city were magnanimous, something that can be further implied by the quickness and relative ease with which the local schools integrated, especially in comparison to the rest of the Commonwealth. The relationship between the white and black communities in Horse Cave persisted through the late twentieth century and can be seen in the built environment of the Henry Town Historic District and the number of buildings that the city helped fund in an effort to beautify the black neighborhood. While these resources fall outside the POS, they are worthy of note as they are still in the District and their presence contributes to the District’s evolving identity. There are a total of 189 resources in the district, 90 of which are Contributing. The author notes that the large number of Non-Contributing resources (99 out of 189 total resources) are vacant lots—58 in all. The loss of the built historic African American landscape results from several factors, such as a lack of financial resources and construction which was intended to be more affordable than enduring. Consequently, these houses were quicker to deteriorate. The evaluation of the district’s integrity has incorporated these realities into its judgment.

The Henry Town Historic District’s significance lies its ability to tell a story of African American life in Hart County that has not been told elsewhere. Horse Cave is the largest city in Hart County, thus, as one might expect, it also had the largest community of African Americans. This community differed from many of the other African American communities in Hart County. Those were more rural and widely spread. In many cases, little remains of the built environment except for churches and the occasional school building. The one other city in Hart County that had a larger African American population, Munfordville, was developed in a way that separated the white and Black communities more than what occurred in Horse Cave. Moreover, the African American community in and around Munfordville was itself separated into different areas geographically, resulting in a less cohesive collection of buildings that serve to provide insight into the African American community’s life. By contrast, the Henry Town Historic District provides insight into

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Hart County's local African American experience of cohesion. This district helps explain, through the built environment, the disparities between the white and black communities, separated only by a railroad track, the resiliency and self-determination of the Black community, and the ongoing progress and evolution of the residents in the district that has continued through to the 21st century.

Historic Context: African Americans in Horse Cave and Hart County, Kentucky, 1800-1975

African American history is American history, and as such, it is noteworthy to emphasize that the presence of African Americans in rural expanses, such as Hart County, Kentucky, can be traced back to the area's original European settlers. In the earliest days of the county, of the white families that settled in the vicinity of Hart County, roughly one-fifth of them held at least five enslaved people.¹ The life of enslaved people in Hart County could involve inhumane treatment, but such treatment has not been thoroughly documented. Instead, this nomination will begin its consideration in 1850, when public records begin to help create a portrait of the African American.

In 1850, Hart County had a total of 333 enslavers and 1,300 enslaved persons, of which 196 were Mulatto and 1,104 were Black, while in the following decade, right before the onset of the Civil War, Hart County enslavers held just shy of 1,400 enslaved people.² It should be noted that in each of those years, there was a small number of African Americans and Mulattoes who were documented as being free. By 1870, over 2,200 Black or Mulatto individuals were enumerated in Hart County in the US Federal Census.³

At the end of the Civil War and the passing of the 13th and 14th Amendments, formerly enslaved individuals throughout Hart County dispersed throughout the Commonwealth and the country. While some formerly enslaved people stayed on to work as paid laborers on the farms where they were previously enslaved, many newly freed African American men and women left to form their own communities on the outskirts of the larger cities and towns in the region, such as Horse Cave. Despite the newly gained freedom, life was still difficult for African Americans in America, particularly in rural southern regions, as they faced discrimination, threat of violence, and unfairness in all aspects of life. As the nineteenth century came to a close, it seemed as if race relations were on the mend in some areas of Hart County, however, at the dawn of the twentieth century came Jim Crow laws, the KKK, and the end of the Reconstruction.⁴

African American history in Hart County followed the history of African Americans in the United States, for the most part. Jim Crow laws kept African Americans as second-class citizens and enforced segregation relegated their communities to the outskirts of town, often in undesirable and infertile areas. However, Black communities across Hart County rallied together and created a kinship, place, and identity of their own. The various African American enclaves around Hart

¹ Lafferty, Susan C. *The Long Journey: A History of Hart County's African-American People*. The Hart County Historical Society, Lexington, Kentucky. 2004.

² "Hart County (KY) Enslaved, Free Blacks, and Free Mulattoes, 1850-1870," *Notable Kentucky African Americans Database*, <https://nkaa.uky.edu/nkaa/items/show/2366>, accessed April 2025.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Lafferty, 2004; Lucas, Marion, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky: From Slavery to Segregation, 1760-1891*. Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, KY. 2003.

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County, most notably on the outskirts of the bigger towns, created self-sufficient neighborhoods of their own complete with Black-owned businesses, well-kept residential streets, and most importantly, their own churches and schools.

Religion was an important part of early rural life for many Americans, including within the Black community. As such, places of worship were seen as a essential part of any Black community. Similarly, schools were a necessity. From the late nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries, at a time when schooling was not deemed as important for many rural Kentuckians, as working on the farm or helping the family took precedent, schools were still seen as a necessary aspect for any successful community, somewhere to educate the youngest. In the Black communities, churches and schools sometimes went hand in hand, occasionally sharing a building or being located right next to one another. In Hart County, there were several rural Baptist churches established by various African American communities in the decades immediately following Emancipation, such as: Allen Seminary Baptist Church (1914) in Hardyville, Bearwallow Church (1867) east of Horse Cave, Friendship Baptist Church (1896) in Horse Cave, Horse Cave First Baptist (1868) situated within the Henry Town Historic District, Little Blue Spring (1868) in southeast Hart County, Morning Star (1867) outside of Munfordville, Mt. Vernon (1883) in Bonnieville, and Woodsonville Baptist Church (1870) in Woodsonville.⁵

The history of schools in the African American communities are broadly representative of the overall relations between white and Black Kentuckians and the inequalities that persisted. Following emancipation, black Kentuckians began to organize their own schools, in large part with assistance from the federal Freedmen's Bureau and benevolent northern groups. In the first few years after the Civil War, black Kentuckians established over 200 schools. Despite being minimally funded, having poorly paid teachers, and having terms limited to no more than three months, over 10,500 students were being served in the Commonwealth. Similar to the paltry options for both freedmen and enslaved persons before the war, most of these institutions were supported by local religious organizations, often operating out of a church. In 1871, the Freedmen's Bureau assistance was discontinued and little changed until 1874 when a common school system was established for black Kentuckians.⁶

The school law of 1874 formally established a common school system for black children in Kentucky, which, while racially segregated, had an organizational structure similar to the white schools. However, unlike white school districts, the black school districts were unable to make major decisions for the district, as the black trustees had to turn to the county commissioners, who were white. Additionally, black school district trustees were responsible for establishing black schools "a 'suitable' distance from all white schools, hire teachers, and manage school funds."⁷ The latter proved to be increasingly difficult for black school districts. Similar to the white schools, funding came primarily from taxes on black-owned property, but it did not benefit from the state funds, like the white counterparts. As a result, black schools were funded solely from black

⁵ Lafferty 2004.

⁶ Kennedy, Rachel and Cynthia Johnson. *Kentucky Historic Schools Survey: An Examination of the History and Condition of Kentucky's Older School Buildings*. Kentucky Heritage Council, Frankfort, KY. 2002.

⁷ Ibid: 19.

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property taxes, which, due to social inequalities and disenfranchisement of black Kentuckians, was paltry and insufficient.

Less than a decade later, Kentucky was threatened by a federal lawsuit to either integrate the school system or to match school funding in the state for both white and black schools. As a result, the legislature, with the support of the Commonwealth's voters, chose to pass legislation to equalize school funds for segregated school systems. White Kentuckians made it known that they would rather share funding than share space with African Americans.⁸

In Hart County, there were numerous one-room schools for elementary education of Black children, as well as a few buildings for secondary education, many of which shared buildings or were property with the churches, such as: Bonnierville School, Knobs School (also known as Allen Seminary), Little Blue Spring School, Munfordville Colored School, Bearwallow School, and the Woodsonville School. Moreover, some buildings, such as the Horse Cave Colored School, built between 1930-1931, were constructed in part with funds from the Rosenwald Fund, which was established in 1917 to assist southern black communities with the establishment and construction of schools. In addition to requiring black communities to match funds to get the grant money, it "stipulated that all assisted schools remain in session at least five months, and that the buildings be properly maintained and equipped once completed."⁹ Additionally, the fund supplied money for the housing and training of teachers, specified that all buildings became the property of the local school system upon completion, and sent formalized plans along with each grant approval. The Horse Cave Colored School was constructed with \$3,000 coming from the African American community, \$1,400 from the general public, and \$700 from the Rosenwald Fund.¹⁰ Between 1920 and 1928, the Rosenwald Fund spent over \$350,000 a year on schools. The fund stopped providing grants for school building in 1932, the year Rosenwald died, but throughout its existence, it funded over 5,300 educational facilities in black communities throughout the South (Figure 1).¹¹ During this era in Kentucky, the Rosenwald Fund funded 158 schools and other education-related facilities.¹²

With Hart County being a predominantly agricultural county, many available jobs for its African American citizens came in the form of working on one of the many farms in the area. Hart County was known internationally for its tobacco production and, as such, many local African Americans worked the fields for several months of the year and then, in some cases, went to work in the tobacco production facilities after harvesting was complete. In some of the larger towns, industrial jobs and homemaking jobs were available, but most of the Black workforce existed in the agricultural sector.

In the post-war years, as *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Civil Rights Movement drew headlines across the country, Hart County began to change with the times. School desegregation

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid: 26.

¹⁰ Mayor Randall Curry et. al. *A Brief History of African Americans in Horse Cave, Kentucky*. Horse Cave Board of Architectural review, 2020-2021. Jobe Publishing, Inc. Horse Cave, KY. 2021.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Turley-Adams, Alicestyne. *Rosenwald Schools in Kentucky, 1917-1932*. Frankfort, Kentucky: The Kentucky Heritage Council, 1997.

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began between 1957-1965, including the integration of the Caverna Independent School District, which was created out of an agreement between the Horse Cave Board of Education and the Cave City Board of Education, in 1957, which was one of the first in the state and included the hiring of the first black teacher at an integrated school in Kentucky. African American life in Hart County since the passing of various Civil Rights legislation has mirrored that of many other rural counties in the United States. There are still lingering issues of inequality and remnants of the discriminatory practices of the last 150 years, but there have been many strides in the right direction.

Brief History of Horse Cave, Kentucky

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

In the 1850s, Major Albert Anderson purchased and subsequently laid out the town of Horse Cave.¹³ This coincided with the L&N Railroad obtaining a charter “to build a railroad between Louisville, Kentucky, and the Tennessee state line in the direction of Nashville.”¹⁴ This corridor brought the path of the railroad through Horse Cave and, as such, by the late 1850s, L&N had graded the land and begun laying the tracks. Similarly, in 1858, Anderson donated land to L&N for them to build a railroad depot in the heart of Horse Cave, a move that would prove to be very fortuitous.¹⁵

Immediately following the establishment of L&N’s presence in Horse Cave, a post office was established and within ten years, a building boom occurred that led to residents constructing both commercial and residential buildings just east of the railroad line. During this time, the population grew from 82 in 1860 to 470 in 1870, and that would almost double by 1880 when it reached 800.¹⁶ It was during this time that the presence of the rail depot provided a shipping point for the surrounding countryside to market their tobacco, produce, and livestock.¹⁷ It was during this period of growth, nearing the end of the nineteenth century, that residential development began to take off.

Dr. George Alfred Thomas, who moved to the area in 1886 to establish his dental practice, bought the cave in 1887 and began to develop it with his son, Dr. H.B. Thomas. Within the first couple years, set up a water pumping system that was able to provide a lot of the city with drinking water and installed one of the first hydroelectric generators in Kentucky to power the cave itself as well as several nearby downtown buildings.¹⁸

¹³ Edwards, Cyrus and Florence Edwards Gardiner. *Cyrus Edwards’ Stories of early days: and others in what is now Barren, Hart and Metcalfe Counties*. Louisville: The Standard Printing Company, Inc, 1940; “Horse Cave Local Historic District Designation Report 2004,” The City of Horse Cave.

¹⁴ Charles B. Castner, “A Brief History of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad”, accessed March, 2024.

¹⁵ “Horse Cave Local Historic District Designation Report 2004,” The City of Horse Cave.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Hart County Historical Society, “Horse Cave: A History of – Part II 1850-1900.” Hart County Historical Quarterly, October 1982.

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Throughout the last few decades of the nineteenth century, Horse Cave grew considerably, largely as a shipping point and leader in the tobacco industry, but, as was common at the time, most of the residents lived in the surrounding countryside, as only about 10 percent of the houses in the City were constructed during this time. In 1905, H.B Thomas took control of the cave and in 1916, opened it to the public and renamed it Hidden River Cave.

From its earliest years, the City of Horse Cave relied on the tobacco industry and the city's location along major transportation routes to thrive. Tobacco fields flourished in this portion of Kentucky and the shipping point in Horse Cave was integral to the success of the tobacco industry in the area and the growth of Horse Cave as a city. Not only did the fields require a large workforce to plant and harvest the cash crop, but curing and getting it ready to ship was a large part of the process. For this, Horse Cave served as an ideal location, central to the region, accessible via the major state highways, and along the L&N line for ease of distribution to the larger markets of Louisville and Lexington.

Hidden River Cave closed as a show cave in 1943, and in the years following, the residential expansion of Horse Cave slowed down. From 1920 to 1930, the years after the opening of Hidden River Cave, the population of the city rose over 45%. From 1940 to 1950, Horse Cave still experienced a 20% increase in population.¹⁹ After the cave's closing, residents relied on the normal mix of local industries, the railroad, agriculture, and the nearby Mammoth Cave National Park, to prop up the local economy. Today, nearly twice as many people live in Horse Cave as lived there when Hidden River Cave closed to the public. The 1935 and 1966 United States Geological Survey (USGS) maps of the area show that Horse Cave continuing to develop even when Hidden River Cave was not in operation.

African American Communities in Hart County, Kentucky

Throughout Hart County, several African American communities were established following the end of the Civil War. These were primarily in small rural areas, but a couple were formed on the outskirts of Hart County's cities and towns. Some of these early settlements and hamlets are hard to identify now because much of what was there has been lost, however, a standard for locating some of the lasting communities is by highlighting the associated churches and/or schools and cemeteries, many of which were previously mentioned above. These focal points were places for community gathering and fellowship and were sometimes situated around small communities with features that would otherwise be unidentifiable aside from the demographic that lived there. Such communities included small rural homes with small patches of land for agricultural production, sometimes just for subsistence, especially in the early years.

Due to travel limitations, most of these communities had their own churches, one-room schools, and cemeteries. In most cases, these institutions were solely funded by the local Black community, however, there are reports of white residents contributing land or money or sharing a white church for semi-regular services.²⁰ By 1870, there were already two established schools for African

¹⁹ United States Census Bureau, *Historical Census 1900-1980*. Census.gov.

²⁰ Lafferty, 2004.

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American children and by 1888, there were 15, and most of these had associated places of worship and represented an independent African American community.²¹

The early small rural African American communities in Hart County are scattered throughout the county. Communities such as Bearwallow, Halltown, Little Blue Springs, Woodsonville and Pleasant Valley, to name a few, are among the rural African American enclaves that dotted the Hart County landscape, each of which had a school, church, and cemetery and trace their origins back to the decades immediately following the Civil War.²² Churches, in particular, became central to community life, offering spiritual guidance and functioning as venues for education and civic engagement.

Some of these communities would be considered a part of the towns they are near today because of their citizens' mailing address and the post office that serves them, such as Horse Cave for Bearwallow and Little Blue Springs, and Munfordville for Woodsonville, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The distances between an African American community and the nearby predominantly white community, albeit seemingly small by today's standards. However, prior to 1930, regular travel was more difficult and social barriers prevented intermingling between the two communities.

All of the rural Black communities underwent hardships in one form or another. In many, if not all, cases there was the constant worry of finances and how things were paid for and how people were paid. In some instances, teachers were paid in goods and gifts, because the community could not afford more, and in others, the schoolhouses or churches were built with subpar materials because that was all that was available.²³ Many of these communities struggled with ownership and construction permission when building spaces for worship or education. As a result of all of these difficulties, communal buildings were in need of constant repair and updating, and were needed to be built and rebuilt several times over. Similarly, many of the houses that served these populations were lacking in quality materials, often resulting in them not able to stand the test of time. As such, it is not uncommon for the churches and schools to be all that has survived intact in these communities from the turn of the 20th century. However, as a testament to their resilience and strong sense of community, several of these smaller rural African American churches are still standing and have active congregations.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the African American communities throughout the American south, including in Hart County and Kentucky as a whole, survived in large part by working the fields on larger farms in nearby communities or as hired help in those same homes. Lack of generational wealth, which was afforded to some of the white community members whose families owned land for generations, relentless discrimination, legal limitations, and economic insecurities were just some of the factors that disproportionately kept rural southern African American communities and community members from thriving the same way as their white neighbors. These Black communities had to trust in persistent self-reliance throughout the

²¹ "African American Schools in Hart County, KY," Notable Kentucky African Americans Database, accessed April, 2025, <https://nkaa.uky.edu/nkaa/items/show/2864>

²² Lafferty, 2004.

²³ Ibid.

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Reconstruction period, the Jim Crow era, and into the Long Civil Rights movement, and these circumstances were faced by African Americans across the county, in both the bigger cities as well as the small rural hamlets.

It is easy to focus on resilience, toughness, and pride in building a community, physically, spiritually, and culturally, but it is inaccurate to paint a picture that these African American communities were left alone to their space in rural Hart County. The rural and spatial nature of these communities was not unique to the African American population, as many of these state roads and small towns were populated by rural white families who, for all intents and purposes, had similar communities and daily routines. However, the white communities did not have to live with the constant fear of violence, under the cloud of sanctioned discrimination, and in a world of perpetual social and economic disparities. There are numerous examples of African American communities requesting aid from the county only to be denied or forced to endure inadequate educational facilities for their children while the white students went to newly constructed facilities. In one case, at the Mt. Gilboa Baptist Church, which was located next to the Halltown one-room school, the threat of violence was realized. In September of 1968, a very tumultuous year for race relations in America and in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the Mt. Gilboa Baptist Church was bombed and while no one was hurt and the building was able to be salvaged, the interior damage was severe and the emotional damage was worse.²⁴

Hart County is a rural county, and as such, there are only two real cities within its boundaries; Munfordville and Horse Cave. Horse Cave had a burgeoning Black community in the Henry Town and Barlow Hill neighborhoods, which in addition to churches and schools, had black-owned businesses, restaurants, and other services, albeit still to a lesser degree than the white counterparts on the other side of the tracks, and in many cases with inferior amenities (many homes lacked indoor plumbing well into the mid-20th century). The only comparable African American community in Hart County existed in Munfordville. However, research indicates that Munfordville, despite being smaller than Horse Cave, had a few smaller African American communities nearby, as opposed to a single cohesive community such as Henry Town in Horse Cave. Munfordville had an African American enclave on the northeast side of town, near the Morning Star Baptist Church and cemetery, an enclave about a mile north of town in the Perryville community, where the Munfordville Colored School and eventually the Carter-Dowling School was located, and south, across the Green River, in nearby Woodsonville.²⁵ All three of these areas were home to a Black community, but the separation aided in preventing the formation of a Black space as solidly Black as that of the west side of Horse Cave.

There were other factors that directly explain the differing characteristics and patterns of growth in the African American communities in Horse Cave and Munfordville. Foremost, and most obvious, is the proximity to the L&N railroad line. This dividing barrier not only informs some of the other disparities between the two cities, but it served to physically separate the white and Black communities in Horse Cave, something that Munfordville did not have. A physical obstacle separating the communities was important in the early days of Reconstruction to provide an individual space for the Black community to thrive, and during the Jim Crow era and beyond when

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid; USGS Various.

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discrimination thrived on physical and ideological disconnection. Unlike Horse Cave, much of Munfordville was laid out before the arrival of the L&N railroad line, which bypassed the city slightly to the west, which accounts for this slight disconnect, and the evolution in the early years of each city's existence. Another factor that informed the differences in cohesion and proximity between the Black communities of Horse Cave and Munfordville was industry. This factor is multi-faceted and itself dependent, in some part, to the proximity of the city center to the railroad. Horse Cave had a burgeoning tobacco market and was a valuable shipping point for all of Hart County. As a result, facilities needed a ready and willing workforce to meet their needs. This was only accentuated in the mid-20th century when larger manufacturing and industrial enterprises were constructed along the railroad line just south of Horse Cave. Similarly, Horse Cave was a Cave Town, the only one of its size and grandeur, and as a result, had a thriving tourism industry. Again, this required a local workforce. For all of these jobs, the African American community provided workers from Henry Town.

Throughout Hart County, the mid-20th century brought about a lot of change, both in the movement throughout the county and subsequent settlement patterns, as well as the social shifts that were impacting the country. As the rise and affordability of the automobile, and subsequent ease of travel, reached America's rural communities, an unprecedented change in the landscape took place along with a massive demographic and population shift, notably among the Black community, coined the Great Migration. This also furthered the expansion of industrialism to the countryside. As workers migrated from rural to urban settings, small cities such as Horse Cave saw an uptick in manufacturing and industrial facilities. Larger cities with a regional impact could host even larger factories, because a nearby workforce was not as necessary with a growing ability to commute. These widespread changes directly impacted the smaller Black communities in Hart County's rural areas, as local African Americans sought better opportunities. This shift eroded the African American rural community in Hart County and elsewhere.

In the years immediately following WWII, when educational philosophies were drastically shifting, both ideologically and in the physical construction of school facilities, and aiming to take advantage of infrastructure improvements and transportation availability to appropriately meet the needs of a greater geographic population. Schooling for Black students in Hart County changed significantly. Aligned with the ongoing consolidation movement in public school education, in 1951, the Carter-Dowling Consolidated School was opened in Munfordville, offering first through eighth grade education for all of Hart County's African American children.²⁶ With the construction of this consolidated school came the closure of every one-room school serving African American communities throughout the County. This school was a huge benefit to the entire Black community and provided educational programming and facilities that heretofore had not been unavailable, however, the closure of each one-room school impacted the local African American community it had formerly served. The Carter-Dowling School served the entirety of Hart County, except for Horse Cave, which had its own colored school that remained open. The Carter-Dowling School remained open until 1969, two years after the final desegregation of Hart County schools, which resulted in the Black students integrating into the white schools, not the other way around.

²⁶ "Carter-Dowling School" *Kentucky Highway Marker Database*, electronic document, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=39983>, accessed April 2025.

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The changing landscape of the mid-20th century directly affected many of the smaller African American communities in Hart County. Some communities were hit harder than others. The African American community of Pleasant Valley, which was close to Hammondsville, closed its school in 1951 and its church in 1965 to out-migration of younger generations.²⁷ Horse Cave had long since maintained the county's only high school for African Americans. The Horse Cave Colored School had been in operation since the 1920s and around the year 1950, the Horse Cave School District merged with that of nearby Cave City to create the Caverna Independent School District. Thus, while every other Black school in Hart County consolidated to a centralized location in 1951, Horse Cave maintained its own local school, which reinforced its community. In 1957, just a couple years after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the Caverna Independent School District integrated, almost a full decade before the rest of Hart County. These changes seemed to happen in rapid succession, but ultimately, they resulted in the preservation of a cohesive Black community and identity in Horse Cave, one that was not forced to disperse or travel long distances for basic services.

The construction of Carter-Dowling, the eventual full desegregation of Hart County Schools, and the construction of the Hart County High School in 1967 would seemingly reinforce the Black community in Munfordville, the County seat and the general location of each of these new schools, however, it did little to change existing African American life in the city. Carter-Dowling was constructed north of the city while the integrated consolidated high school was constructed south in Woodsonville. Moreover, construction projects along US 31 W, that passes straight through Munfordville and acts as its central artery, and expansion of county government buildings and properties, created modern infill and intrusions that served to break up and further separate some of the consistency and interconnection Munfordville might have once experienced among its Black enclaves.

Ultimately, there were no other known groupings of African Americans that coalesced into communities in Hart County that resemble Henry Town. Many of the Black communities throughout the county existed in the countryside, where in many cases, the only physical remains are the church, cemetery, and, in some cases, the original African American one-room schools. The other Black communities in Hart County lacked the cohesion, intimacy, and proximity of that of the Henry Town Historic District. They were, by nature, rural communities that, while connected through shared central pillars of education, worship, and identity, were still lacking the structure and unity afforded those in Henry Town. Moreover, as times changed, and residents migrated north and to bigger cities, local schools were consolidated, and younger generations were moving outside of the County, Henry Town maintained its own identity, both through the local school district and in its organization.

African American Life in Horse Cave, Kentucky following Emancipation

In the years following the Civil War, rural communities of African Americans often developed on the outskirts of the towns and cities that had an established presence. In the case of Horse Cave, the African American population, made up of freedmen and women, settled in the area just west of the newly established L&N railroad line. This land was likely yielded to the African Americans because it was at the foothills of the expansive knobs, ridges, and small mountains of the cave

²⁷ Lafferty 2004.

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region of Kentucky. This land would have been seen as much less desirable than the flatland, ideal for residential and agricultural development, to the east.

Almost immediately after settling in this area, the local Black population set upon establishing churches for their community. The Horse Cave First Baptist Church was established around 1868 in a log cabin on what is now Church Street. Although the original church burned some years later, a new church, that still stands today, was built and thrived around the same location. Just a couple decades after the establishment of the Horse Cave First Baptist Church, another church for the growing African American population was founded in the area. The Friendship Baptist Church was constructed around 1896 on W. Main Street on the outskirts of the Horse Cave city limits, with a new brick building being built just six years later. In the 1990s, a new church was constructed next to the brick building to serve the ever-growing population, and the 1902 construction was demolished.

The area west of the L&N that makes up the Henry Town Historic District was split into two neighborhoods, each having its own name and identity, but combined to make up the African American community. Henry Town has been primarily used synonymously with the Black community of Horse Cave, was situated in the residential streets stretching north of West Main Street while Barlow Hill, named for the Barlow families that once lived there, was further west and south of Main Street. It was in these two neighborhoods that African American life was centered and where African American residents were allowed to settle. These streets housed the African American churches, the early black school and the Horse Cave Colored School that was built, in part, with money from the Rosenwald Fund in 1930-1931, and numerous Black-owned commercial destinations, including barber shops, restaurants, a funeral home, and lodging houses.²⁸

For the first several decades following the Civil War, African Americans in Horse Cave worked predominantly in the burgeoning tobacco industry. The Black residents of Horse Cave worked the tobacco fields in the surrounding region during planting and harvesting seasons. Following the planting, harvesting, and curing seasons, the Henry Town and Barlow Hill neighborhoods would get an influx of Black workers, both local and transient, who would come to work in the storage and processing facilities near town. This only served to further the growth and self-sustainability of the African American neighborhoods.²⁹

As Horse Cave entered into the twentieth century and the Jim Crow era, segregation was enforced and life resembled what many similarly sized rural southern towns witnessed. Disparities between the white and African American populations were glaring and the amenities that were available in the flourishing downtown Horse Cave were either strictly segregated or service to Black residents was simply prohibited. Mayor Randall Curry, lifelong Horse Cave resident, recalls establishments in Horse Cave in the mid-twentieth century allowing him to come and order a sandwich, but that he was not allowed to eat it there. Other establishments, such as an early theater, not to be confused

²⁸ Mayor Randall Curry et. al. *A Brief History of African Americans in Horse Cave, Kentucky*. Horse Cave Board of Architectural review, 2020-2021. Jobe Publishing, Inc. Horse Cave, KY. 2021; Interview with Mayor Randall Curry March 31, 2025; Interview with Pastor K.T. Ford March 25, 2025.

²⁹ Interview with Mayor Randall Curry March 31, 2025.

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with the Horse Cave Theater constructed in 1977, were segregated with African Americans being relegated to certain seats.³⁰

Around the turn of the twentieth century, cave tourism had reached a point of viability for cave owners and promoters to compete for this tourist business. This led to what has been dubbed the Kentucky Cave Wars. Precipitated by an increased interest in cave tourism, the level of competition from the numerous viable cave systems in the area, and the widespread adoption of the automobile by American families, tourism became a sustainable business. As a result, proprietors often engaged in questionable marketing activity to lure tourists to their attractions. Already, by the mid-nineteenth century, Mammoth Cave was the main attraction in the region, so smaller caves looked for ways to carve out a portion of that tourist traffic. It was estimated that by 1904 “no less than ninety other caves have been explored within” a ten-mile radius of Mammoth Cave.³¹ During this time, businesses and individuals sought to bind themselves to Mammoth Cave through either a cave connection or proximity to the transportation routes tourists favored, such as the L&N and the Mammoth Cave Railroad.³²

The City of Horse Cave was very much a part of this cave war era, given its proximity to Mammoth Cave and its location along the L&N mainline. Not only was Horse Cave vying for the tourist traffic that the various cave systems bolstered, but the proprietors of the Hidden River Cave, who were themselves financially engaged in the success of show caves, were directly involved in the widespread promotion of their cave within the area. During the height of the cave tourism, some nearby caves, most notably Mammoth Cave, hired Black men to serve as guides. This practice dated back to the pre-Civil War years when enslaved people were used as guides and explorers. In Horse Cave, the tourism industry, much like the tobacco and manufacturing industries, utilized Black laborers in the early twentieth century. These laborers played a role in the hospitality and growing interest in the area, which in turn, helped precipitate the growing African American community and the intertwined relationships between the white and Black residents.

At this same time, Horse Cave was growing significantly due to cave tourism and the tobacco industry, other industries, manufacturing facilities, and factories appeared as well. With the benefits of its location along the L&N and the major thoroughfares, these industries had access to a steady workforce of both white and Black Horse Cave residents, as well as the infrastructure for their products to get shipped to the surrounding region and beyond. Such industries included Midway Wholesale Company, a wholesale grocery company, the Horse Cave Mills, and even an Ice Plant, the latter two of which were located in the African American part of town.³³

Local residents of Horse Cave, both white and African American, remember the years in the mid-twentieth century as being tranquil and without many noteworthy issues regarding race. In fact, as

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ National Register of Historic Places, Mammoth Cave National Park Historic Resource Study, Multiple Property Documentation Form, National Register, #64500237

³² National Park Service. “The Kentucky Cave Wars.”

³³ Interview with Mayor Randall Curry March 31, 2025; Mayor Randall Curry et. al. *A Brief History of African Americans in Horse Cave, Kentucky*. Horse Cave Board of Architectural review, 2020-2021. Jobe Publishing, Inc. Horse Cave, KY. 2021; “Horse Cave Local Historic District Designation Report 2004,” The City of Horse Cave, Horse Cave, Kentucky 2004.

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early as the 1950s, some parts of Barlow Hill were already integrated, however, Henry Town remained predominantly African American through the late twentieth century.³⁴ Perhaps one of the most significant events in the saga of race relations in Horse Cave was the desegregation of the Caverna Independent School District in 1957.

The Caverna Independent School District was formed in 1950 when the Boards of Education from Horse Cave and Cave City, which is situated across the border in neighboring Barren County, combined to combat the low attendance at their respective schools. This merger was contentious at the time and resulted in bussing students across county lines to attend various schools.³⁵ For the first few years following its formation, the schools remained segregated, and the Horse Cave Colored School served the African American population in Horse Cave. However, in 1957, just three years after the *Brown v. Board of Education* case, the Caverna Independent School District chose to integrate all grades, something that very few schools in Kentucky had done. Furthermore, Newton Thomas, an African American and the former principal of the Horse Cave Colored School, who worked tirelessly with the superintendent of Caverna, Ralph Dorsey, to ensure that desegregation went off smoothly, was the first African American to teach in an integrated school in Kentucky.³⁶

Dorsey and Thomas thought that the best way to handle the inevitable integration of schools mandated by the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling was to desegregate. Students who attended the desegregated Caverna school remember how bad the conditions were of the Horse Cave Colored School compared to their counterparts, one of the benefits to integrating, while opponents likely lamented about the potential loss of community.³⁷ Some of the students remembered the transition going smoothly, but others recall being moved to a different classroom in the integrated school because some students might not be as amenable to integration.³⁸ However, the school board urged “the students, teachers, and all citizens of the Caverna Independent School District to put aside prejudice and to approach the forthcoming integration of [the] schools in a spirit of good will and mutual cooperation for the common good of all.”³⁹ While the quick shift into an integrated school, which resulted in the closing of all African American schools in the district, was difficult for many Black students, several of whom dropped out, the transition is seen by many as a victory for race relations in Kentucky.

³⁴ Interview with Mayor Randall Curry March 31, 2025; Interview with Pastor K.T. Ford March 25, 2025.

³⁵ “Formation of Caverna.” In *Horse Cave Stories*, electronic document, <https://horsecavestories.com/horse-cave-stories-traditions/caverna-stories/formation-of-caverna/>, accessed April 2025.

³⁶ “Integration at Caverna” In *Horse Cave Stories*. Electronic document. <https://horsecavestories.com/horse-cave-stories-traditions/caverna-stories/integration-at-caverna/#:~:text=In%201957%20Caverna%20Schools%20integrated,students%20were%20sent%20to%20Caverna,> accessed April 2025.

³⁷ Oral History with Ann Matera. “Integration at Caverna.” Electronic document, <https://horsecavestories.com/horse-cave-stories-traditions/caverna-stories/integration-at-caverna/>, accessed April 2025.

³⁸ Oral History with Seaborn Ellzey, “Integration at Caverna.” Electronic document, <https://horsecavestories.com/horse-cave-stories-traditions/caverna-stories/integration-at-caverna/>, accessed April 2025. Oral History with Clarence Glover. “Integration at Caverna.” Electronic document, <https://horsecavestories.com/horse-cave-stories-traditions/caverna-stories/integration-at-caverna/>, accessed April 2025.

³⁹ “Caverna School District Resolution & Motion.” In *The Hart County News*. June 7, 1956.

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By many accounts, racial tensions in Horse Cave were not at the forefront of many of the city's residents, either white or Black. For most of the late twentieth century, Horse Cave still remained, for all intents and purposes, a segregated southern community. Henry Town remained mostly Black until the 1990s and early 2000s. However, despite the segregated status of some of the city's residents, which was no longer enforced and integration had begun to occur in the housing stock east of the tracks, the city wanted to do right by its Black residents. In the early 1980s, Kentucky became "one of two states in the nation to formally accept federal funds under the community development block grant program" which, through the Department of Housing and Urban Development, sought to provide funding for community development activities.⁴⁰ In Hart County, the money was earmarked for "housing, public facilities and economic development projects that principally benefit low and moderate income people."⁴¹ This was great news for Horse Cave and its African American population, as some of the Black residents were among the largest beneficiaries. Along some of the main residential streets in Henry Town, community block grant money was utilized to tear down dilapidated homes, many of which were in poor disrepair and lacked modern amenities such as indoor plumbing, and built new homes to return to the residents. This was great for the African American community, it helped to beautify the Henry Town neighborhood, and it marks a point in Horse Cave's history that highlights the harmonious nature of the integrated southern city.

In the years since the POS, the African American population in Horse Cave has declined and the Henry Town Historic District has been integrated. Many younger generations of African Americans are moving out of Horse Cave to take advantage of opportunities afforded them. The neighborhood no longer remains all African American because residential opportunities are open across the city. Mayor Randall Curry, the current and first African American mayor, said that Horse Cave has always had open arms (referring to racial acceptance) and that, when he grew up, they might not have had much, but they had what they needed and the people in town worked and lived together peacefully and happily.⁴²

Evaluation of the Significance of the Property within the Historic Context

The Henry Town Historic District is significant to the story of Horse Cave, as it tells the story of the prominent and influential African American population in the small, southern Kentucky town. Black history is American history, and too often, the role of African Americans in small rural towns get forgotten or only anecdotally remembered. In Horse Cave, African Americans lived in the area as long as the white settlers, settled the area now known as Henry Town and Barlow Hill after Emancipation, and made a community of their own on the west side of the tracks. Despite living in rural Kentucky and battling endless inequalities, the African American community in Horse Cave thrived, founding churches and schools, the latter of which gained regional notoriety for sports, and playing a noteworthy role in the overall success of Horse Cave. In fact, some of Horse Cave's most celebrated sons were the African Americans who grew up going to segregated schools and went on to play professional sports.⁴³

⁴⁰ "Kentucky one of two states handling community block grants." In *The Hart County News*, April 22, 1982.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Interview with Mayor Randall Curry March 31, 2025.

⁴³ Clarence Glover, was born in Horse Cave, attended the Horse Cave Colored School for a few years before integration, and went on to play for the Boston Celtics. Carl "Kingfish" Helem and Clarence "Cave" Wilson both attended the original Horse Cave Colored School and went on to play for the Harlem Globetrotters.

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The City of Horse Cave does not characterize itself as a stereotypical southern town, with frequent klan rallies and horror stories. Such atrocities are known to have occurred in nearby Hart County Black communities. While there were isolated issues, Horse Cave was only able to thrive because of the African American population. The Black community worked the tobacco fields and warehouses, worked in the factories, and worked in the tourism industry, without which, Horse Cave would look much different. However, due to the disparities between white and Black life in Horse Cave through much of its history, there are fewer, and less glamorous, remnants of African Americans in the built environment. The very presence of the historic buildings in the Henry Town Historic District work to tell the story of a cohesive community that, while lacking the stylishness, splendor, and superfluousness of the more affluent downtown buildings and houses to the east, were just as essential to the overall story of the town. From the Horse Cave First Baptist Church, whose congregation dates back to the years immediately following the end of the Civil War, to the modest one-and-two-room dwellings that line the residential streets, to the African American Horse Cave Cemetery, the land, the built environment, and the people on the west side of the tracks are significant to the story of Horse Cave and to the resolve of African Americans in America's rural small towns.

Moreover, the Henry Town Historic District provides insight into African American life in Hart County as a whole. Horse Cave, the county's largest city, was developed around the L&N railroad line with the white and black areas being developed or laid out around the same time. This proximity provided a sense of cohesion that was not seen as robustly in other areas of Hart County. The only other city of comparable size in Hart County is Munfordville, which saw early development as the county seat before Emancipation and the arrival of the L&N, meaning the layout of the city has greater separation from the railroad lines, and greater separation between the white and Black communities. Similarly, this separation and the developmental patterns of Munfordville have affected the built environment in a negative way. This is all to say that the Henry Town Historic District provides a unique view of the African American life in Hart County, where the physical separation can still be seen along with the disparities between the white and Black communities. The Henry Town Historic District is the only place capable of telling the urban version of the story of African American life in Hart County. The Henry Town Historic District provides insight into Hart County's local African American experience. This district and its history help explain, through the built environment, the inequalities between the white and Black communities, the resiliency and self-determination of the Black community, and the ongoing progress and evolution of the residents in the district that has continued through to the 21st century.

Evaluation of the Integrity Between the Significance and the Property's Physical Condition

Before diving into the Integrity of the Henry Town Historic District as it is defined by the National Park Service, it is important to discuss the inappropriate view some people have when determining which buildings are historic or significant. It is all too easy, and unfortunately common, to only rest the significance of a district on how beautiful or grand the architectural resources are. This is wrong. While the resources in this district are not as grand, elaborate, stylish, or pristine as those in the Horse Cave Residential Historic District or the Commercial District, both on the east side of town, the resources in the Henry Town district are just as important to remembering a significant part of Horse Cave's shared history. These resources are significant, not because of their stylistic prowess, but despite it. Their practicality, simplicity, and humble appearances are what help define

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what they were, the community they served, and, when put in context, are the very things that make them significant. Similarly, while some of these buildings are in various states of disrepair, this can be viewed through the lens of what happens to such a neighborhood when the residents are disenfranchised for so long and then how the buildings survive when circumstances change. Therefore, it is important to approach these buildings with their context in mind, and not bias their power with inappropriate comparisons with grander districts whose significance lies elsewhere.

Each building's contribution to the district has been evaluated insofar as it helps reinforce and interpret the significant identity of the Henry Town Historic District. The Henry Town Historic District meets the definition of a district stated as the 4th term of Criterion C, it is "a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction." Because that significance is in Horse Cave's developmental history, particularly in the context of the establishment of an African American community and part of town, the Criterion of eligibility is Criterion A.

The task of evaluating the overall significance of the Henry Town Historic District means first evaluating its social and developmental significance and then evaluating whether there is an integrity between the resources' physical condition and the sense of significance. That will call for "... sometimes a subjective judgment, ... it must always be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance."⁴⁴ The evaluative lens for this district is that it was the primary residential development Horse Cave that served the African American population, one that was historically marginalized, discriminated against, and alienated. The established Period of Significance stretches from the mid-to-late-nineteenth century to 1975 in order to fully demonstrate that the district has been an integral part of Horse Cave since Emancipation and through to the late twentieth century.

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

One feature about the Henry Town Historic District's integrity is likely noticed upon first glance and, thus warrant some preemptive justifications. The Horse Cave Historic District has a large number of Non-Contributing resources. However, it can be argued that this instance is a part of the overall story of the Henry Town Historic District. There is an unusually large number of vacant lots, accounting for over half of the Non-Contributing resources. This is commonplace in many of Kentucky's African American communities. As explained in the National Register listing of the New Zion Historic District, on the boundary of Fayette and Scott Counties, Kentucky, as to why rural African American communities experience dissolution or loss of the built environment:

⁴⁴ United States Department of the Interior. *National Register Bulletin #15: Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning*. (Washington D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, 2002.)

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As blacks found greater ability to integrate into mainstream society throughout the 1960s, there would be less need for autonomous African American communities. Further, as blacks found housing in traditional towns and cities...which provided residents with amenities that were absent from the rural communities, those rural villages could look less inviting, by comparison. Perhaps the isolated situation of a rural community, while freeing, still connoted an outsider status for some people who wished a greater participation in wider societies.⁴⁵

This description is perfect for describing some of the features that have led to the loss of the built environment in communities such as Henry Town. These factors lead to buildings being lost due to neglect and falling into disrepair, but are nonetheless a part of the story of a rural African American community. This district also has a large number of Non-Contributing buildings, however, this too is a part of the larger story of the evolution and progress of the Henry Town District and the greater Horse Cave African American community. Many of the buildings built right outside the POS were done by and for the African American community, funded by a city-sanctioned Community Block Grant, that endeavored to beautify the Henry Town community and make the residences more habitable for the African American residents. Moreover, the buildings built just outside of the POS are compatible with the rest of the district in materiality, as well as feeling and design. The Henry Town Historic District as a whole should be viewed as a chronicle of rural African American communities and, specifically, of the African American experience in Hart County, Kentucky.

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

The Henry Town Historic District retains integrity of **location**. At the end of the Civil War, thousands of formerly enslaved people in Hart County were left to find a new place to live, begin a life, and build a community. On the outskirts of Horse Cave, at the base of the unforgiving topography west of town, is where the newly freedmen and women were relegated to living. Furthermore, the grid-like residential streets of the Henry Town Historic District branched off West Main Street, the major east/west corridor, something that remains the same today. This locational aspect has remained the same and the resources in the district remain in their historic location. Moreover, the physical makeup of the neighborhood has remained relatively unchanged over the last hundred years. Additionally, the overall layout and major thoroughfares are intact, meaning the district appears much as it did when it was laid out. Because of this, the district retains integrity of **setting**. From its inception, the district has been mostly residential with a few religious buildings and some former places of business. The current physical makeup of the district retains the setting of a humbler residential neighborhood that, while close to the central commercial corridor, is physically separated by a railroad line, which was integral to the city's survival and

⁴⁵ National Register of Historic Places, New Zion Historic District, Scott and Fayette Counties, Kentucky, National Register #08001118.

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growth as well as the segregation of the population. There has been some impact of the historic setting as there are 41 Non-Contributing buildings in the district that were all built outside the POS. However, nearly all of these buildings replaced earlier dwellings out of necessity or habitability and are, themselves, modest in design and style, similar to the resources they replaced. Furthermore, many of these instances of modern infill were done by the African American community through city-sanctioned grants aimed at lifting up Henry Town and beautifying it. These factors aid in telling the overall story and significance of the Henry Town Historic District and, as such, the presence of new buildings does not impact its integrity in a way as to not allow the district to convey its historic setting.

The Henry Town Historic District also retains integrity of **design**. The overall design and layout of the district has been largely unchanged. This can be noted in the layout of the streets and the size of the parcels with the city's major thoroughfare dissecting it and the railroad line bounding it. While the overall design of the Henry Town District has not changed in the 150 years since its formation, it has been impacted by the modern infill and construction of new buildings in the past several decades. Most of the new construction, however, consists of replacement buildings for dwellings that were already present and have therefore not affected the District's ability to convey the original historic design. In addition to the historic integrity of the design is the integrity of **materials**. When evaluating the district's material character, through the lens of Criterion A with an emphasis on the property's identity as a modest, African American residential development that arose following Emancipation, the practicality of historic and present materials become important definers of that identity. Some changes have been made to the materials over time, but the new materials are used for practical purpose and effect, just as the original materials were. While the district's material integrity is the aspect that has been affected by the presence of so many modern, Non-Contributing resources, it has not been diminished in a way that prevents the District from conveying its significance. In fact, the buildings built just outside of the POS are compatible with the rest of the district in materiality. Most of these dwellings were built out of the same materials as the resources that are Contributing and match the same in style, simplicity and utility.

The **feeling** and **association** of the Henry Town Historic District is retained. The resources within the district, consisting of modest and practical housing types, are extant, along with a few more elaborate buildings along West Main Street and the open lots that once served as an extension of the commercial district. The feeling has been somewhat impacted by the level of new construction that has taken place in the last fifty years, however, much of this was done to improve the livability of the houses and were built by and for the African American Henry Town community. During the years of new construction in the District, the demographic remained largely African American, thus the beautification efforts by the city that ultimately improved the livability of the houses, should be seen as an extension of the factors that make the Henry Town Historic District significant in the first place. The new buildings are all modest in design and style and were constructed using the same materials that were being used to update the historic resources, thus their presence has not negatively impacted the feeling in such a way that the District is not able to convey its integrity. The integrity of location, setting, materials, and design, allow the extant features of the district to convey a strong sense of what a small-town's African American community looked like. The varying lot sizes, inconsistent setbacks, variable styles and sizes of the houses, and absence of ornamentation, all combine to give the district its distinct character.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

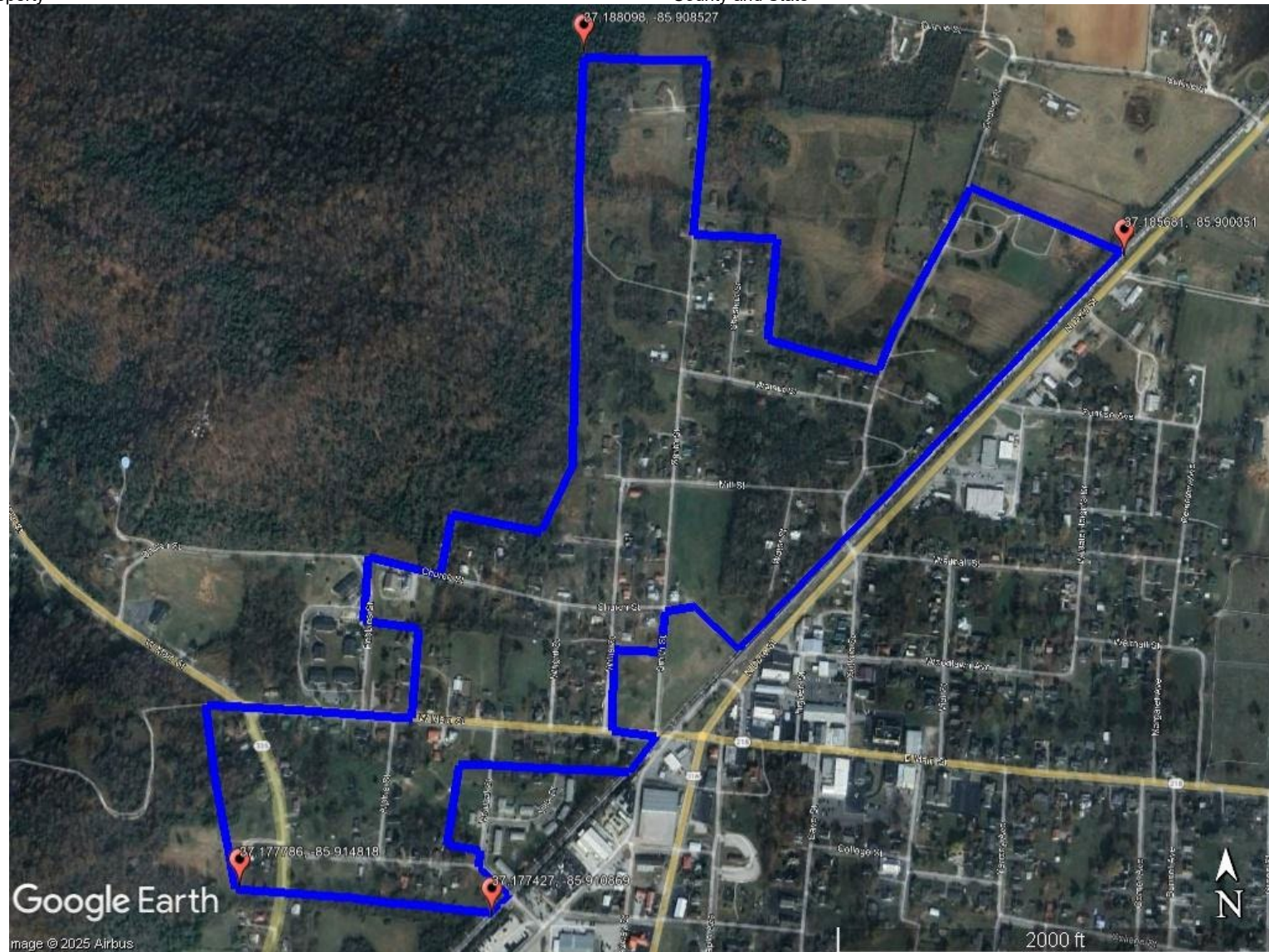
Acreage of Property 150 acres

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 37.188098 | Longitude: -85.908527 |
| 2. Latitude: 37.185681 | Longitude: -85.900351 |
| 3. Latitude: 37.177427 | Longitude: -85.910869 |
| 4. Latitude: 37.177786 | Longitude: -85.914818 |

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Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the northwest corner of the Horse Cave Cemetery parcel, then south along the border of the railroad line to a point at the southeastern corner of the lot of 201 McFerran Street, excluding the empty lots at the convergence of W. Main Street, Smith Street, and the railroad tracks and the lots containing the Caveland Manor apartment complex, then continuing west along the southern parcel lines of the houses on McFerran Street to the southwestern corner of the lot of 215 Old Dixie Highway., then north along the western property lines of the houses on Old Dixie Highway. to W. Main Street then east along W. Main St to the eastern boundary of the modern houses on Peebles Street, then north to the northwestern corner of said modern houses, then east to Peebles Street then north to the intersection of Peebles and Church Streets, the east to the southwest corner of the lot of 212 Church Street, then north along the property line and east following the rear property lines of the residential streets in Henry Town to the northwestern corner of the lot of 476 Smith Street, then east to the extension of Smith Street then south along Smith Street to the southwestern property line of 439 Smith Street, then following rear property lines of houses along Chestnut and Walnut Streets until reaching Guthrie Street, then north on Guthrie Street to the northwestern boundary of the Horse Cave Cemetery, then east to the point of the beginning.

Boundary Justification

The Henry Town Historic District includes the core of Horse Cave's historic African American community, including the residential streets on both sides of W. Main Street The boundaries deviate from the entirety of the historic area in three areas: one features two large open lots at the intersection of W. Main St, Smith Street and the L&N that previously had historic buildings on them but one has since been converted to what appears to be a community park, the second cut out modern apartment complexes. Furthermore, there is an area just west of the boundaries in between W. Main and Church Street that was removed. This is because all historic resources once located in this area have been lost, including the historic Friendship Church, which was demolished in the 1990s after the construction of the new church that currently sits at the site. Otherwise, this district encompasses the residential core of the African American community, complete with the Horse Cave Cemetery. The boundaries also attempt to stay within the recognized boundaries of the City of Horse Cave.

Property Owner:

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

name

Multiple

street & number

telephone

city or town

state

zip code

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11. Form Prepared By

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Additional Documentation

Photographs

Photo Log

Name of Property: Henry Town Historic District

City or Vicinity: Horse Cave

County: Hart County

State: Kentucky

Photographer: Wes Cunningham

Date Photographed: March 2025

Photo 1 of 21, Horse Cave Cemetery entry post, camera facing east.

Photo 2 of 21, Horse Cave Cemetery, camera facing northeast.

Photo 3 of 21, Horse Cave Cemetery, camera facing south.

Photo 4 of 21, 134 Walnut Street, camera facing north.

Photo 5 of 21, 247 Mill Street, camera facing southeast.

Photo 6 of 21, 238 Water Street, camera facing southwest.

Photo 7 of 21, 302 Smith Street, camera facing southwest.

Photo 8 of 21, 104 Church Street, camera facing northeast.

Photo 9 of 21, 110 Church Street, camera facing north.

Photo 10 of 21, Overview of the Henry Town Historic District, camera facing west.

Photo 11 of 21, 117 Church Street, camera facing southeast.

Photo 12 of 21, View of the Henry Town Historic District along Wright Street, camera facing north.

Photo 13 of 21, Overview of resources along W. Main Street, camera facing northeast.

Photo 14 of 21, 212 Church Street, camera facing north.

Photo 15 of 21, Horse Cave First Baptist Church, camera facing south

Photo 16 of 21, Representative modern infill just outside of the District, camera facing southwest.

Photo 17 of 21, Overview along Old Dixie Highway., camera facing south.

Photo 18 of 21, 155 Old Dixie Highway, camera facing west.

Photo 19 of 21, 195 Old Dixie Highway, camera facing southwest.

Photo 20 of 21, 200 McFerran Street, camera facing southwest.

Photo 21 of 21, Overview of McFerran Street, camera facing northwest

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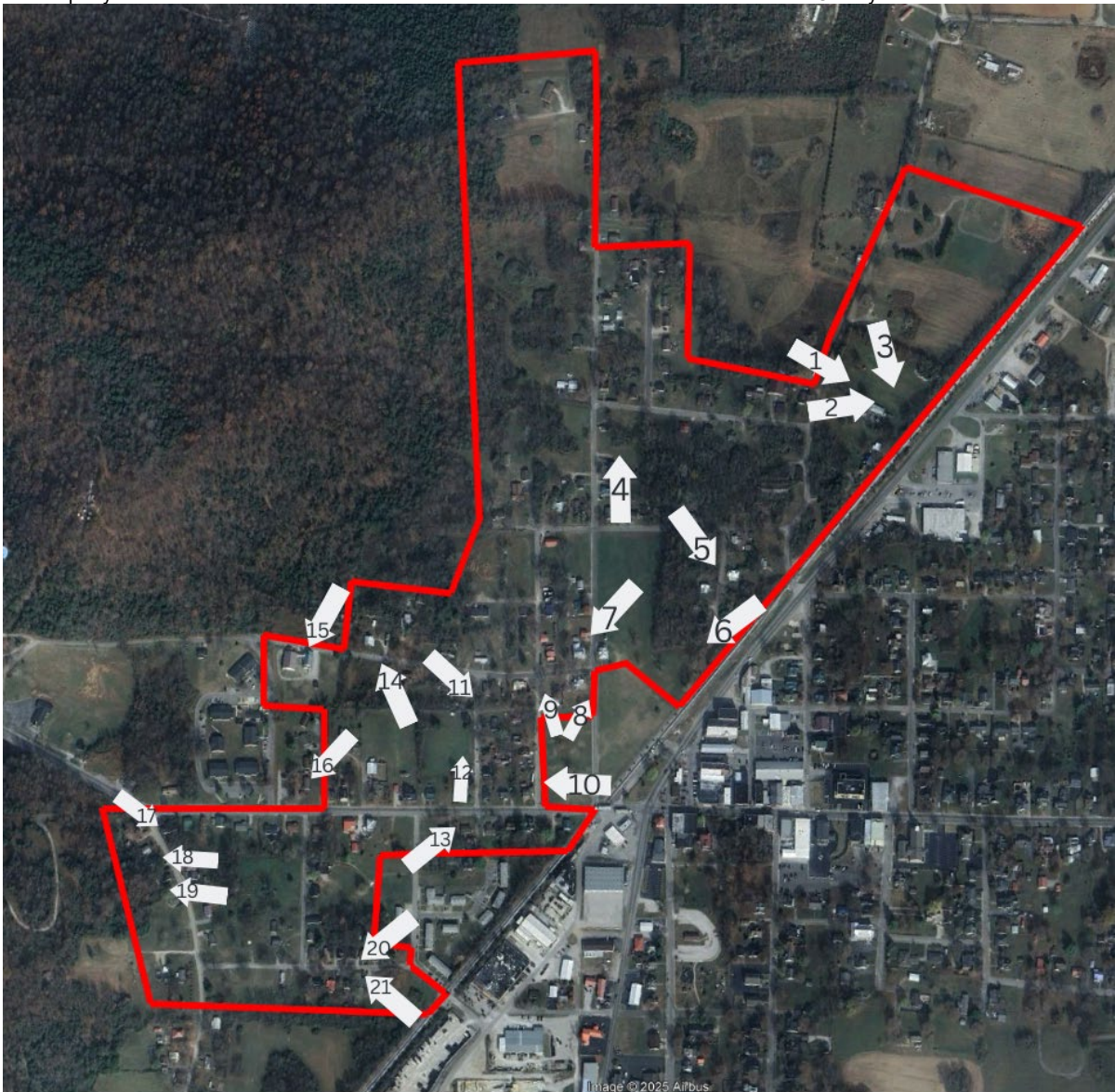


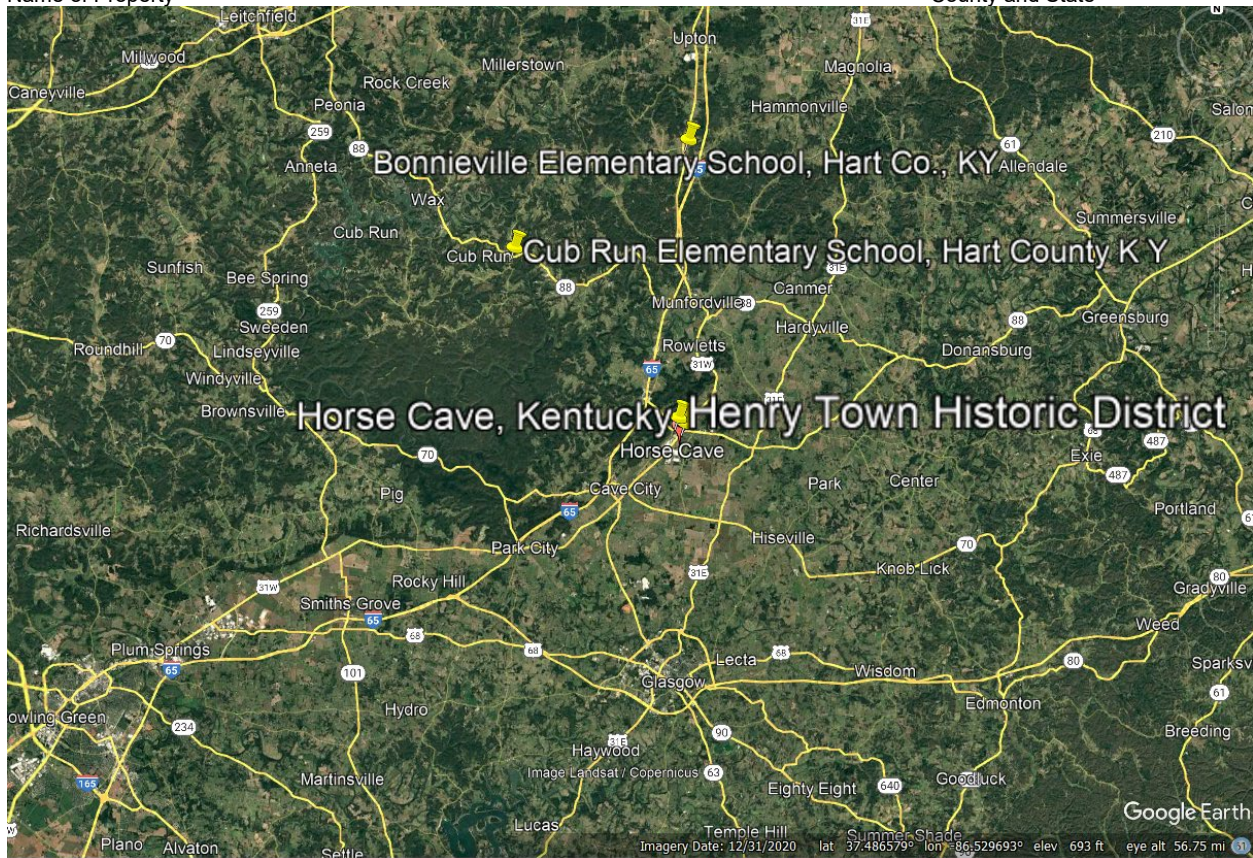
Photo Key

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Area Map Showing location of District

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