

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Skaggs, Thelma, House

Other names/site number: RWM 196

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & number: 221 Heights Avenue

City or town: Morehead State: Kentucky County: Rowan

Not For Publication: ☐ NA Vicinity: ☐ NA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>2</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

Domestic/ Single Dwelling

Domestic/Secondary Structure (Garage)

Landscape/ Garden Structure (well houses, benches)

Current Functions

Domestic/ Single Dwelling

Domestic/ Secondary Structure (Garage)

Landscape/ Garden Structure (well houses, benches)

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Bungalow/Craftsman

Side-gable bungalow with front facing dormer

Early 20th-century vernacular

Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: concrete/stone piers, Walls: wood frame with horizontal wood siding (later vinyl/aluminum replacement in some areas), Roof: asphalt shingles, Porch: wood decking; square wood piers, Windows: wood-framed double-hung sash; some replacement vinyl units on rear sunroom

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Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Thelma Skaggs House (RWM 196) is a one-and-one-half-story, front-gabled Bungalow/Craftsman dwelling built circa 1915 and located at 221 Heights Avenue in Morehead, Rowan County, Kentucky. The house retains its original massing, roof form, full-width front porch, and early 20th-century Craftsman-influenced design elements. The building sits on a sloped lot. The area proposed for National Register listing is the entire .56-acre lot, which includes two contributing buildings (house and garage), two contributing structures (well houses), and one contributing object (stone bench). The house is being interpreted for its identity as the birthplace and childhood home of Thelma Skaggs.



Thelma Skaggs House, Morehead, KY Latitude: 38.174699° Longitude: -83.442827°

Character of Site

The property occupies approximately 0.56 acres on a hillside overlooking lower Morehead. The front lawn slopes gently toward the street, while the rear of the property drops toward a wooded

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edge. Mature trees, informal plantings, and a naturalistic yard contribute to the feel of a natural wooded Appalachian domestic landscape. The garage is positioned on the northwestern portion of the lot, aligned with the driveway. Two historic well structures and a stone bench are situated behind the house near the slope, consistent with early 20th-century water access and yard use.

Description of Resource

The basic form of the house is rectangular with a side-gable roof that rises to a ridge running east-west. The roof is covered with shingles, and a dormer is present on both the north and south slopes of the roof. An added carport is attached to the west side of the house. The house retains its historic 3-over-1 double-hung sash windows. Skirting material covers the bottom of the house, obscuring the view of the foundation material. Vinyl siding has been added to the house, covering its historic lap siding.

Exterior: North (Front) Elevation

The north (front) elevation is defined by a full-width engaged porch supported by square, tapered wood piers resting on a continuous foundation. The porch retains its original footprint and roof form. Porch decking is wood; skirting shows deterioration but reflects the original configuration. Centered on the façade is a single-leaf wood door with upper glazing, flanked symmetrically by paired double-hung wood sash windows. Above the porch roof, a prominent gabled dormer contains three wood-sash windows grouped together, typical of the Craftsman style. The main roof is a steep side-gabled form covered in asphalt shingles.



Front of House (north side)



East elevation

East Elevation

The east side features the original massing, characterized by two evenly spaced window openings. The eaves have been wrapped in vinyl, obscuring any exposed rafter tails or historic soffit details that may remain behind the later material. Skirting and vegetation limit views of the foundation along this elevation, but the overall wall plane and window openings continue to convey the historic side elevation.

South (Rear) Elevation

The rear elevation features an enclosed sunroom addition with multiple replacement vinyl windows. Although nonhistoric, the enclosure remains subordinate and does not obscure the

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original roofline or massing. Two historic well structures and the stone bench are located directly behind the house.



South (back) elevation



West side

West Elevation

The west elevation includes the attached carport supported by slender metal posts, likely a mid-20th-century addition. Behind the carport is the original west wall of the house with wood-sash windows and original siding profile still evident underneath later replacement panels.

Interior Description

The interior of the Thelma Skaggs House follows a compact early-20th-century bungalow floor plan that reinforces the property's modest scale. The main level is organized around a central living room that opens directly from the front entry, with adjacent rooms radiating outward in a simple, efficient circulation pattern. A doorway on one side leads to the dining area and kitchen, located toward the rear of the house, while bedrooms are situated off short hallways to the side and back. This arrangement required constant movement through shared rooms, creating an environment where family members regularly interacted and made collective use of limited space.

Interior finishes are modest yet characteristic of the period's construction in rural Rowan County. Door and window casings, baseboards, and simple header trim are composed of dark-stained early-20th-century millwork, typical of working-class bungalow interiors in Appalachia. The wood exhibits a deep, warm finish that highlights the natural grain pattern, with some elements left stained and others painted in lighter tones that brighten the small rooms. Several original wood-panel doors remain in place and retain their early hardware. The trim profiles and surviving craftsmanship together convey the workmanship and domestic character of the home during Skaggs' formative years.

Flooring on the main level consists of wood subflooring, now covered in some rooms by later carpeting or resilient materials. In other areas, the original wood floors remain visible, showing the wear patterns associated with decades of family life. Walls and ceilings are finished in plaster or gypsum board, with later paint layers but minimal structural alteration. Kitchen and

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bathroom spaces have undergone updates typical of continued domestic use, including replacement cabinetry, modern fixtures, and updated appliances. However, these changes are limited to finishes and do not alter the house's historic room layout or general functional relationships.

Overall, the interior retains the compact, efficient, and resource-conscious character of a working-class Appalachian home in the early to mid-20th century. The relatively small rooms, simple finishes, and shared circulation pattern illustrate the domestic environment in which Skaggs learned to manage tight space, stretch resources, organize routines, and supervise multiple tasks at once, skills she later translated into the structured, safety-focused practices of her licensed child-care enterprise on West Main Street.



Interior door



Window from inside

Garage/Outbuilding (Contributing Building)

A one-story, front-gabled frame garage sits northwest of the dwelling. It retains original gable vents, wood framing, weatherboard siding, and a side shed addition supported by simple wood posts. Although weathered, the structure conveys its historic form and function.



Garage



Well housings and bench

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Well Structures (Two Contributing Structures)

Two square-plan well houses with wood siding and gabled wood roofs are located behind the house. Their form, materials, and placement are consistent with early 20th-century domestic water systems.

Stone Bench (Contributing Object)

A simple stone bench consisting of a rectangular slab supported by two block uprights sits along the rear slope of the lot. Its workmanship, materials, and patina indicate early- to mid-20th-century origin.

Changes to the Property Since the Period of Significance

- Vinyl siding added to the exterior of the dwelling
- Rear sunroom enclosure
- Mid-century carport addition
- General repair/replacement of porch materials
- Modern utilities (HVAC, electric meter, etc.)

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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

Social History

Period of Significance

1921-1939

Significant Dates

1921

1939

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Significant Person

Skaggs, Thelma

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph

Thelma Skaggs' Birthplace (RWM 196) at 221 Heights Avenue in Morehead, Kentucky, meets National Register Criterion B for its association with a pioneering figure in women's economic empowerment and childcare innovation in rural Appalachia. Skaggs' daycare became a vital community service and a model of grassroots female entrepreneurship, reflecting broader mid-20th-century shifts in childcare and women's labor roles, as outlined in the historic context "The Rise of Women-Led Childcare Enterprises in Rural Appalachia, 1945–1975." Skaggs was born in 1921 and established a licensed daycare circa 1960–1962 that served working families near Morehead State University for over 20 years (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024). At a time when government childcare support was limited, she balanced maternal care with administrative precision, maintaining detailed ledgers, hiring local stay-at-home mothers, and meeting state licensing standards (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024). Her work emerged amid rising female labor force participation and a growing national need for dependable childcare (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017; Michel, 2009). This need was especially acute in underserved Appalachian communities, such as Morehead, where formal childcare infrastructure was limited (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2020; Eller, 2008). The early 20th-century bungalow (built circa 1915) where she was born and raised, is the scene of experiences that shaped her, and in turn became benchmarks by which she conceived an appropriate organization for her daycare operation. In this house, she learned financial discipline from her parents' household management (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024), community reciprocity from a close-knit neighborhood (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024), and a cooperative approach to caregiving through the informal child-minding networks common in early 20th-century Morehead (Eller, 2008; Family interview, personal communication, May 2024). These formative experiences laid the foundation for her professional childcare model, directly linking the property to her later significance.

Historic Context: The Rise of Women-Led Childcare Enterprises in Rural Appalachia, 1945–1975

Following World War II, childcare in the United States entered a period of transformation shaped by rising female labor force participation, expanding higher education access, and shifting economic conditions. Across rural Appalachia, these changes were especially pronounced as industrial decline, outmigration, and growing service-sector employment pushed more women into wage work (Eller, 2008; ARC, 2020). Yet even as more women worked outside the home, childcare options lagged far behind demand. In many Appalachian communities, the traditional reliance on extended family and neighbor-based care persisted, but these informal networks proved insufficient for families working full-time, multiple jobs, or shift-based schedules (Naples, 1998; Coontz, 2000).

Nationally, public attention to childcare intensified during the 1960s and 1970s. Advocacy from pediatric groups, women's organizations, and social work researchers revealed

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widespread safety concerns in unregulated childcare settings (Hinitz, 2000). Journalists reported cases of neglect and inadequate facilities, making childcare a policy priority for the first time since the wartime nurseries of the 1940s. This heightened scrutiny contributed to federal legislation such as the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) of 1974, which incentivized states to adopt more formal licensing and inspection systems (Michel, 2009).

At nearly the same time, Congress passed the Comprehensive Child Development Act of 1971, which would have created a universal childcare system accessible to all families. President Nixon vetoed the bill, arguing that federal involvement in childcare undermined the traditional family structure (Michel, 2009). The veto preserved childcare as a private responsibility, intensifying pressure on families, especially women, to navigate limited, unevenly regulated care options.

In Kentucky, debates over childcare in the 1960s and 1970s often focused less on public investment and more on regulation. Proposals that would have provided direct operating funds or subsidies for community-based centers routinely stalled or lost appropriations during the legislative process, even as lawmakers acknowledged the growing need for childcare (Michel, 2009; Coontz, 2000). This pattern followed a larger dynamic in which predominantly male policymakers retained control over the policy agenda while leaving the practical burden of childcare on women, who were expected to reconcile wage work with caregiving using limited public support. In that environment, the state's main intervention was to regulate providers rather than to underwrite their operation—a choice that shaped how women such as Thelma Skaggs could build and sustain their enterprises.

In response to rising national expectations and federal pressure from CAPTA, Kentucky strengthened childcare standards through the Cabinet for Human Resources (now the Cabinet for Health and Family Services). The state created requirements related to sanitation, safety, staff-to-child ratios, and facility inspections (KCHFS, 2024). However, Kentucky, like most states, offered little financial support to help providers meet these new expectations. As a result, the regulatory framework disproportionately challenged small, home-based operations in rural communities that lacked capital for upgrades or paid staff (Eller, 2008).

Within this tightening policy landscape, rural women who sought to open or formalize childcare centers faced substantial barriers: limited cash reserves, fluctuating demand connected to local industries and universities, and skepticism toward paid childcare in communities historically reliant on familial support networks (Naples, 1998; Coontz, 2000). Despite these challenges, women entrepreneurs across Appalachia developed small, community-based childcare programs that served working families and set new standards for children's safety, supervision, and early learning. Their efforts laid groundwork for modern early childhood care systems, particularly in regions where institutional childcare was still emerging.

The context of Morehead, Kentucky, exemplifies these national and regional dynamics. As Morehead State University expanded in the 1960s, the number of faculty, staff, and student families with young children increased. Yet the community lacked licensed, year-round childcare facilities capable of meeting professional work schedules. Informal arrangements continued to dominate the landscape: part-time church nurseries, neighborhood babysitting, and short-term

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care tied to religious or seasonal programs (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024). These services provided meaningful help but lacked the stability and oversight required for families needing consistent, daily supervision.

It was within this environment that women like Thelma Skaggs emerged as innovators in local childcare. Their work filled a critical gap created by mismatched labor demands, insufficient public policy, and the absence of formal childcare infrastructure. Thelma's operation must therefore be understood not only as an isolated entrepreneurial venture but as part of a broader historical movement of Appalachian women organizing accessible, community-centered childcare in response to structural need.

Local Daycare Landscape and Peer Context

A review of oral histories (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024), local newspaper archives at the Rowan County Public Library Genealogy Room, and Kentucky childcare licensing records (Cabinet for Health and Family Services [KCHFS], 2024) revealed no evidence of long-term, non-family-operated licensed daycares in Morehead prior to the 1960s. Informal arrangements, such as church-based nurseries, short-term vacation Bible school programs, and neighborhood babysitting networks, did exist, but these services typically operated intermittently, for limited hours, or in direct connection with religious programming rather than as full-day, year-round childcare enterprises.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the growing number of dual-income and single-parent households fueled demand for structured and reliable childcare (Coontz, 2000, p. 186). The proportion of women with children under age six in the labor force doubled, from 19% in 1960 to 38% by 1975 (U.S. Department of Labor, 1979). This trend heightened the visibility of childcare as a public and policy issue and magnified the consequences of relying solely on informal arrangements.

Investigative journalism and advocacy from pediatric and social work communities spotlighted the inadequacies of unregulated childcare settings, leading to federal responses like the 1974 Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), which prompted states to adopt licensing standards. Though President Nixon vetoed the Comprehensive Child Development Act of 1971, the legislation marked a turning point in the national conversation about childcare as a public policy priority (Michel, 2009). Rather than funding a broad network of public centers, states were more likely to impose minimum standards and inspections on existing providers.

In this climate, Kentucky empowered its Cabinet for Human Resources, the predecessor to today's Cabinet for Health and Family Services, to establish licensing regulations covering health, safety, staffing, and facility standards (KCHFS, 2024). These mandates, enacted without accompanying financial incentives or subsidies, followed a regulatory "stick" approach, prioritizing structure and compliance over direct financial support. Providers who sought licensure had to absorb new costs for building upgrades, equipment, and record-keeping while competing with unregulated, lower-overhead alternatives.

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Within this sparse and shifting landscape, Thelma Skaggs' decision to pursue and maintain licensure stands out. Available licensing records and oral histories have not yet identified another independent, non-family-operated, licensed daycare in Morehead that matched her combination of full-day service, continuity across decades, and verified compliance with emerging state standards during the historic period (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024; KCHFS, 2024). This absence of sustained peers underscores the pioneering nature of her initiative, while the presence of numerous informal arrangements provides the necessary context for understanding what made her licensed operation distinct, rather than assuming significance solely from being "the only one."

History of Thelma Skaggs' Day Care Operation

Thelma Skaggs began planning her childcare business in the late 1950s, recognizing a growing need for dependable, local care among working families near Morehead State University (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024). In 1961, after several years of preparation, she opened Thelma's Day Care in the small frame house she owned at 612 Rawcel Street, Morehead, Kentucky 40351. This modest dwelling, located approximately one mile from the Morehead State University campus, remains standing today with typical mid-century residential updates such as replacement siding and windows.



612 Rawcel Street, Morehead (note 606 Rawcel Street, at end of long driveway)

As demand for childcare grew and her waiting list expanded, Skaggs shifted her operation to a second residence she owned at 606 Rawcel Street, which she had previously leased to tenants. Once the lease concluded, she converted 606 Rawcel Street into the primary daycare facility, where the licensed operation continued for the remainder of its more than two decades of service. The house at 606 Rawcel Street also remains standing, with alterations made by subsequent owners but in sound condition. At the time, formal childcare options in Rowan

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County were limited, especially those operated independently by women (Eller, 2008, pp. 56–59; Michel, 2009). She first operated her daycare at 612 Rawcel Street, later relocating it to 606 Rawcel Street, a property she initially rented out before converting it for childcare use; both buildings remain standing with typical residential updates.



606 Rawcel in 1978



606 Rawcel in 2025

Skaggs operated the daycare for over 20 years, providing care for the children of faculty, staff, and students from Morehead State University as well as local working families (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024). Her facility was known for its consistent structure, cleanliness, and nurturing environment. She maintained handwritten ledgers to track finances and operated transparently through routine inspections (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024).

When Kentucky began formalizing daycare licensing standards in the early 1970s, in response to national reform efforts such as the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974, Thelma's Day Care became a licensed provider (Hinitz, 2000; KCHFS, 2024). Her facility passed inspections and reviews under the Cabinet's emerging administrative standards, which included minimum requirements for sanitation, safe supervision, staff-child ratios, and physical facilities (KCHFS, 2024). This record of compliance stood out in a rural region where other home-based arrangements either remained unlicensed or closed due to the difficulty of meeting new requirements (Coontz, 2000, p. 186; U.S. Department of Labor, 1979).

Rather than hiring traditional employees, Skaggs developed a cooperative model by enlisting trusted stay-at-home mothers from her neighborhood to work rotating shifts (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024). This approach provided job opportunities for local women, distributed caregiving responsibilities among peers, and built a deep sense of community and trust around the daycare.

Without access to formal childcare or business training programs, Skaggs developed her skills through lived experience and adaptive learning (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024). She modeled meticulous financial recordkeeping on her parents' household budgeting (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024), learned operational efficiency and customer service while co-managing the Skaggs Drive Inn Restaurant

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(Family interview, personal communication, May 2024), and adapted sanitation and safety practices she observed in church kitchens and community events (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024). Her proximity to Morehead State University, located at 150 University Boulevard, Morehead, exposed her to the expectations of faculty and staff families (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024), influencing the structured, dependable style of care she provided. These self-taught competencies enabled her to meet and exceed the state's emerging standards, exemplifying grassroots professionalism in rural Kentucky (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2020; Michel, 2009).

History of the Skaggs' (Black) Family

Thelma Lee Black was born on December 18, 1921, into the Black family in Rowan County, Kentucky. Her father, Wales S. Black, was part of a generation shaped by post-Reconstruction hardship and the pressures of rural Appalachian life. The Black family lived on Heights Avenue in a bungalow of modest design. Their household was marked by deep community ties, a culture of resourcefulness, and faith-centered routines that helped families survive in economically constrained environments. Like many Appalachian families, the Blacks prioritized survival, spiritual grounding, and intergenerational care over formal education or material advancement.

Thelma's upbringing mirrored broader patterns in Appalachian family life. Children were raised collectively, elders passed down oral histories and traditions, and women maintained gardens, preserved food, and participated in informal labor economies. Thelma's determination to lead an independent life was partly shaped by observing her mother's experience in marriage. Despite having no high school diploma, Thelma embraced self-education. At age 17, she moved to Detroit seeking opportunity, which mirrored migration patterns among Appalachian youth seeking industrial work in urban centers (Eller, 2008).

After returning to Morehead in the late 1940s¹ and marrying, Thelma transformed her personal experiences into a powerful model of female entrepreneurship. In the early to mid-1950s², she and her husband operated Skaggs Drive Inn Restaurant, a small local business that served the Morehead community for several years. By 1961³, after establishing ownership of a home at 606 Rawcel Street, she launched Thelma's Day Care in that space. As her business grew, she utilized a second property she owned at 612 Rawcel Street, which she had previously rented to tenants. Once available, she relocated the daycare into 612 Rawcel Street, where the licensed operation continued for more than two decades. Both Rawcel Street properties remain standing today, each exhibiting routine residential updates but remaining intact and not deteriorated. Throughout the 1960s and into the 1980s, she maintained detailed handwritten ledgers, passed every required inspection, and hired local women, many of whom had never worked outside the home, to rotate in part-time caregiving roles.

¹ Based on known migration patterns and her 1921 birth year, Thelma likely returned to Morehead from Detroit in the late 1940s after spending time exploring employment opportunities in the urban Midwest.

² Precise start date for Skaggs Drive Inn is not confirmed through archival records, but family and community accounts suggest the restaurant was active before the daycare, likely operating during the early to mid-1950s.

³ 1961 is the confirmed founding year of Thelma's Day Care, as verified through family interviews and contextual corroboration.

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Known as “Mama Skaggs,” Thelma nurtured generations of working families and transformed the lower level of her family home into a public community hub. By anchoring her business in the same space where she was raised, she created a legacy of caregiving, integrity, and Appalachian perseverance. Her actions reflect a broader tradition of domestic entrepreneurship in the region, where women generated income, stability, and leadership in informal and institutional ways (Naples, 1998; Smith, 1999). Thelma's story embodies the adaptability and dignity that define Appalachian womanhood and affirms the cultural significance of the home where her journey began.

Evaluation of the Significance of Thelma Skaggs’ Day Care within the Rise of Women-Led Childcare Enterprises in Rural Appalachia, 1945–1975

To fully evaluate Thelma Skaggs’ contributions, her accomplishments must be understood in relation to the broader landscape of childcare providers operating in Morehead and surrounding communities during the mid-20th century. Research into daycare providers in Rowan County during the 1960s–1970s was conducted through oral histories with residents (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024), family interviews (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024), a review of local newspaper archives at the Rowan County Public Library Genealogy Room, and searches in Kentucky childcare licensing records (KCHFS, 2024). This research did not identify another non-family-operated, independently licensed daycare in Morehead that operated with comparable length and continuity during the historic period.

Informal and short-term arrangements, such as church nurseries during services, babysitting co-ops, or unlicensed neighborhood minders, were present and did provide meaningful support to families. However, these arrangements typically operated part-time, closed when a particular volunteer stepped away, or focused on limited Sunday or evening hours rather than the all-day, year-round coverage needed by parents working standard or shift schedules (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024). Many did not transition into the state’s licensed framework in the mid-1970s because they lacked dedicated facilities, stable staffing, or financial capacity to meet the new standards (KCHFS, 2024).

In this context, the question is not simply whether Skaggs’ daycare was “the only one,” but whether it performed in ways that made it especially valuable within the field of available options. Several features of her operation emerge repeatedly in the historical record:

- **Documented health and safety compliance.** Licensing records and family interviews indicate that Thelma’s Day Care met state requirements for sanitation, supervision, and record-keeping at a time when other local arrangements remained unregulated or ceased operation rather than seek licensure (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024; KCHFS, 2024). Parents who enrolled their children there were choosing a setting with regular inspections, written policies, and predictable oversight rather than relying solely on informal reputation.
- **Reliability and continuity of care.** Interviews describe the daycare as operating on consistent daily schedules, for the full workday and across the calendar year, over more

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than two decades (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024). By contrast, many informal providers offered sporadic or short-term care that required families to continually renegotiate arrangements. Skaggs' ability to remain open across multiple economic and regulatory shifts gave her operation a rare continuity.

- **Structured routines and developmental opportunities.** Family narratives recall that Skaggs used age-appropriate routines, designated play areas, and simple educational activities such as storytelling, basic pre-literacy practice, and guided play (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024). Children experienced the daycare not merely as custodial supervision but as a place where they were expected to follow routines, interact with peers, and prepare for school.
- **Community trust and integration with local institutions.** Thelma's Day Care drew families from Morehead State University and the broader community, and it employed neighborhood women as rotating caregivers. In doing so, it created a social network that linked a working-class neighborhood, a regional university, and a growing group of wage-earning mothers (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024). The willingness of faculty and staff to place their children in her care, and the long-term relationships that followed, demonstrate a sustained level of trust that exceeded what was typically afforded to ad-hoc arrangements.

Taken together, these features show that Skaggs' daycare was significant not simply because it was licensed, but because it embodied a higher standard of reliability, accountability, and opportunity than the informal alternatives documented in the local record. The operation translated abstract state priorities, health, safety, and orderly record-keeping, into daily practice in a modest home-based setting, while simultaneously reflecting and reinforcing community values of mutual aid and hard work.

In this sense, Skaggs was not merely "the only one in her class." Within a landscape dominated by informal, episodic childcare, she built a licensed, continuously operating enterprise that parents repeatedly chose over time because it met emerging expectations of professional care. Her daycare illustrates how one Appalachian woman leveraged domestic space, neighborhood ties, and regulatory adaptation to create a durable institution that advanced women's ability to work for pay while keeping children safe and supported.

Understanding this significance also clarifies why her birthplace home at 221 Heights Avenue remains historically meaningful. It preserves the physical environment where her formative values were shaped and provides the tangible setting through which her later professional impact can still be interpreted, a connection explored further in the Evaluation of Integrity section.

Evaluation of Integrity Between Thelma Skaggs' Significance and the Physical State of the Property Today

In National Register terms, integrity is "the ability of a property to convey its significance." For the Thelma Skaggs Birthplace at 221 Heights Avenue, that ability rests on the way its surviving location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association allow visitors to understand how a modest Appalachian home shaped, and still illustrates, the life of a pioneering daycare operator. The house need not be unchanged to retain integrity; instead, the question is

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whether a person standing on the site today can still perceive the domestic landscape that formed Skaggs' values and made her later accomplishments legible.

The property retains integrity of **location** and **setting**. It remains on its original lot along Heights Avenue, in a residential neighborhood comparable in scale and character to the one Skaggs knew as a child. The modest yard, outbuildings, and relationship to the street reflect the working-class development pattern of early- to mid-20th-century Morehead. Nearby houses of similar size and age reinforce the sense of a close-knit, walkable neighborhood where neighbors shared labor, childcare, and resources, precisely the environment that shaped Skaggs' cooperative approach to care.

The house also retains key aspects of an integrity of **design** and **materials** that express the modest, "in-between" character of the household that formed Skaggs' values. As a one-and-one-half-story bungalow, not a grand residence, but not a shack, the dwelling embodied the expectations placed on a working-class Appalachian family that was expected to "get by" through hard work, thrift, and mutual support. The wood-frame structure, simple gable roof, and detached garage are typical of early 20th-century domestic construction for Rowan County's emerging middle class. The surviving double-hung sash windows, central entry, and horizontal lap siding (including portions now covered by later materials) continue to convey the building's scale and proportions. Within this compact envelope, the arrangement of rooms required family members to share space, negotiate privacy, and use every corner efficiently. Those conditions helped normalize the kind of frugal, well-organized domestic management that Skaggs later translated into the routines, budgets, and supervision practices of her licensed daycare.

These physical characteristics support integrity of **feeling** and **association**, the aspects most closely tied to Criterion B. Within these walls, Skaggs learned the habits that later defined her licensed daycare: careful record-keeping, frugal use of space and resources, and an ethic of mutual aid rooted in family and neighborhood life (Family interview, personal communication, May 2024). The modest scale of the rooms, the orientation of the kitchen and living spaces, and the presence of garden plots and outbuildings situate the property firmly within a tradition of domestic labor that blurred the line between household and workplace. Standing on the front porch or in the yard today, a visitor can still imagine the patterns of daily life that produced the skills she later used to manage budgets, supervise children, and coordinate neighborhood caregivers.

Modern alterations, such as updated utilities, interior finishes, and minor exterior repairs, have not erased these interpretive cues. Rather, they reflect the ongoing use of the house as a residence while leaving intact the core spatial relationships, massing, and landscape features that convey its historic character. The wells, the garage, and the simple yard retain the impression of a self-reliant household that combined subsistence gardening, wage work, and informal exchange, mirroring broader patterns in Appalachian women's economic strategies (Eller, 2008; Naples, 1998).

Because 221 Heights Avenue still reads as the modest, unpretentious childhood home of a woman who later transformed domestic skills into an innovative, licensed child care enterprise, the property retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance under Criterion B. The house's

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small rooms, simple finishes, and working-class setting, all were appropriate to a person with social humility. That character quality mirrors Skaggs' own quiet, persistent approach to leadership, showing how significant achievements in childcare could emerge from an ordinary Appalachian bungalow rather than from more visible or elite spaces. The fabric of the house and its setting continue to illustrate the intersection of domestic space, informal labor economies, and women's entrepreneurship that defines Skaggs' contribution to the history of childcare in rural Appalachia.

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Archival and Personal Sources

- Family interview, personal communication, May 2024.
- Rowan County Public Library. (2024). *Local newspaper archives and genealogy room records, Morehead, Kentucky*. Rowan County Public Library.

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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): RWM 196

9. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.56 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 38.183030 Longitude: -83.42827

Or

UTM References Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

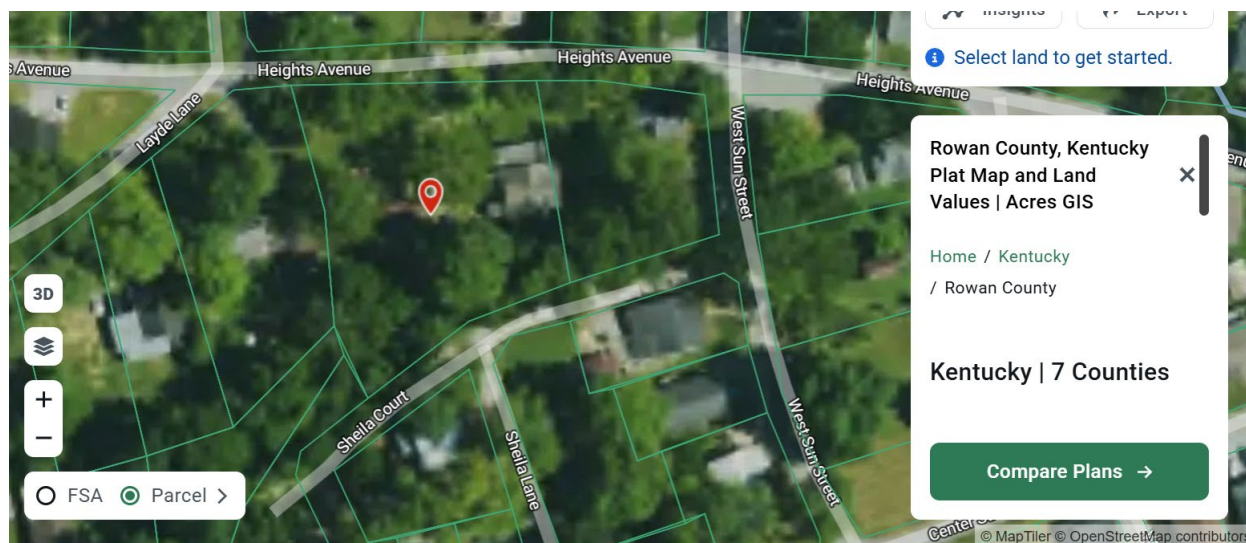
1. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
4. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:

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

The boundary of the nominated property corresponds to the legal parcel recorded as Rowan County PVA Parcel ID: 060-30-01-019.00, located at 221 Heights Avenue, Morehead, Kentucky. The parcel encompasses approximately 0.56 acres. The boundary begins at the northeast corner of the lot at the intersection of Heights Avenue and the driveway, then extends west along the northern property line to the northwest corner; turns south running the full depth of the parcel to the southwest corner along the rear wooded boundary; then proceeds east along the southern property line to the southeast corner; and returns north along the eastern property line to the point of beginning. The boundary includes the historic dwelling, garage/outbuilding, two well structures, stone bench, and all associated yard features historically part of the residential property. That area is depicted on the map below, marked by the red teardrop:



Boundary Justification

The selected boundary encompasses the entire parcel historically associated with the Thelma Skaggs House from its construction in the early twentieth century through the period of significance (1921–1980). The lot contains all surviving resources directly linked to Skaggs' early life, household environment, and the domestic landscape that contributed to her formative experiences. Features within this boundary—including the dwelling, garage/outbuilding, well structures, and stone bench—retain integrity and collectively reflect the property's historic residential use. No additional land outside the parcel contributes to the significance of the property; therefore, the legally defined parcel provides the most appropriate and historically accurate boundary for National Register listing. Skaggs's later childcare work took place at 606 and 612 Rawcel Street, properties not included within this nomination; she first operated her daycare at 606 Rawcel Street and later relocated it to 612 Rawcel Street, both of which remain standing with typical residential updates.

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Property Owner:

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

name Jayme and Billy Poe III
street & number 221 Heights Ave telephone 606-207-7949
city or town Morehead state Kentucky zip code 40351

10. Form Prepared By

name/title: Jayme Poe
organization: _____
street & number: 221 Heights Ave.
city or town: Morehead state: Kentucky zip code: 40351
e-mail jaymepat01@gmail.com
telephone: 606-207-7949
date: 11/13/2025

Photographs

Photo Log

Name of Property: Thelma Skaggs House
City or Vicinity: Morehead
County: Rowan County
State: Kentucky
Photographer: Jayme Poe
Date Photographed: May 2025

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

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1 of 8.



Description: *North (front) elevation of the house, full-width porch and dormer visible, facing south.*

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2 of 8.



Description: *South (rear) elevation of the house with enclosed sunroom, facing north.*

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3 of 8.



Description: *East elevation showing side wall and rear sunroom enclosure, facing west.*

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Description: *West elevation with carport attached, facing east.*

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Description: *Contributing garage/outbuilding (front gable and side sheds visible), facing southwest.*

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Description: *Historic stone bench behind house, facing southeast.*

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Description: *First historic well structure behind house, facing south.*

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8 of 8.



Description: *Second historic well structure with gabled cover, facing southwest.*

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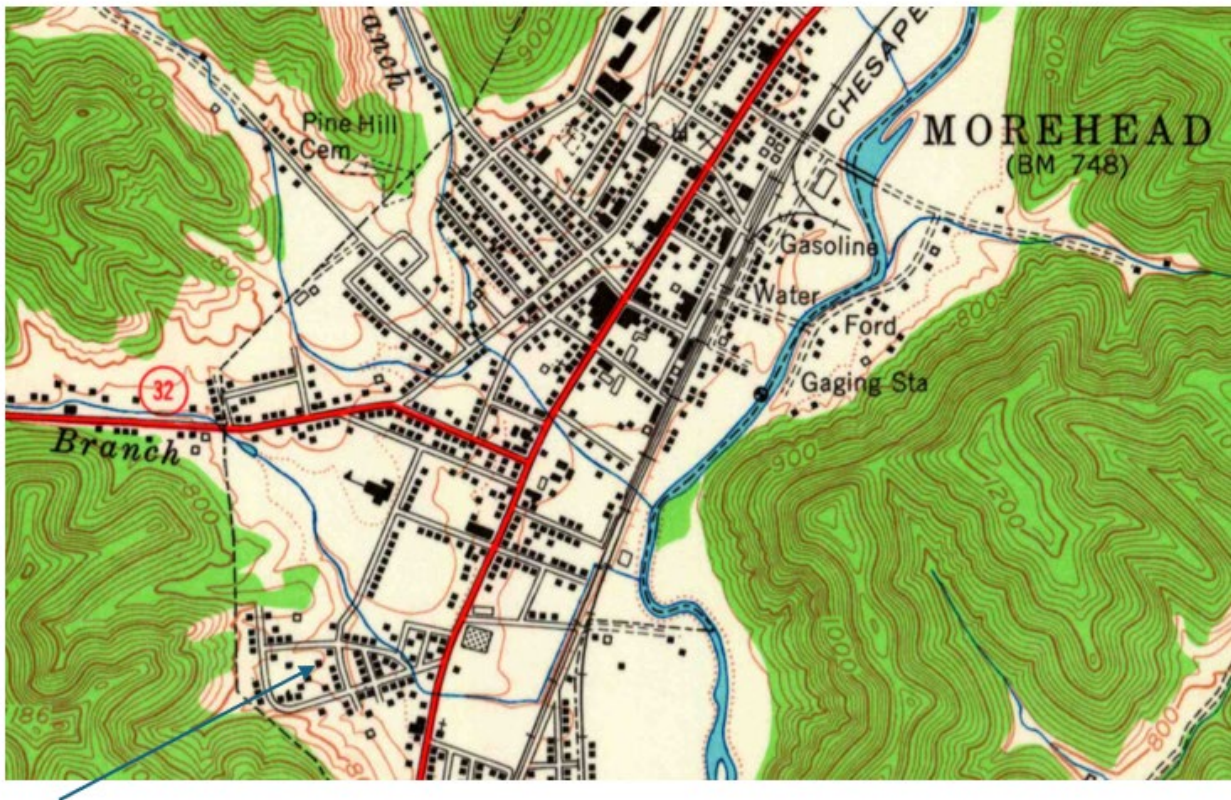
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Thelma Skaggs House, Morehead, Rowan County, Kentucky, wide area view

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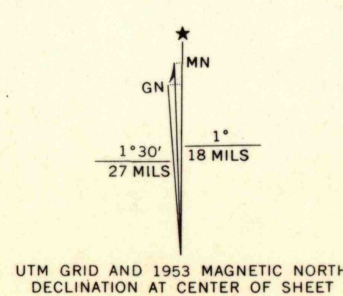
Rowan County, Kentucky
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Thelma Skaggs House, detail of 1953 Morehead USGS quad map



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS
Topography from aerial photographs by multiplex methods
Aerial photographs taken 1950. Field check 1953
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Kentucky coordinate system,
north zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 17, shown in blue



SCALE 1:24,000
1000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 FEET
1 5 10 KILOMETER
CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT HALF-INTERVAL CONTOURS
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242,
KENTUCKY GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY,
AND KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

USGS
Historical File
Topographic Division



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty 4 LANE 6 LANE Light-duty
Medium-duty 4 LANE 6 LANE Unimproved dirt
U. S. Route State Route

U.S.G.S.
FILE COPY
TOPOGRAPHIC DIVISION

MOREHEAD, KY.
NW/4 MOREHEAD 15' QUADRANGLE
N3807.5—W8322.5/7.5

1953
AMS 4360 III NW—SERIES V853

2630
MAY 5 1966