

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Nelson Distillery Warehouse  
 other names/site number JF-EI-106 ; Anderson-Nelson Distillery, See other names on first page of Description

## 2. Location

street & number 100 Distillery Commons Dr.

NA
NA

 not for publication  
 city or town Louisville Vicinity  
 state Kentucky code KY county Jefferson code 111 zip code 40206

## 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

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

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

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 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**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
1	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

None

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce/Trade: Warehouse

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant/Not In Use

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

Industrial

**Materials**

foundation: Limestone  
walls: Masonry/Brick  
roof: Asphalt  
other:

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## **Narrative Description**

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### **Summary Paragraph**

The Nelson Distillery Warehouse (JF-EI-106) was part of the Anderson-Nelson Distillery Company, a Kentucky distilling complex located in a bend of the middle fork of the Bear Grass Creek, east of downtown Louisville. Once part of the largest bourbon distilling operation in Kentucky, the Nelson Distillery was a subsidiary of the larger organizational brands on the site where the nominated feature now stands. Those companies were originally known as the Anderson-Nelson Distillery Company, Allen-Bradley Distillery Company, and Elk Run Distillery. The Nelson Distillery Warehouse (NDW), built in 1895/1896, is being interpreted for its architectural significance as an example of an early form of bourbon whiskey aging warehouse in Louisville, Kentucky. While much of the larger distilling complex has been destroyed, the NDW remains as a rare example of its form, retaining a high degree of integrity of original design which grew out of an evolution of construction within the industry. This nomination encompasses a single warehouse structure and the land on which it resides.

### **Evolution and Character of the nominated property**

The Nelson Distillery Warehouse (NDW) is one of the last remains of what was once the largest and oldest distilling company in Kentucky, the Anderson-Nelson Distillery (Cecil, 2003). Built in 1895/96 the Nelson Distillery Warehouse is one of three warehouse structures still standing that were part of the vast Anderson-Nelson distillery complex, which encompassed multiple distilling companies. The following attempts to list the many names of corporations that operated on the site and with which the NDW was at one time associated with the following corporate entities:

- John. G Mattingly & Brother Distillery
- David L. Graves Distillery
- Beal, Stiles & Company
- Newcomb-Buchanan Distillery
- Anderson Nelson Distillery Company
- George C. Buchanan Distillery
- Anderson Distillery
- Nelson Distillery
- Kentucky Distilleries & Warehouse Company
- Allen-Bradley Distillery Company
- Allen-Bradley
- Graystone Distillery
- Elk Run Distillery
- American Medicinal Spirits Company
- National Distillers as Old Grandad Distillery

The NDW sits adjacent to the Williams Distillery warehouse and the Central Distillery warehouse, and adjoining structures, all of which were part of the Anderson-Nelson Distillery Company and have been adaptively repurposed to create the Distillery Commons in recent years.

The NDW stands at the intersection of Lexington Street and Payne Avenue in East Louisville. The whole of the distilling complex was constructed in a bend in the Middle Fork of the Beargrass Creek, a short distance before the creek flows into the larger South Fork of Beargrass Creek and into the Ohio River. The original complex existed on this site since at least 1860 (Zoeller, 2009). Once the distillery stood in a rural area, surrounded by farm land and only neighbored by the Cave Hill Cemetery to the south and a rail line to the north. Today the site is bounded by Payne Street and the Cave Hill Cemetery to the south, the current CSX rail line to the north, Spring Street to the east, and Pine Street to the west. Lexington Avenue (formerly Hamilton Avenue) ran through the middle of the plant and was a major service route for the facilities.

Today the extant buildings associated with the many distilleries of the site are bounded between Lexington Ave, Payne Street, and Pine Streets. The immediate area is comprised of a relatively flat topography sitting atop a small hill, which grades slightly toward the Middle Fork of the Beargrass Creek. As the area developed, industrial complexes were built, including livestock operations and a public workhouse to the south. A mix of turn-of-the-century housing stock grew up in between the industrial complexes, and came to be known as Irish Hill.

### **History of the Nelson Distillery Warehouse Site**

The NDW and site are part of a rich history of the Bourbon Whiskey industry in Louisville, Kentucky. The plant's operation spanned some 134 years. At the height of development of the Anderson-Nelson Distilling Company, the corporation included the Allen-Bradley Distillery and Elk Run Distillery, and later the Kentucky Distillery & Warehouse Company, and National Distillers. This conglomerate encompassed some 35 acres of production facilities, with a combined capacity for more than 735,000 barrels of Kentucky Bourbon Whiskey. The distillery complex stood beside the Middle Fork of the Beargrass Creek, a main water source initially for production, near a major rail line, and within proximity of the Ohio River, all contributing to the company's success in local markets and beyond.

The whole of the complex was built between 1860 and 1918 (Cecil, 2003). The largest portion of production facilities were consolidated to the North side of Lexington Avenue, adjacent to the Middle Fork of Beargrass Creek. Distillery aging warehouses were built interspersed between the fermenting and distillation plants, as well as across Hamilton Avenue. Each of the distilleries had their own bonded warehouses, and additional free warehouses. This included Nelson Bonded Warehouse No. 4, Buchanan Bonded Warehouse No. 97, Finck Bonded Warehouse No. 97, Slocum Bonded Warehouse, Central Bonded Warehouse, Williams Bonded Warehouse, Louisville Storage Bonded Warehouse No. 4, Southall Bonded Warehouse, Nelson Distilling Company Warehouse (NDW), and Whitestone Bonded Warehouse of Allen-Bradley and Elk Run Distilleries (Sanborn 1920). Additional structures for grain storage, cisterns, bonded bottling facilities, and more were all located on the site. Improvements were made to the distillery until the onset of Prohibition in 1920.

For forty-six years following the repeal of Prohibition, distilling continued at the site of Anderson-Nelson Distillery Company. Operations were confined to existing structures, as less of the original plant was needed. Competition and decreased demand led to the demise of the once-largest Kentucky Bourbon Distillery in the world. Existing buildings were dismantled and others abandoned until the entire plant was shut down and abandoned in 1979 (Zoeller, 2009). The NDW has been vacant from 1979 until the present day. A revival of the industry in recent years has contributed to an appreciation for the historic forms of architecture associated with the bourbon whiskey industry, giving rise to repurposing of many structures

which are no longer used for production. The remaining warehouses on the adjoining site to the NDW still retain recognizable facades, though they have been altered, the interiors having integral rack systems removed and much of their original bourbon production hardware also removed. The Central and Williams aging warehouses of the former Anderson-Nelson/Allen-Bradley Distilleries have been repurposed for housing and commercial space, aptly named the Distillery Commons, as well as a bottling addition and former gate house, which pay homage to the integral history of the site today.

### **Exterior Description**

The Nelson Distillery Warehouse is a three story warehouse with a brick exterior and support system, and a native limestone foundation. The structure has a gable end and is divided into 25 bays on its northern and southern facades and 9 bays on the eastern and western facades. Bays are divided by 24" pilasters set at 8' intervals. The gable ends extend beyond the roof line and are capped with clay tile; the center bay on each gable extends 8' at the apex to a square, supporting a ridge vent. The roof structure is covered in asphalt roll roofing, and capped by a full monitor at the ridge. Originally, interior bays contained shuttered window openings on each floor, of which all but every third opening has been filled in on the northern and southern facades, and intermittently on the remaining facades. Extant windows are wood industrial type sashes with side hinges that cantilever open for ventilation. The southern façade hosts an opening at the far westernmost corner bay, raised above the level of a filled door in the ground level of the adjoining bay. Additional short single-pile brick additions are found at the 6<sup>th</sup> pilaster of each side of the southern façade, measuring 8' square, and supporting a single door to the southern face, and a poured concrete roof. Both the eastern and western facades have a double door opening at ground level in the center bay. The northern façade supports five door openings at the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> bays, east to west. All doors are made of diagonal tongue-and-groove bead board substrate, covered by iron sheets on the exterior, and capped by a fixed iron-clad transom, which are capped by an additional five-light transom window. All window openings, including those closed in, have single row brick arched lintels. Doors have triple-height rowlock brick arches. Door openings have original cut limestone sills, while existing window sills have been replaced by modern concrete. The .55 acres on which the warehouse stands are level having the hill, excavated on the southern façade nearly 15 feet from the building, creates a grade, allowing access to the facility at all levels on all facades. At the northern façade, the building is level with a sidewalk adjoining Lexington Ave, while turf joins the remaining facades. No other historical exterior features are attached to the structure or are located within the boundary of the nominated area.

### **Interior Description:**

The Nelson Distillery Warehouse consists of a solid brick superstructure that serves as a protective shell for the warehouse and lateral support for the interior racks, as well as regulates the ventilation, humidity and temperature within the structure. The interior is comprised of a system of dunnage racks built atop brick foundations running the length of the building. Dunnage racks stand 18 tiers high, each tier originally the height of a single barrel. Dunnage racks are divided into a system of 6 racks, two tiers per rack, divided by headers, having 45 racks running the length of the building and 15 racks spanning the width of the structure. The innermost center two racks in each direction, accompanied by the outermost racks surrounding the interior circumference of the structure, served as walkways, and support two sets of stairs running at the middle (23<sup>rd</sup>) rack. While the dunnage racks remain intact, much of the supporting rails which once held barrels of bourbon have mostly been removed. An additional mechanical elevator has been added in the 2<sup>nd</sup> center bay of the west rack and extends the full height of the structure, opening to the westernmost and central walkway, likely replacing an earlier manual elevator. Dunnage racks adjoin the

exterior masonry walls by resting upon pockets in the masonry walls, and by resting on wood supports placed into the masonry walls crossing window openings. Dunnage racks are made of 4" x 7" dimensional lumber paired side by side supporting existing racks made of 3" x 5" lumber. Headers are made of 3" x 7" lumber. Original walkways were made of 2" thick lumber of varying widths; these have been mostly removed from the interior. Dunnage rack numbers, both stencil painted and metal tags, still are placed on each row and level of the structure.

No original windows survive within the structure, however the lower level supports 12 galvanized steel windows with 5 x 8 panes, typical of those of the 1930s. Textured metal-reinforced panes of glass comprise the outer panes of both sides and top, and the center. The bottom-centermost nine panes, 3 x 3, are open, having no glass panes, instead are replaced with a single exterior sash of the same materials, and tilt out to allow ventilation yet ensure security, locking with a handle at the center top to the interior. The remaining openings of the structure support three-over-two horizontally-divided sash windows of wood frames installed and typical of a 1960s renovation. The whole of the interior was designed to hold a capacity of 40,000 barrels (Sanborn, 1895). The warehouse contained 30,039 barrels aging in 1905 (Sanborn, 1905).

**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**

Property is:

- 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**

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1895/1896  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1895/1896- Date of Construction  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

The period of significance for this property (1896) is a single year, the year of construction of the aging warehouse, which is a convention in the National Register for an architecturally significant property.

**Criteria Considerations: N/A**

## Statement of Significance

### Summary Paragraph

The Nelson Distillery Warehouse (JF-EI-106) built in 1895/96, meets the first term of National Register eligibility Criterion C: it possesses the distinctive characteristics of a type of construction, a Kentucky bourbon whiskey aging warehouse. Built in the community of Irish Hill, an area about 2 miles east of central downtown Louisville, the distillery developed on the middle fork of Beargrass Creek, a direct tributary to the Ohio River. The Nelson Distillery Warehouse (NDW) was built as one of the last capital building projects of its parent distillery, Anderson-Nelson Distillery, prior to Prohibition in 1920, and was a result of an ever-increasing demand for their products and the expanding market of the distillery. Standing three stories high, the NDW is constructed of solid brick masonry exterior walls, with a system of interior dunnage racks which stored aging barrels, while supporting the roof system. Possessing a design evolved within the bourbon whiskey industry, the NDW sits on .55 acre, detached from the surrounding associated structures, and is an early example of this architectural form in Louisville, Kentucky. There are no other historic resources associated with the site included in this nomination for consideration.

### Historic Context: Bourbon Distillery Warehouse Construction in Louisville, Kentucky, 1860-1920

The distilling industry in Louisville grew nearly simultaneously with the development of the city and Kentucky. During the early period, distilling was confined to rural producers who distilled for personal use and for sale locally. With the growth of the industry, Kentucky would eventually professionalize the industry, and from the first registered distillery in 1860 thru Prohibition in 1920, bourbon whiskey production grew to become a leading industry in Louisville. The city held the largest distiller in the United States, the largest aging warehouse to yet be constructed, led the industry in developments in production, and held the largest share of the market both within Kentucky and beyond.

### Development of Bourbon Distilling in Louisville, Kentucky

Bourbon Whiskey production can be traced to the beginning of the state, where small distilling operations were scattered across the agrarian landscape. Much by necessity, excess corn, which grew plentifully in Kentucky, was used to produce alcohol, a product that would not spoil and which settlers could sell and trade locally. Small-scale distilling operations can be traced to nearly every county and city of Kentucky including Louisville (Crowgey, 2008). By accident, it was found that by storing these sprits in charred oak barrels, the hardwood container would mellow the flavor of the alcohol and create a more desirable product. This “whiskey” found a market outside the state and producers began shipping their surplus product down the Ohio to the Port of New Orleans to be sold. Eventually the aged whiskey became more desired and began to be referred to as “Bourbon,” aptly named for Bourbon County, which was one of the three original Kentucky counties, and encompassed the port of Limestone, now Maysville, on the Ohio River where “Bourbon” was being shipped out of the state (Crowgey, 2008).

Production during this early period was restricted by both means of distilling as well as facilities. Small pot stills were used to distill sprits; these required disassembly and cleaning after each use. Aging facilities took on many forms, with records of open-air log structures and small masonry buildings serving as



distilling houses and aging facilities. It was quickly discovered that a better product could be created by allowing barrels filled with what became known as “white dog” or new, clear distilled grain spirits, to age through the winter’s cold and the summer’s heat. These changes in temperature pulled the whiskey in and out of the wood substrate, imparting flavor and color to it. This style of small-scale production would continue and production facilities would grow throughout the state, using larger pot type stills for production as demand grew. By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, numerous distilleries were actively distilling Kentucky Bourbon Whiskey (Crowgey, 2008).

### **Development of distilling along Beargrass Creek at Gregory Street in Louisville**

In 1860, Kentucky began to regulate the growing industry, recognizing the increase in both production and demand for the product in external markets. Kentucky organized distilleries by registering each, beginning with John G. Mattingly and his brother Benjamin F. Mattingly, who that same year opened their distilling operation at Gregory Street, in a bend of the Middle Fork of the Beargrass Creek, directly north across Lexington Avenue from the Nelson Distillery Warehouse in Louisville, Kentucky (Zoeller, 2009). The Mattingly Bros. helped professionalize the growing industry with their focus on distilling. Moving their operations from land-locked Bardstown, Kentucky, the Mattingly Brothers exemplify the movement of the industry from smaller scale to large scale production in the ideally situated Louisville. Of note, John Mattingly once having moved his distillery to Louisville, would contribute perhaps one of the largest developments in distilling by inventing the ‘continuous column still,’ which greatly altered production capacity, allowing distillers to increase production by utilizing a continuous distillation process rather than the previous method of small batches (Zoeller, 2009).

Louisville, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, would grow to become the largest city in Kentucky and a major production and export hub. Its ideal location along the Ohio River created a natural production district for Bourbon because of the ease of shipping product and the invaluable ready supply of limestone rich waters essential for distilling. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the city hosted some 24 bourbon distilling companies, supplying an ever-growing demand for Bourbon and leading the industry in technological advancements for production.

As a testament to Louisville’s bourbon industry, by 1871, the Newcomb-Buchanan Co. had become the largest Bourbon distillery in Kentucky (Zoeller, 2009). In 1885 the distillery, in conjunction with the affiliated Allen-Bradley Company, was producing such great quantities of bourbon that they could sell at a loss, undercutting competition by selling their brands at \$.23 cents per gallon, less than half of some of their competitors’ prices (Cecil, 2003). For example, Old Crow in Frankfort, KY was selling between \$.60-.65 per gallon (Cecil, 2003). This practice helped the company to gain a market share, which they used to further expand their facilities and acquire other distilling companies, continuing production of many of the acquired brands. This sheer scale of production and continuous expansion, for a product with ever growing demand, provided the distillery resources to invent new methods of production, which in turn influenced the types of facilities they built.

After a fire in 1890, which destroyed one of the distillery plants operated by Allen-Bradley Company, the company rebuilt a new facility with even greater production and storage capacity. New warehouses were built along Hamilton Avenue (now named Lexington Avenue) including Slocum, Central, and Williams warehouses, with a combined capacity for 140,000 barrels (Zoeller, 2009; Sanborn 1895). In 1895, the Nelson Distilling Company, a subsidiary of Anderson-Nelson Distilling Company, began construction of a 100’ x 240’ three-story warehouse, the nominated property, with a capacity of 40,000 barrels. (Sanborn,

1895, 1905) This era of expansion and consolidation led to the acquisition of Anderson-Nelson Distillery Company and subsidiaries by Kentucky Distillery & Warehouse Company in 1901 (Zeoeller, 2009).

By 1911, the Elk Run Distillery and its affiliated operations were the largest of their kind in the KD&W portfolio and began construction on a new warehouse complex. Erected in two sections, the new warehouse would be the largest on record yet built in Kentucky. Each section had a capacity of 150,000 barrels storage, standing twelve stories high, with construction costs estimated at \$400,000, or equivalent to more than \$9 million today (Zoeller, 2009). In 1918 another large distilling plant was built adjacent to the Nelson Plant on Hamilton, and operated by U. S. Industrial Alcohol, being the last large capital improvement of the complex prior to Prohibition (Cecil, 2003).

During the Prohibition years, the distillery, because of its size and location, was selected for use as concentration warehouses, preventing demolition, neglect or other re-use. After the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, the Elk Run plant began production again. Though older production facilities were demolished (Cecil, 2003), much of the facility continued to serve production needs. This signaled the beginning of a gradual descent for the distillery and the industry in Louisville and Kentucky. In 1979, the final occupants, National Distillers, would abandon the plant, signaling the end of Kentucky Bourbon Whiskey production spanning 154 years on the site along Bear Grass Creek.

### **The Architecture of Bourbon Warehouses**

Kentucky bourbon is created by aging distilled alcohol in new charred oak barrels. When allowed to age over a period of time, the alcohol mellows, taking on both the color and flavor of the oak hardwood barrel. Purportedly discovered much by accident, this aging process was refined to eventually become known as Kentucky bourbon whiskey (Zoeller, 2009). New charred white oak barrels became the standard for aging and thus dictated the unit the warehouse was designed to accommodate.

Many foreign whiskey aging warehouses follow similar production methods, yet rely on natural ventilation from sea breezes and stand one or two stories high. Kentucky distillers found a need to create convection to age their bourbon, thus, they developed warehouses that created a natural drawing effect to achieve the desired aged product that consumers desired. By experimenting with structural designs and components, distillers were eventually able to construct aging warehouses that promoted convection while allowing the essential seasonal conditions to mellow raw spirits into fine Kentucky bourbon whiskey.

### **Early Kentucky Aging Warehouses**

Early Kentucky bourbon warehouses were generally small structures known to be built from log cribs, masonry, and other types of construction (Crowgey, 2008). These early facilities were generally found on farms, where the product was used by the producer and excess marketed locally. As distillers grew, they marketed their products, eventually gaining demand for bourbon in markets across Kentucky and beyond. These distilling operations grew and began to migrate to areas where ease of shipping and production could meet demand of external markets. Towns along the Kentucky and Ohio Rivers became natural locations to establish facilities, due to the supply of water needed for production and the ease of shipping the ship product to other markets. Distilleries already located along these waterways grew, and others relocated, creating many modern distilling operations still found in Frankfort, Leestown, Lawrenceburg, and Louisville.

In the earliest period of industry development, distillers constructed buildings that were typical for warehouses in other industries. These are generally small one-room single-story structures. They generally are found in rural landscapes near small streams and wells, which were suited to their small scale of production. No structures are known to exist in Louisville from that period, though such facilities can be found throughout Kentucky.

As distilleries grew, advances in production and facility design allowed distillers to increase production. However, once distilling operations began to commercialize, distillers had to invent means to increase production yet ensure a consistent product, which matched their customers' demonstrated tastes. The challenge for distillers in the later-19<sup>th</sup> century became how to create larger warehousing facilities which resulted in the taste of a hand crafted product.

### **Development of Aging Warehouses**

Remnants of early distilleries are hard to find in Louisville. The few that remain provide a glimpse into the evolution of the industry. In Louisville, of the 24 distilling operations listed in operation at the time of construction of the Nelson Distillery Warehouse, three sites have structures remaining that were associated with distilleries of different periods of development within the industry. Of these remaining buildings, two sites are known to retain bourbon aging warehouses. Within these remains, the evolution of the aging warehouse form can be seen in the architectural differences of each period of construction. The first and earliest known of these structures remains in western Louisville at the site of the former Stitzel Brothers Distillery.

### **Louisville Bourbon Warehouses, 1860-1880**

The former Stitzel Bros. Distillery (JF-87) holds one of the earliest-known bourbon production facility still standing in Louisville. The facility was built prior to 1870 and was developed for an earlier smaller-scale operation. While altered, it survives as a rare example of this period of bourbon industry development in Louisville. The site exists as a small principal one-story warehouse, along with a small single-story warehouse addition and a small two-story warehouse addition. It demonstrates that at this time the industry grew incrementally, repurposing early buildings with design advances as the industry conceived them. The Stitzel Bros. warehouse held a total of 3800 barrels for aging in its 1895 configuration (Sanborn 1895, see Figure 5). While a smaller operation, the Stitzel Bros. warehouse is likely typical of many Bourbon warehouses of the pre-1880s market growth in Louisville. The earliest design of the Stitzel Bros. warehouse seems to document that barrels were stacked within its walls, with door and window ventilation aging the bourbon. The many additions to this original production facility seem to demonstrate that the operation was adapted to more specialized purposes as the company and the industry evolved. While earlier warehouses could rely on stacking barrels vertically inside aging warehouses, the need for increased production led distilleries to look for ways to more easily access barrels within the facility, to ensure even aging while holding ever larger quantities.

### **Louisville Bourbon Warehouses, 1880-1890**

Distillers met the demand for increased production by building larger and more utilitarian structures intended for this specific function. These buildings were comprised of interior racking systems, with between fifteen to twenty-one tiers of dunnage racks of heavy wood post-and-beam style construction. Wood rails both held the barrels and served as supports for aisles to access each storage level. The exterior of the structure serves as a protective shell from the elements and to regulate ventilation, humidity,

and temperature. Exterior walls became more substantial, to help regulate the interior conditions of the building. At times warehouses were equipped with steam heat to help regulate the temperature of the building during the winter months and smooth the aging process (Hall, 1989). Elevators were installed inside the buildings to move barrels in and out, as well as between levels, to subject the barrels to a more even aging process. This design could allow distillers to increase production yet maintain the control over the process as they did in smaller warehouses. This was extremely important, for temperature and air flow fluctuations in warehouses would age barrels differently. The rack system also provided for easier inventory rotation. While it has yet to be discovered when these technological advancements first appeared, clues to the evolution of facilities can be found in Louisville at the former Allen-Bradley Distillery.

At the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, key innovations were beginning to infiltrate production and would eventually come to comprise many Kentucky bourbon production facilities. By the 1880s, Allen Bradley would endeavor the construction of a new facility, the Williams Warehouse. The warehouse still stands, having been adaptively developed in the last few years, and retains much of its original exterior features which provide an understanding of how it functioned. (Figure 2)

Williams is a three-story facility with an interior racking system that supported an arched roof. Regularly spaced window openings allowed for even ventilation. While its proximity to the earlier distilling facilities allowed for increased production. Williams sits on the landscape partially set in a small hill, which naturally stabilizes the warehouse's interior temperature. Solid masonry brick walls supported by pilasters on all sides support the interior racking. As the Stitzel Bros. warehouse stands with additions, the Central Warehouse still stands attached to the Williams Warehouse. Nearly identical in design to Williams, the Central warehouse extends the lines of Williams, though with a flat roof slanted toward the south. Divided by a solid masonry wall, these two warehouses functioned much as a single unit. A now-demolished third building also extended the lines of the warehouse, creating a vast complex for aging and storage. While this system of warehouses functioned much as one unit, they were actually built for and occupied by different branches of the parent company.

### **Louisville Bourbon Warehouses 1890-1900**

The Nelson Distillery Warehouse would be built nearly 15 years later than the Williams and exhibit further architectural refinements (Figure 3). While the NDW is the structure being nominated to the National Register, as an early example of a distinct form of architecture in Louisville, it indicates a new era of architectural evolution in comparison to its neighbors to the west, the Williams and Central warehouses. The NDW exhibits strong exterior masonry walls, which protect barrels from the elements, while also supporting interior racking, which supports the roof. The walls were strengthened by the addition of pilasters to help support the numerous openings for ventilation much as the Williams warehouse. Interior racks tied into the masonry walls and foundation supported barrels, walkways, and an elevator to ease movement of inventory for consistent aging. The NDW has an addition of a full monitor vent along the length of the roof ridge to ensure ventilation. The NDW is different form its predecessor in that the plant was built completely disconnected from other structures, unlike the three comparison warehouses. This disconnection provided insurance against the dreaded fire which could easily engulf whole warehouses and spread to attached structures. Additionally, while built along the same small hillside as the Williams warehouse, the NDW had the hill excavated around the whole of the structure at the time of construction, providing level access around the structure which enabled even ventilation at all levels and access from all facades. The architectural design of the warehouse here seems much more dictated by the physical function of the building and refinements in previous construction.

### **Louisville Bourbon Warehouses 1910-1920**

The advances in aging warehouse design would be further refined in later periods, replicating many earlier elements on a larger scale. The Stitzel Bros. would build a new warehouse just prior to 1920 (Sanborn 1920). This warehouse again displays an architectural design that integrates function and production (Figure 4). This warehouse stands eight stories high, yet its exterior is of solid masonry, which originally supported an interior racking system. While having now been extensively remodeled, and much of the interior removed, the exterior provides a good example of the later evolution of industry facilities. As with NDW, this structure supports the full monitor at the roof apex, while being completely detached from surrounding buildings, with access at grade on all facades. While much of the Stitzel Bros. distillery has been demolished, within their four associated structures, the evolution and growth of the bourbon industry in Louisville can be clearly observed.

### **Louisville Bourbon Warehouses Post-1934**

Bourbon aging warehouses built in Louisville prior to Prohibition would take the form of solid masonry warehouse with interior racking systems that supported the roof. Some elements would change, yet the basic form would be favored and increased in size. However, even though Prohibition was repealed, the industry in Louisville would never fully recover. Many of the production facilities in Louisville were demolished shortly after Prohibition began; others were destroyed in a massive flood in 1937. Several businesses did reopen after Prohibition, and many would eventually again grow to command a large portion of the industry market share. Because of the decay of buildings during Prohibition, and the great flood, the post-Prohibition companies would begin replacing what was lost, and expanding their designs. New construction favored concrete. These new structures replicated many of the features developed in warehouses such as Stitzel Bros, Williams, Central and Nelson aging warehouses. These warehouses were built into the 1960s, which is generally accepted as the last period of capital expansion for bourbon distillers, before the eventual decline of the industry in the 1970s and 1980s, which saw the sale and abandonment of many complexes across Louisville and Kentucky.

### **History of the Nelson Distillery Warehouse**

The Anderson-Nelson Distilling Company began on a site near that of the NDW in 1860 when John G. Mattingly and his brother, originally of Marion County Kentucky, built their distillery on the banks of the Beargrass Creek (Zoeller, 2009). John G. Mattingly and his brother Benjamin F. had distilled in Marion County since at least 1845, having been credited with operating the first registered distillery in Kentucky (Cecil, 2003). Additionally, John G. Mattingly is credited with perfecting the continuous column still which allowed for continual distillation and is the basis of large-scale bourbon production (Cecil, 2003).

In 1867 the brothers sold their operations to David L. Graves, also of Marion County (Zoeller, 2009). The Mattingly Brothers would move their distilling operations to a new facility on 7<sup>th</sup> street in Louisville's south side, to an area known as Oakland (Zoeller, 2009). Following the move, Mr. Graves sold the distillery to a George W. Beall in 1875, also of Marion County. Mr. Beall, who had been engaged in distilling most of his life, was a member of the firm Beall, Stiles & Company, also credited as one of the earliest registered distillers in the state (Zoeller, 2009). In 1872, the distillery was again sold to the Newcomb-Buchanan Company, with George C. Buchanan presiding President (Cecil, 2003). At this junction, the distillery is credited as the largest bourbon distilling complex in Kentucky, a title they would retain for years (Cecil, 2003).

By the 1880s, the Newcomb-Buchanan Company would hold ownership to additional distilleries located at the same site, including the original distillery, then known as the George C. Buchanan Distillery, the Anderson Distillery, and the Nelson Distillery (Zoeller, 2009). By 1885, the company would again reorganize, to become the Anderson-Nelson Company. The following year the three distilleries had a combined mashing capacity of 4,855 bushels per day, producing some 500 barrels of whiskey per day, Anderson accounting for some 600 bushels, Nelson 1,200 bushels, and Buchanan 3000 bushels (Zoeller, 2009). By this time, eight warehouses carried a capacity for aging of 117,000 barrels (Zoeller, 2009). The warehouses were now located on the north side of Hamilton Avenue and near the Beargrass Creek. One measure of the company's size: in 1885 they paid \$500,000 in federal taxes (Zoeller, 2009).

By 1905, the company had grown even further, and had a production of 260,000 barrels (Zoeller, 2009). The Anderson Distillery produced a small-tub sour-mash whiskey (Sanborn, 1905). The Buchanan produced a sour-mash whiskey made by hand, first marketed in 1880 (Zoeller, 2009; Sanborn 1905). The Nelson Distillery produced, "Nelson Pure Rye" a rye and malted barley product, "Nelson Pure Malt" an entirely malted barley whiskey, and "U.S. Club," a quick-maturing whiskey that was aged only three to four months in heated warehouses (Zoeller, 2009).

An additional distillery was located next to the Anderson-Nelson Distillery, the Allen-Bradley Distillery. In 1880, the Allen-Bradley Company also built the Elk Run Distillery adjacent to their plant. While separate business entities, the management and ownership of each distillery overlapped. That same year, the Allen-Bradley Company would take over the R.P. Pepper Distillery of Frankfort, and moved its operations to their distillery in Louisville (Zoeller, 2009). In 1890 a fire destroyed the Elk Run Distillery, but the company quickly rebuilt their plant at the Hamilton Avenue location, now the corner of Lexington Road and Payne Street (New York Times, 1890).

The new Elk Run Distillery expanded the company's production capacity, and new warehouses would be built along Hamilton Avenue including Slocum, Central and Williams warehouses prior to ca. 1880, with a combined capacity for 140,000 barrels (Zoeller, 2009; Sanborn 1895). In 1895, the Nelson Distilling Company, a subsidiary of Anderson-Nelson Distilling Company, would begin construction of a 100' x 240' three-story warehouse with a capacity of 40,000 barrels (Sanborn, 1895). This era of growth led to the acquisition of the distillery by Kentucky Distillery & Warehouse Company in 1901 (Zoeller, 2009).

Both Elk Run and Allen-Bradley Distilleries would continue operations thru the turn of the century, who being acquired by Kentucky Distilleries & Warehouse Company (KD&W) in 1901, continued until Prohibition in 1920. Responding to demand and increased production capability, KD&W began construction on a new warehouse complex, completing it in 1918. Erected in two sections, the new warehouse would be the largest yet on record in Kentucky. Each section had a capacity of 150,000 barrels storage, standing twelve stories high, with construction costs estimated at \$400,000 (Zoeller, 2009). The Anderson-Nelson Distillery would sell to KD&W trust, and continue operations until Prohibition, when they closed (Zoeller, 2009).

During Prohibition, the warehouses of all the distilleries were used by the American Medicinal Spirits Co. as concentration warehouses (Cecil, 2003). Following Prohibition, the Allen-Bradley Distillery would be dismantled, however the Elk Run Distillery would be reopened (Zoeller, 2009). The remaining structures, including the former Nelson Distillery warehouse, would be purchased by National Distillery Company, also known as Old Granddad Distillery, to begin distillation at the plant once more (Zoeller, 2009). In 1936, the

Distillery had a capacity of 175,000 barrels (Zoeller, 2009). They would continue production until 1979, when National Distillery Company vacated the plant, ending a legacy of 154 years of distilling at the site.

Over the length of production on Beargrass Creek, the site witnessed the largest distillery company in Kentucky produce Bourbon Whiskey and saw the largest Bourbon Whiskey warehouse yet built and the perfection of a form or architecture pairing form and function in the evolution of the bourbon aging warehouse. The site would contribute to the rise and witness the eventual decline of the bourbon whiskey industry to which the remaining structures are a tangible link and integral historical artifacts of the industry.

Through years of production, the original John G. Mattingly & Brother Distillery would also be known as: David L. Graves Distillery; Beal, Stiles & Company; Newcomb-Buchanan Distillery; Anderson-Nelson Distillery Company; George C. Buchanan Distillery; Anderson Distillery; Nelson Distillery; Kentucky Distilleries & Warehouse Company; Allen-Bradley Distillery Company; Allen-Bradley Graystone Distillery; Elk Run Distillery; American Medicinal Spirits Company; and National Distillers as Old Granddad Distillery, producing such brands as "Anderson Nelson", "Buchanan", "Jefferson", "Jackson", "Gold Springs", "Avon Glen", "Dearlick", "Forest Brook", "Woodleigh", "Linden Spring", "Rippling Spring", "1901", "St. Elmo", "Valley Forge", and "Belle of Nelson" (Zoeller, 2009).

The Allen-Bradley Distillery Company would be known as: Pearl of Kentucky Distilling Company; Stien Brothers; J.A. Monks Distillery Company; Lewis Tousing & Company; R.P. Pepper Distilling Company; St. Bernard Distilling Company; Sycamore Distilling Company; Klien Broc. Y& Hyman Henry W. Smith Tyrone Distilling Company; O. B. Cook & Company; C. H. Graved & Son; Star Distilling Company; Edgewood Distilling Company; Union Distilling Company; Brookside Distilling Company; Union Distilling Company; Victor Distilling Company; Oakdsale Distilling Company; Grand Marshall Distilling Company; Davenport & Morris Distilling Company; Elk Hill Distillery; Stoll & Company; J. G. Mattinglay & Company; U. S. Club Distiller Company; Raymond G. Shipman; Elm Hill Distilling Company; Ashburn Distillery Company; Daniel Brandy; Shields & Company; E. Eppstine & Company; John Miller & Company; Harry E. Wilkin; and J. A. Monks & Sons Distillery Company (Zoeller, 2009).

### **Evaluation of the architectural significance of the Nelson Distillery Warehouse in the context of bourbon distillery warehouse construction in Louisville, Kentucky, 1850-1920**

The Nelson Distillery Warehouse has survived the years as a tangible link to the vast industry it once served. Through its 119 years, the warehouse has been altered little, allowing it to remain a physical reminder of the role of the Kentucky bourbon whiskey industry in Louisville. Its design is an architectural display of its intended function, and a recognizable form of architecture.

The extant building retains a historical connection to the development of the Kentucky bourbon whiskey industry in Louisville; as such the NDW survives as a rare example of an early bourbon aging warehouse in Louisville, Kentucky. A facility developed by production of the industry leader during the period of growth of the bourbon industry prior to Prohibition in 1920, the NDW assembled the many architectural advancements that had grown in a gradual evolution of bourbon production facilities, exhibiting the integral features that influenced design of these warehouses until the decline of the industry. The NDW is instantly recognizable as a bourbon aging warehouse, and as such provides a glimpse into the industry at the time it was thriving in Louisville, Kentucky.

### **Evaluation of the Integrity between the Nelson Distillery Warehouse's significance and its current physical condition**

The Nelson Distillery Warehouse has integrity of **Location** and **Setting** in that it retains occupancy of the original site. This site which gave rise to the industry for which the NDW was built, created the setting of the distillery. The site retains the separate free-standing structure on an area of land which was excavated and altered for the aging warehouse's construction. As a free-standing building, separate from the larger distilling plant, the NDW maintains authentic integrity nearly unaltered from the time of its construction on .55 acres and a prominent position at the intersection of Payne Street and Lexington Avenue. For the integrity of setting and location, the building is easily recognizable as a contributing structure to the Kentucky bourbon whiskey industry.

The building possesses a high integrity of original **Materials**. These include the interior foundations, racking, and functional components. Only interior walkway flooring boards have been removed and barrel racks have been removed, both of which were dimensional lumber and commonly replaced and moved as warehouses age. Additionally the exterior retains a high integrity of original materials including original masonry walls, window and door openings with stone lintels, and roofing with full monitor. Original windows have been replaced, and their openings have been filled with other forms of sash. Together these original materials are recognizable to the observer of a distinct form and convey a strong connection to the design of the structure and its function, influenced and designed for bourbon whiskey production.

The property retains integrity of **Design**, as its current appearance is a reflection of its original design and function. The NDW exhibits a style influenced and designed by Kentucky bourbon whiskey production which is a recognizable form of the industry. The building's multi-story warehouse plan is an impressive design which reflects the distillery's evolution and growth during the period prior to Prohibition. The industrial design is minimalist. Its arched roof, full monitor, solid masonry walls supported by pilasters, multiple window and door openings, and original interior racking are all part of a distinctive vocabulary of the construction, denoting a bourbon whiskey aging warehouse. The overall design of the building and its few alterations create a physical connection to the past and the skilled workmanship which gave rise to the NDW.

Because the structure retains integrity of location, setting, material, and design, the warehouse retains integrity of important **Associations** with Louisville's bourbon whiskey industry. While being a physical connection to the first registered distillery in Kentucky, and to the largest Distilling Company at one period, and the largest aging warehouse yet constructed, the NDW mainly retains integrity of association as a form of architecture developed by an industry to store and age spirits.

The Nelson Distillery Warehouse delivers the story of the industry to which it contributed for over 84 years. Its design and retention of original materials provide a rare glimpse into the growth and development of a once-booming industry in Louisville. It provides the ability to understand the functionality of the building and the process of production for which the NDW supported while viewing the evolution of the industry production facilities. Therefore the NDW structure meets the National Register's criteria for integrity and should be considered for preservation by the current and future owners.



**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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Crowgey, Henry G. Kentucky Bourbon: The Early Years of Whiskey Making. Lexington, KY, The University Press of Kentucky. 2008.

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Hall, David H. *Labrot & Graham Distillery National Register of Historic Places Nomination*. Bardstown, KY: Old Nelson Heritage, Inc., 1995.

Kroll, Harry Harrison. Bluegrass, Belles, and Bourbon: A Pictorial History of Whiskey in Kentucky. New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1967.

New York Times. New York, 1890.

Sanborn Map Company. Insurance Map of Louisville, Kentucky. New York, 1895.

Sanborn Map Company. Insurance Map of Louisville, Kentucky. New York, 1905.

Sanborn Map Company. Insurance Map of Louisville, Kentucky, New York 1920.

Zoeller, Chester. Bourbon in Kentucky: A History of Distilleries in Kentucky. Louisville, KY: Butler Books, 2009.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): JF-EI-106

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 0.55 acres

**UTM References**

**Jeffersonville, Indiana quad**

**Coordinates calculated by ArcGIS Explorer**

**Coordinates according to NAD 83: Zone 16; Easting 611 851.06; Northing 4234 392.63**

**Coordinates according to NAD 27:**

1 16 611 853.87 4234 186.38 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

Nelson Distillery Warehouse  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kentucky  
County and State

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary of the described property shall encompass the 100' x 240' NDW structure and immediate adjoining land of **parcel number 068R0010000** as recorded by the Jefferson County Property Valuation Office in Kentucky known as Distillery Commons Comm. Condo Building/Unit #100 encompassing only the Nelson Distillery Warehouse and a 24,006 sq ft land lot.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary incorporates the historic NDW warehouse and the lot on which the building stands. The campus of the former distillery complex has suffered much destruction and extant buildings have been divided into the Distillery Commons Comm. Condo Buildings assigning a separate inventory number and land parcel to each structure. As such the parcel number 068R001000, known as Commons Comm. Condo Building/Unit #100 by the Jefferson County Property Valuation Office, is the parcel of land on which the NDW is encompassed, being nominated individually to the National Register of Historic Places, is the duly assigned land lot associated with the warehouse structure and the plot which encompass the landscape associated with the nomination.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Eric Whisman, Historic Preservation Consultant  
organization Pinion Advisors, Heritage Development Services date 2/20/2014  
street & number 1501 Morton Ave. telephone 517-862-7333  
city or town Louisville state KY zip code 40204  
e-mail [ericwhisman@gmail.com](mailto:ericwhisman@gmail.com)

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**Photographs:**

**Name of Property:** Anderson-Nelson Distillery, Nelson Distillery Warehouse.  
**City or Vicinity:** Louisville  
**County:** Jefferson  
**State:** Kentucky  
**Photographer:** Eric Whisman  
**Date Photographed:** October, 2013  
**Location of Digital Files:** 304 Green Fields Lane, Frankfort, KY 40601

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**

Photographic Identification (The information is the same for each photograph)

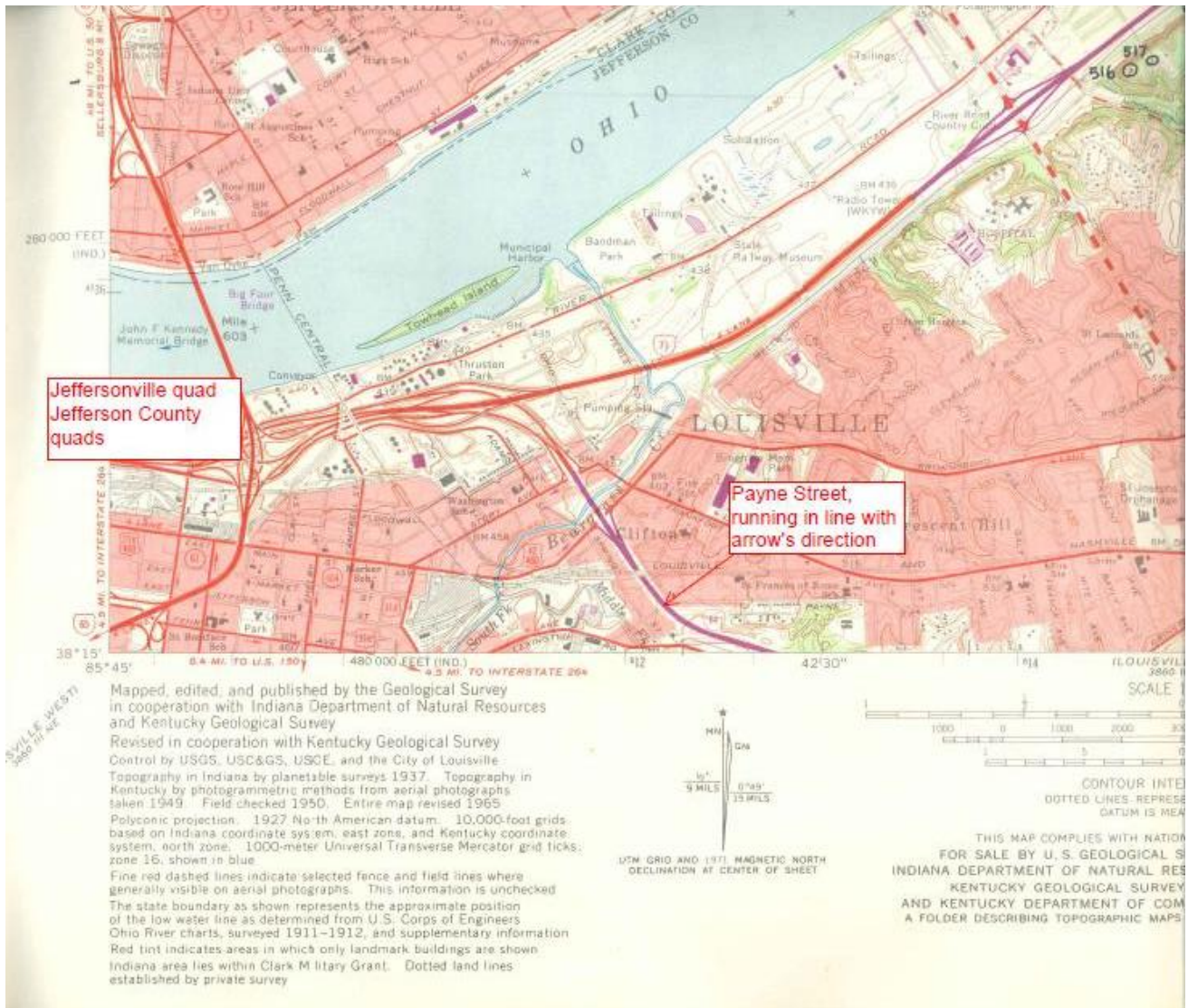
Photo #1: East façade, camera facing west

Photo #2: North façade (right) west façade (left), camera facing southeast

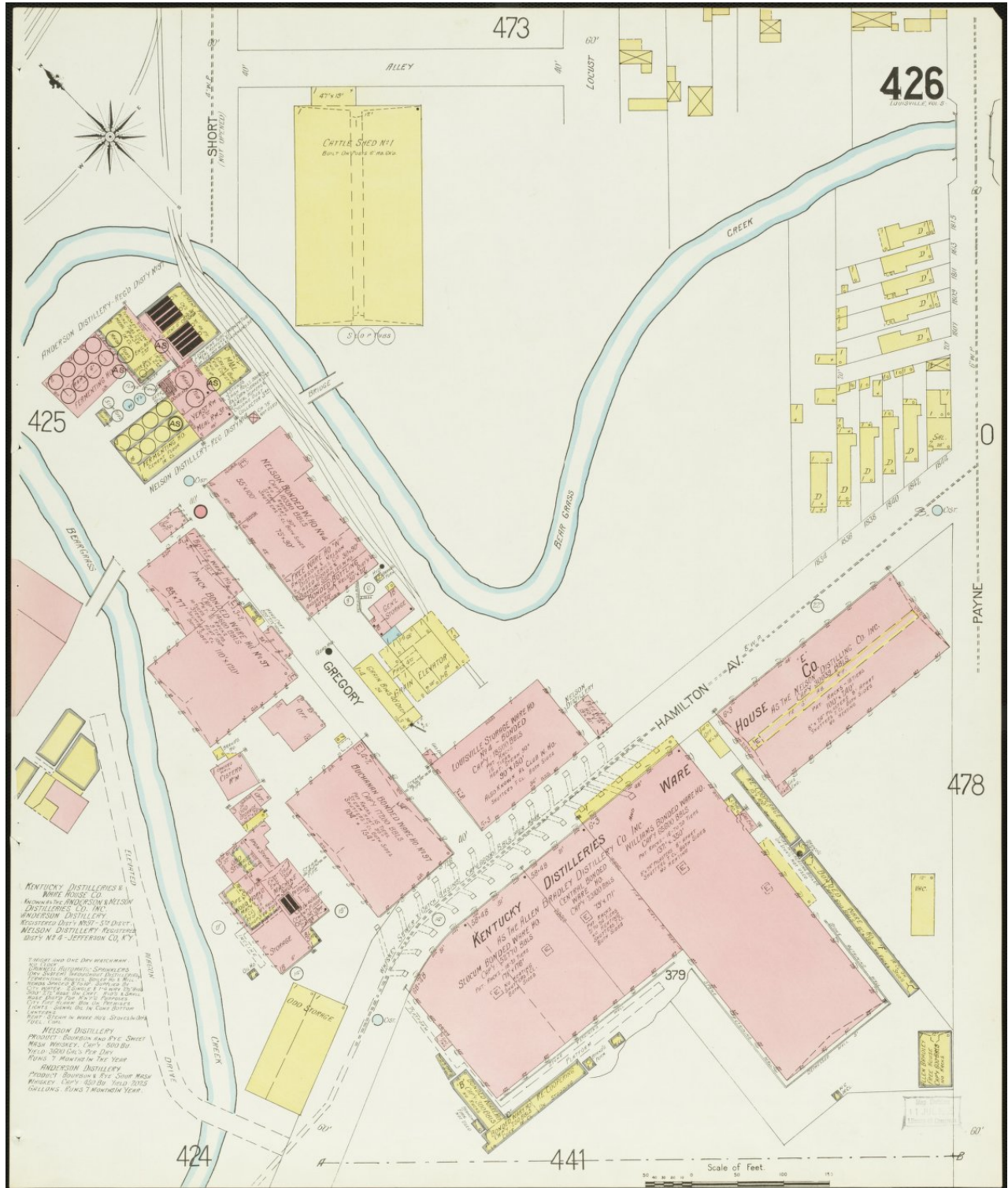
- Photo #3: South façade (right) west façade (left), camera facing northeast
- Photo #4: South façade (left) east façade (right), camera facing northwest
- Photo #5: Interior, center walk-bay, camera facing east
- Photo #6: Interior, center bay, camera facing south

**Property Owner:**

name Kinetic Properties, Inc.  
street & number 200 Distillery Commons, Suite 200 telephone 502-719-9500  
city or town Louisville state KY zip code 40206







Sanborn Map Company. Insurance Map of Louisville, Kentucky, New York, 1920.

-Figure 6



Anderson-Nelson Distillery, Nelson Distillery Warehouse  
Jefferson County KY  
Google Maps



-Figure 1



-Figure 2



-Figure 3



-Figure 4



-Photo 1:



-Photo 2:



-Photo 3:





-Photo 4:



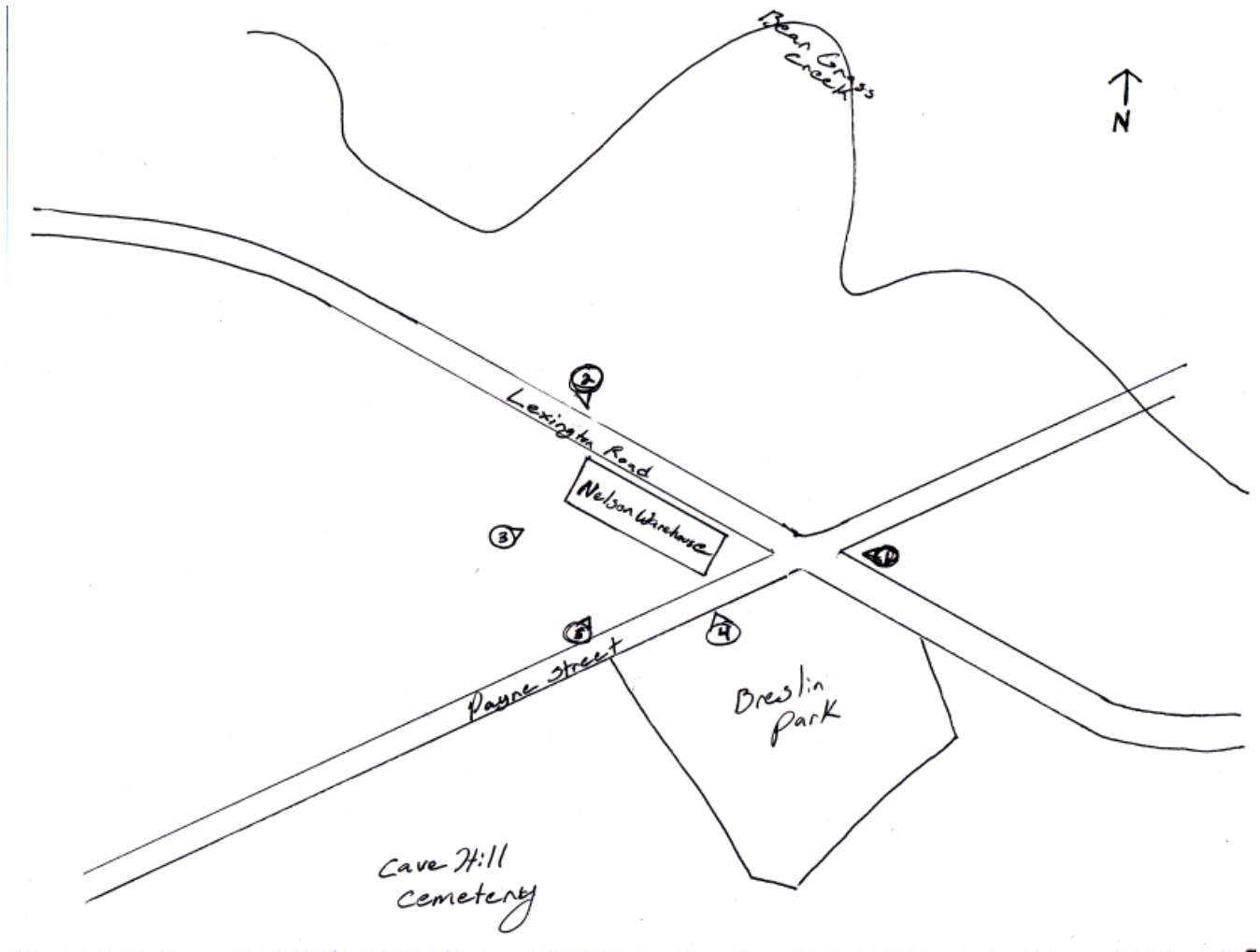


Photo Identification Map