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The Blue Grass Trust for Historic Preservation is a non-profit advocate for historic preservation that strives to protect, revitalize and promote the special historic places in our community to enhance the quality of life for future generations. The Trust is guided by three tenets – education, service and advocacy.

The Trust is completely supported by our membership and donations. For information please call (859) 253-0362, visit www.bluegrasstrust.org or e-mail us at info@bluegrasstrust.org.

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Sources:
• The Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office

• Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government Division of Historic Preservation

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PROLOGUE

Referred to locally as Lexington’s first subdivision, the Constitution Historic District was developed during the second decade of the 19th century with development continuing into the early 20th century.

The district boundaries follow the northern edges of the properties on East Third, the west side of Martin Luther King Boulevard to Pleasant Stone and the north side of Pleasant Stone to Limestone. Contributing elements in this district include a variety of architectural styles, with examples of the Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Eastlake, Gothic Revival, Neoclassical, and the Shingle style represented. This district is one of the earliest middle-class neighborhoods in Lexington. Its early residents included brick masons, carpenters, carriage makers, and ministers, but also some bankers and other socially prominent citizens.

Some of the earlier houses in the district include the Brand-Kennedy House, circa 1813, located at 112-114 Constitution St. and the house at 155 Constitution, circa 1818. The Mathew Kennedy House located at 216 North Limestone, circa 1831, and the Weir House located at 312 North Limestone, circa 1830-1850, are two of the most elegant houses in the district.
Located at 194 North Limestone St. is Sayre School, a structure that was originally built as a residence in 1846 and converted to a school in 1856. The church located at 146-148 Constitution St., known as the Second Church of Christ when it was constructed in 1874-1875, was sold to the African American Antioch Christian Church in 1880. At that time, the church was renamed the East Second Street Christian Church. The congregation, led by former slave Thomas Phillips, was one of the oldest and most prominent among the African American community at the time. After being destroyed by a fire in 1880 it was rebuilt and has continued to serve the religious needs of the community since that time.

As you walk through this historic district comprised of over 50 structures, imagine the site before the early to mid-19th century when it was divided up into smaller lots. Located just north of downtown Lexington, there were just a few residents with large lots surrounding their homes within the area and some hemp factories located nearby.

- The houses on Constitution Street and the four facing Limestone were built on land that was purchased from John W. Hunt in 1813 by Matthew Kennedy, an architect in Lexington, and James Brand who was a member of a prominent Lexington family. Kennedy and Brand retained some of the property for themselves but sold the remainder for development.

The Weir House anchors the northwest corner of the Constitution Historic District. James Weir, who was a hemp products manufacturer and prominent merchant, as well as one of the founding members of the Lexington & Ohio Railroad, commissioned this house to be built in 1832. Weir’s administrators continued with the construction of the house after his death and, upon completion, it was occupied by his descendants. Either James H. Woolfolk or Chief Justice Thomas Mitchell owned the house when the final form was completed in the 1850s.

A massive two-story Greek Revival structure, the house was originally built with one-story wings that were converted into two stories about the turn of the 20th century. Pilasters divide the facade. Sometime after the beginning of the 20th century, the front door was replaced with a modern fanlight door. The house would have originally had a Greek Revival door with sidelights and a transom. The architect for this house was probably Gideon Shryock, who was working on Morrison Hall on the campus of Transylvania University at the time. John McMurtry probably completed the later work on the structure. Interior features include parlors divided by a screen of Corinthian columns supporting an entablature that has a bracketed cornice that goes around the entire room. The original ell that had been added to the back was removed in 1910 at which time the present ell was built.

According to historian C. Frank Dunn, the construction costs submitted by the administrators when the house was completed included the following information: “King” Solomon dug the foundation and latrine; Samuel Long was the carpenter; Lailey Moore and Co. furnished the timber for the columns; E. Turner did the “turning”; and Ebling supplied the brick for the residence and the kitchen. Many people resided in the house before Dr. James Cantrill Carrick purchased it in 1910. Carrick and his wife, Anna Pearce Carrick, lived in the house until 1954. The house was given to Transylvania University in 1955 and in 1956, Whitehall Funeral Chapel acquired the property. Recently, the structure has been renovated to be used as a banquet facility and renamed The Carrick House.
In the 1790s, George Nicholas had a house built on this property. Nicholas became a resident of Lexington in 1788. He was a distinguished attorney in Virginia, had served as a colonel in the Revolutionary War, and was an influential member of the Virginia Convention. He was the first professor of Law at Transylvania University and was the first Attorney General of Kentucky. After his death in 1799 and the death of his wife in 1806, the property was sold to Thomas Hart, Jr. who operated a ropewalk at the rear of the property in 1806. After Hart’s death, his widow, Eleanor Hart, sold the property to E.P. Johnson and his wife. The Johnsons probably lived in this house until they replaced it with a new structure.

In 1846, Johnson commissioned Thomas Lewinski, an architect who had designed many other structures in the area such as Christ Church Cathedral and the rebuilt Ashland, to design a new house. This finely executed Greek Revival two-story house was designed for them.

In 1855, Johnson sold the property to David Sayre, who was a practicing silversmith until he started the banking business and formed the first private bank in Lexington through which he increased his wealth significantly. In 1854, he founded Sayre School “to further the education of young ladies.” He purchased the property at 194 North Limestone to accommodate the need to enlarge the school. He hired John McMurtry, an architect who had designed many other structures in the area including Elley Villa, Brotherum, and Loudon, to add the third floor, garret and cupola. Classes were held in this building in 1856 and Sayre School has continued to operate on this campus since that time.
The Matthew Kennedy House, one of the most notable buildings in this historic district, was built by and for Matthew Kennedy in the early 19th century. The house was constructed on property owned by Matthew Kennedy and James W. Brand. Kennedy, who according to architectural historian Clay Lancaster, is recognized as the first in the state of Kentucky to adopt the title of "architect", distinguished himself as an architect through his designs for other buildings in the area. Some of these buildings included the main building at Transylvania University, completed in 1818 (burned in 1829), and the medical hall at Transylvania, completed in 1827 (burned in 1839).

Kennedy’s residence and office at 216 North Limestone St. served as the prototype for a number of houses in the Bluegrass. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973, it is a two and one-half story, five bay, brick transitional Federal to Greek Revival house. Italianate features were added when alterations such as the cast iron hoodmolds and columns were added in the early 1860s. Noteworthy architectural details include the center pavilion with large pilasters connected by a pediment. The blind arch and large lunette centered in the pediment is reflective of the fanlight of the front door. The property was sold to John Brand in 1834.

This house is one of a pair of houses built in the 1880s on land that was part of outlot 30, the site of a hemp factory, owned by James Weir of 312 North Limestone. The small brick cottage was built in the Eastlake style, but has been altered. The projecting bay has a double parlor window with a slightly arched transom above it. Note the sunburst-like carving in the tympanum. Some of the early residents of this house included Charles H. Bowyer of W.E. McCann and Co.; A. Mitchell, Jr., a freight agent for the C & O Railroad; and J.L. Stockdell, a physician.

This house, the other house in the pair of Eastlake cottages, is nearly a twin of the one next door at 159 East Third St. Note the many identical architectural features. Aldenburg and Scott may have designed these two houses. Early residents of this structure included Frank Bosworth, a dentist, and F.H. Norton, a druggist.
This two-story, three bay house was built in the Greek Revival style in 1845. Italianate paired brackets have been added and the windows have been lengthened in the intervening years. The house has planked lintels with decorative corner blocks. The front porch with its hexagonal projection and conical roof, was added between 1901 and 1907. William B. Emmal, a grocer and banker, bought the house from Evan Lilly. Lilly had previously purchased three lots in Combs Square for investment purposes and built this house to sell. Lilly was a bricklayer and contractor and actually made the bricks for the buildings that he erected. His buildings include the Main Street Christian Church, which is no longer standing, and the First Presbyterian Church, probably the one built in 1870 on North Mill Street, were among the building that he constructed. Lilly was also involved in the manufacture of woolen goods for a short time, as well as the coal and grocery businesses.

Built in the backyard of the Kennedy house on Limestone, this three bay frame cottage, now covered with aluminum siding, was built between 1896 and 1901.
In the 1790s George Nicholas had a house built on this property. Nicholas became a resident of Lexington in 1788. He was a distinguished attorney in Virginia, had served as a colonel in the Revolutionary War, and was an influential member of the Virginia Convention. He was the first professor of Law at Transylvania University and was the first Attorney General for Kentucky. After his death in 1799 and the death of his wife in 1806, the property was sold to Thomas Hart, Jr. who operated a ropewalk at the rear of the property in 1806. After Hart’s death his widow, Eleanor Hart, sold the property to E.P. Johnson and his wife. The Johnson’s probably lived in this house until they replaced it with a new structure.

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In 1855, Johnson sold the property to David Sayre, who was a practicing silversmith until he started the banking business and formed the first private bank in Lexington. Sayre, through his very successful banking business, increased his wealth significantly. In 1854, he founded Sayre School “to further the education of young ladies” . He purchased the property at 194 North Limestone to accommodate the need to enlarge the school. He hired John McMurtry, an architect who had designed many other structures in the area including Elley Villa, Brotherum, and Loudon, to add the third floor, garret and cupola. Classes were held in this building in 1856 and Sayre School has continued to operate on this campus since that time.

The East Second Street Christian Church was built between 1874 and 1875 for the Second Church of Christ congregation whose members had separated from the Main Street Christian Church. The congregation rejoined the Main Street Christian Church in 1880 and sold the building to an African American congregation, the Antioch Christian Church. The Antioch Church had been organized in 1851 by Thomas Phillips, a former slave of wealthy merchant John Brand of “Rose Hill” located at 461 North Limestone St. The Antioch Church, which began meeting in an old carriage factory on East Fourth St., changed their name to the East Second Street Christian Church when the congregation moved to the new location. Unfortunately, a year after the congregation moved there the building burned. It was rebuilt with insurance payments.

This Gothic Revival structure with Romanesque inspired architectural features was designed by a Swedish-born architect Phelix L. Lundin. Lundin practiced in Lexington in the 1870s and early 1880s. This building is the earliest known structure designed by him and the only documented church. He designed many commercial buildings and residences including the Dudley House located at 215 North Mill St.

Frederic Bush, a carpenter and builder, bought this lot from Evan Lilly and his wife Margaret in 1847 and built this plain Greek Revival house the same year. Bush was a respected builder and carpenter and was known for the many fine residences and public buildings that he constructed in Fayette and adjoining counties. Examples of Bush’s work include the 1883-1884 Fayette County courthouse, destroyed by fire in 1897, and the Lexington post office that stood at the corner of Main and Walnut Street, and the Jessamine County courthouse. His son, William, after apprenticing with his father for seven years, became a partner in the business. William was a trustee at Sayre Female Institute and an elder in the Second Presbyterian Church. His planing mill was located at Vine and Patterson Street.
In the 1790s George Nicholas had a house built on this property. Nicholas became a resident of Lexington in 1788. He was a distinguished attorney in Virginia, had served as a colonel in the Revolutionary War, and was an influential member of the Virginia Convention. He was the first professor of Law at Transylvania University and was the first Attorney General for Kentucky. After his death in 1799 and the death of his wife in 1806, the property was sold to Thomas Hart, Jr. who operated a ropewalk at the rear of the property in 1806. After Hart's death his widow, Eleanor Hart, sold the property to E.P. Johnson and his wife. The Johnson’s probably lived in this house until they replaced it with a new structure.

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These two houses are owned by the church adjacent to them. The house located at 154 Constitution combines architectural features of both the Greek Revival and Italianate architectural styles. The hall-parlor plan of this building is representative of the architectural tastes of Lexingtonians during the mid-19th century. The Reverend Thomas P. Dudley purchased this house in 1869. He and his father, Ambrose Dudley, served as pastors of the Bryan Station Church for a total of 100 years. Reverend Thomas Dudley married the widow of the famous Carter G. Harrison, five-term mayor of Chicago.

The slightly smaller house located next door at 158 Constitution St. was built in a purely Italianate style with more ornate features evidenced in the uniquely constructed front entryway featuring ornamental brackets and wood corbeling.
7. 164 Constitution St. (circa 1915)

This early 20th century two-story commercial building with a canted corner on the first floor forming a corner entrance has experienced some modifications since it was originally constructed. The windows on the second floor have been modernized and filled in at the top and the large plate glass window has replaced a triple window. At one time there was a grocery store on this site.

8. 165 Constitution St. (circa 1880s)

This late Italianate style house was built from the early to late 1880s. The house, which has been sensitively restored in recent years, includes many finely executed architectural details. The windows on the second floor in the projecting bay are paired narrow windows with segmental arches and brick hoodmolds. The other windows have segmental arches and brick hoodmolds as well. Names associated with the house include J.C. Twyman, C.A. Harris, Rebecca Gray and J.C. McKenna.

33. 122 East Third St. (circa 1839-1841)

Constructed between 1839 and 1841, this one-story Greek Revival structure had, at some point in its history, a sun porch added to the front facade. Recent owners removed the porch, restored the building and built an addition on the rear. Early occupants of this structure included the original owner, Jacob Uttinger, who had a carpentry shop and lumberyard; James Jackson; and Richard Hulett. Another owner, Sarah A. Pilcher, who lived here in the mid 19th century, ran a school at the house from 1858 to 1859.

34. 126 East Third St. (circa 1839)

The front of this three bay brick cottage was once covered with stucco. Recent owners removed the stucco revealing the location of the original door and window openings. The house was built by Jacob Uttinger and sold in 1839 to Thomas Bradley. Bradley was a blacksmith before becoming a hardware dealer and a banker. He owned several houses in different areas of town and rented this one out for about 20 years. He sold the house to Elijah and Thomas B. Watkins in 1859. Watkins was the son-in-law of architect John McMurtry.
In the 1790s George Nicholas had a house built on this property. Nicholas became a resident of Lexington in 1788. He was a distinguished attorney in Virginia, had served as a colonel in the Revolutionary War, and was an influential member of the Virginia Convention. He was the first professor of Law at Transylvania University and was the first Attorney General for Kentucky. After his death in 1799 and the death of his wife in 1806, the property was sold to Thomas Hart, Jr. who operated a ropewalk at the rear of the property in 1806. After Hart's death his widow, Eleanor Hart, sold the property to E.P. Johnson and his wife. The Johnson's probably lived in this house until they replaced it with a new structure.

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William S. Keiser built this house which is possibly the first one built on the lots that became known as Combs Square when it opened for development in the late 1830s. Keiser bought the lot from George Crutcher in 1841.

This small Italianate cottage was built in the 1880s. Originally the windows, which have jackarches now, probably had segmental arches and hoodmolds. V.N. Gardner, a millinery shop owner, resided here until 1901.

Built in the late 1830s or early 1840s, this two-story Greek Revival house has undergone many changes over the years. In the 1960s, the property owners divided the house into seven apartments and added several poorly constructed additions. New owners have returned the structure to a single family residence and done extensive renovations including stripping and repointing the entire building, restoring the original windows, and adding wooden replacement windows where needed. The interior of the structure has also been restored leaving much of the original historic fabric intact. This building and the one at 122 East Third St. have been past recipients of preservation awards presented by the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Historic Preservation Commission.

Wire brick was used to build this 20th century duplex. The building has a two-story porch that spans the front of the house with square brick piers supporting it.
11. 155 Constitution St. (circa pre-1818)

Sitting right on the street, this Flemish Bond brick house is Federal style but has been altered since the original construction. During the Greek Revival period, the owners constructed an addition that connected the main house with a two-story rear section and a one-story ell. Instead of wood, the middle section of the house has a cornice made of purpose-molded bricks giving it a decorative profile. The house's facade has been changed by the addition of a recessed doorway that has pilasters supporting an entablature. The house was built by Matthew Kennedy and James Brand before 1818 and was purchased by Thomas Duvall from the heirs of Kennedy and Brand in 1823.

29. 110 East Third St. (circa mid 1840s)

This beautifully restored building was built around 1840 in the Italianate style. Style identifying architectural features include the oval grilles below the eaves, decorative paired brackets under the roof and segmentally arched window tops.

30. 114 East Third St. (circa 1842)

In 1842, Joseph T. Sutton, a merchant tailor, built this house and sold it the next year to Jacob White, a boot and shoemaker. The house is Greek Revival in style. The pilasters on the doorframe are slightly fluted and support a large entablature. According to historic records, the house was rented to a number of different people during the latter part of the 19th century including a saloonkeeper, a professor of practical mechanics, a motorman, and a porter.
In the 1860s Joseph Wingate constructed a building next to his house on the corner of North Limestone and Third Streets. In 1869 the building was described as “the family grocery now occupied by Jacob White.” The store that had stood here since the Civil War was enlarged at the beginning of the 20th century and was known as the Crawford Grocery Store for 35 years. Take note of the decorative brickwork on the upper elevation in this Victorian style building.

- The lots on the south side of East Third St. were purchased by General Leslie Combs from David Stout in 1822. Combs was a very prominent citizen of Lexington. He served with distinction in the War of 1812 and was a practicing attorney in Lexington for over a half a century. He was a trustee of Transylvania University, a member of the legislature, a railroad pioneer, and a state auditor. This area of East Third was part of what was known as Combs Square.

The front section of this house was built between 1907 and 1934. The rear ell, built before 1855, may have been an outbuilding or servants quarters for the house at 145 Constitution St. There are two Greek Revival window frames on the second floor on the rear ell’s east side. Thomas Randall, who purchased the property in 1848, may have built the house at that time.

According to historian C. Frank Dunn, Daniel Talbot built this house before 1818, but since Talbot died in 1817 there is speculation that the house may have been built earlier and completed by his administrators. This three bay Flemish bond brick Federal style house was enlarged in 1855 by the addition of two bays. Italianate architectural elements were added at that time.
The Italianate/Eastlake architectural elements of this house place it firmly in the Folk Victorian style category. This charming three bay frame cottage has a pyramidal roof and a porch that includes a decorative spindle trim with very small spandrels on either side of the turned posts. Currently, the posts rest on contemporary brick piers, but the posts would have originally been all wood and would have had a wood rail between. E.T. Houlihan, the owner of a stove and tin company, lived here from 1887 to 1889. This house was moved from across the street when Sayre School built the playground on its original site.

14. 139 Constitution St. (circa 1880s)

Although this house looks as if it is a wing of the house next door, it is actually a separate house built in the yard of 135 Constitution St. Take note of the unusual window treatment on the second story of the house: There is a small circular window and a double window that has a large section of corbels from the roof framing it.

The first resident of this house was J.D. Noel who was a tobacco buyer. Another early resident was G.S. Strain who was a barber.

15. 137 Constitution St. (circa 1905)

Although built in 1813, this Georgian Federal style house exhibits a rare early hall and parlor plan suggesting an earlier construction date. The door way has been remodeled in the Greek Revival style and the porch displays Italianate features. It is believed that Joseph Wingate, a blacksmith whose shop was located at the corner of Upper and Church Streets, constructed this building. Upon Wingate's death, the property was left to his widow and three sons. Joseph Wingate Jr. was a hatter and became the mayor of Lexington in 1864. Originally built as a private residence, it is now a commercial space.

27. 263 North Limestone St. (circa 1813)

Although built in 1813, this Georgian Federal style house exhibits a rare early hall and parlor plan suggesting an earlier construction date. The door way has been remodeled in the Greek Revival style and the porch displays Italianate features. It is believed that Joseph Wingate, a blacksmith whose shop was located at the corner of Upper and Church Streets, constructed this building. Upon Wingate's death, the property was left to his widow and three sons. Joseph Wingate Jr. was a hatter and became the mayor of Lexington in 1864. Originally built as a private residence, it is now a commercial space.

Early photograph of part of North Limestone St.
25. 257 North Limestone St. (circa 1840)

This structure was built between 1838 and 1840 in the vernacular Greek Revival style. It was originally built for John B. Harbin in 1838 or Martha Beard in 1840 as a residence. It was later converted to a first floor commercial, second floor residential building. The structure is an example of what many modest buildings of the era may have looked like. Currently, the entire building is a commercial space.

26. 259-261 North Limestone St. (circa 1809)

Built in 1809, this Federal style structure, is the earliest building in the North Limestone Commercial District. Many of the Federal style features are still evident along with Greek Revival features that were added later. Originally constructed as a store and residence, today it is used as a commercial space. It was built for Robert Grinstead, a brick and stone mason. In the 1880s, William Colbert had a grocery store and residence here and members of his family continued to live in this house through the 1920s.

16. 135 Constitution St. (circa 1830s)

This simple Greek Revival house was built in 1831 by Thomas K. Layton, a brickmaker and layer. This two story, three bay house has Flemish bond brickwork with brick dentils that are “saw tooth” like.

17. 129-133 Constitution St. (circa 1870)

Built in 1870, this two duplex building has four bays in its central section and a one bay entrance in each wing. The Italianate style is evidenced in the oval iron grilles in the garret and the paired roof brackets. The windows on the first floor are only slightly arched. The arches on the second floor windows are much more prominent. The house has been owned by a number of different families.
18. 125 Constitution St. (circa 1870)

This house, Italianate in style, was built in 1870. The entrance bay, which is recessed behind a one-story porch, has Eastlake details such as the turned posts and a spandrel with turned spindles and floral motif corner blocks. Brackets support the roof and the windows have flatheaded hoodmolds. Former residents of this house include W.W. Adams, owner of a livery stable; B.S. Gentry, 1902 Vice President of the Phoenix National Bank; and J.H. Wood, a physician.

19. 121 Constitution St. (circa 1839)

This one and a half story structure was built in 1839 as a three bay house. It is possible that the original three bays were built earlier than the 1830s, perhaps between 1810 and 1820. They were later altered to the Greek Revival style and again to the Italianate style. Two more bays were added to the house at a later time. The front wall of the house was later extended with the construction of a gable over the middle three bays with a Palladian window above the covered porch. James Robert Sloan, the first owner, was the Fayette County sheriff in the mid-19th century. In 1868, Rosa Vertner Jeffrey, a famous poet, and her husband, lived in the house.

Kennedy and Brand probably built this house in 1813. The house is Federal style with Italianate and later changes. The Flemish bond brickwork is barely evident after the many alterations made to the facade. The house now has a recessed door with double parlor windows and a small decorative window in each floor level. The ornate iron shutters on the windows and door appear to date from the mid to late 19th century. Some of the former owners included a soap manufacturer, H.C. Thompson; a physician, Dr. J.M. Hawkins; a barber, Van G. Laden; and a saloon owner, H.D. Reed.

24. 234 North Limestone St. (circa 1813)

- The next four buildings on the tour are included in the North Limestone Commercial Historic District which was listed on the National Register in 1983.
This mid-19th century Italianate style house has elaborate hoodmolds that are identical to the ones on the Matthew Kennedy House at 216 North Limestone St. They are early examples of iron hoodmolds on which the decorative motif has been applied instead of cast in the one mold.

Built in 1905, this late Italianate house blends nicely with its 19th century neighbors. Interestingly, the rectangular attic windows with ventilators are reminiscent of the Greek Revival style that was often used by John McMurtry and other contemporary architects.