

**A PLACE IN TIME**

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## **“A Place in Time”**

For every creation there is a season. In the case of architecture this “season” can renew itself indefinitely through the efforts of preservationists. “In every culture, surviving architecture is the visible and most enduring link with history.” This presentation is devoted to a review of the architectural spectrum found in Hopkinsville and Christian County; to observe various styles used in construction; and to relate the efforts of preservationists to educate those who would tear down in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Our existing landmark structures – homes, schools, churches, and public buildings were created out of the talent and experience of those inspired to provide a functional and aesthetic contribution to society. The form and style of our buildings make a statement about the knowledge, interest, and experiences of those who have bequeathed this heritage to us.

Far too often, our historic landmarks fall to fire or wind, forces unavoidable or to neglect or demolition by people unconcerned about these sentinels on the landscape. For some, a new high-rise building, a highway, or an asphalt parking lot seems to override the advantages of preservation.

Legislation passed by the Kentucky General Assembly in 1795 opened for settlement, the land south of the Green River. This area included all of what would become Christian County. The state legislature established Christian County in December, 1796 to come into legal existence on March 1, 1797. Created out of Logan County, this new geographic entity included all or a portion of 22 present day counties.

This territory comprised all land west of Logan County, south of the Ohio River, east of Kentucky Lake, and north of the Tennessee line.

An abundance of fresh water, wild game, and timber for building and firewood afforded the draw for initial settlement into north Christian County. People from the piedmont of Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia settled this region between 1785 and 1810. The influence of their piedmont culture is evident in the few remaining log structures north of Hopkinsville.

Between 1800 and 1830, the tidewater migration from the east coast to the southern part of Christian County brought with it the style and building influence of English Georgian and American Federal periods. In the mid 1830s, the Greek Revival style first appeared and by 1840 it was gaining a foothold in the region. Sawed lumber, brick, and limestone rocks were the building materials used. Though architectural similarities existed between Virginia and this county, the popular architectural styles and fashions of the tidewater reached Western Kentucky from ten to thirty years after it was populated. The most typical upscale houses of this era, constructed in South Christian, followed the tidewater southern tradition. Massive timbers were used to build two-story frame structures with Federal style exteriors. After 1840, the interiors were sometimes finished in the Greek Revival style. These southern folk houses usually included a double story portico the width of the central hall.

Hopkinsville was settled about 1796 by the family of Bartholomew (1755 – 1827) and Martha Ann Wood (1763 – 1845). They had migrated from the Greenville District of South Carolina by way of Jonesborough, North Carolina, later the state of Franklin, finally Tennessee. Wood first built a log cabin at what is now the southeast corner of

West Seventh and Bethel Streets. After building a two-story log cabin on the present northeast corner of Ninth and Virginia Streets, he occupied a story and a half frame house with dormer windows, front and back, southeast of the present intersection of Fourteenth and Campbell Streets. It is probable that Wood died in this house in 1827.

The original town plat, squared off in a block pattern, included the area from Fourth to Fourteenth Street and from Little River to Virginia Street. In 1817, a second town plat was added from Virginia to Campbell Street and from Eighth to Fourteenth Street.

In the two decades following the first settlement in 1796, most Hopkinsville homes were built of logs. They were generally one-room with a loft above and a lean-to added later. Heat was generated from a log fireplace with a chimney constructed of stone or brick or of wood and clay. Some two-room and dogtrot houses were also built in this era. All houses were constructed of logs horizontally laid and notched and fitted at the ends to prevent spreading. Log corner notching systems included: V-notched, saddle, half-dovetail, square or full-dovetail. Space between the logs was filled with “chinkin” – a mixture of mud, straw, and small wood chips.

Hopkinsville home building from early settlement has been influenced by the popular trends brought here by settlers, prominent landowners, craftsmen, joiners, architects, master builders, and house plan books. Locally, only a few architects and master builders have been identified in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Across the years, from settlement to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, nearly twenty identifiable styles used in building construction can be identified in Hopkinsville. Nine are addressed in this presentation.

At least three examples come to mind of the Federal style homes prevalent in Hopkinsville between 1800-1830, only two of which are still standing; the home of Simon French (1764 – 1831), a Revolutionary War veteran, dating from circa 1798, located in the Barkers Mill neighborhood; and the John B. Knight (1812 – 1880) home, located at 1417 East Seventh Street, dating from around 1820. The T.M. Edmundson (1840 – 1921) house, now destroyed, located on the southeast corner of North Virginia and East Second Street, revealed the principle features of this form. The semi-circular fanlight over the front door, with sidelights, a small entry porch, the cornice emphasized by decorative molding, and a three-part Palladian-style window are the primary features. The Federal style quickly gave way to more modern designs, such as the Greek Revival.

W. E. Roberts  
Home

An early and stylistically important house in Hopkinsville is Lone Oak, located at the corner of what is now Clay and 16<sup>th</sup> Streets. Constructed for attorney, Joseph B. Crockett, the house was transitional in style from the Federal to Greek Revival periods. Originally a “temple form” house, two rooms, were added upstairs in the early 1880s, which altered the character of the building and makes the porch now seem too heavy for the house. Inside there are a myriad of elements representing both the Federal and Greek Revival periods. It was an early experiment in the Greek Revival style for this area, and the only other temple form is the Dillard House—Planters Bank.

Examples of the Greek Revival period, 1825-1860, blossomed in Hopkinsville with the construction of a courthouse, a hospital, two colleges, and numerous homes. The building boom brought two recognized architects to this community, Hugh Roland and Major Nathan B. Kelley. Greek Revival features included: low pitch gabled or hipped roofs, a cornice line with a wide band of trim, porches with columns, typically of

the Doric style, and a front door surrounded by narrow sidelights and a rectangular line of transom lights above.

A major statement was made for the Greek Revival style on local building when Christian County Court in 1837 retained the Louisville architect, Hugh Roland, to design a second brick court house. Roland, born at Chambersburg, Ohio, in 1792, designed churches and public buildings in Bowling Green, Nashville, and Louisville. He died in Memphis, Tennessee in 1852 and was buried there in Elmwood Cemetery. In 1866, his body was exhumed and "sent up the river" for burial at Cave Hill Cemetery in Louisville.

Roland designed a two-story, brick, Greek Revival courthouse for Christian County on the site of the present building. The structure, 50ft X 75ft, featured a wide band cornice line and plaster scored corner blocks. A cupola rose above the double front doors which were flanked by plastered pilasters with Ionic capitals. It was completed in December, 1838, and was burned by Confederate Gen. Hylan B. Lyons in December, 1864.

In 1848, the Kentucky General Assembly established Western Kentucky Lunatic Asylum and bought the Russellville Road farm of frontier folk character and Methodist Circuit Rider, Peter Cartwright, upon which the hospital was to be built. The architectural plans of Major Nathan B. Kelley, 1808-1871, were selected. Major Kelley came to Hopkinsville from Columbus, Ohio, and remained here to design the main building of Bethel Female High School (later Bethel College), 1855-1857, and possibly South Kentucky College in 1858, along with several homes. This architect brought with him two master builders (contractors), Samuel L. Salter (1823 – 1897) and John Orr (1830 – 1905), to construct the Asylum and Bethel Female High School. Salter became

building and grounds superintendent at Western State and directed reconstruction of the hospital after it was destroyed by fire, November 30, 1860. Building contractor, John Orr, constructed many homes in the area until his death in 1905.

Greek Revival homes were very popular here in the thirty five years prior to 1860. One of the few still standing is the present Planters Bank building located on the northeast corner of South Main and Fourteenth Street. It was constructed by Dutch carpenter, Dan Umbenhour in 1848-49 for the Robert Dillard family. The plans were taken from an architectural plan book by Minard LaFever (1797 – 1854) entitled *The Modern Practice of Staircase and Handrail Construction* – one of a number of popular building guides he published – which appeared in 1838. The two-story frame house features a central block and the surfaces between pilasters are given a rusticated treatment, that is, a beveled block shaped level surface with application of sand in wet paint to resemble stone. Balanced columned galleries feature Doric colonnades which encircle the curved ends of lower wings located right and left of the central core.

Other local examples of the Greek Revival order include: Tuck-Elliot House, Woodland, circa 1835; East of Lafayette, The Leavell Homestead, constructed about 1840; Bethel Street, the Gant House, built in 1847 – 48; corner of South Main and Thirteenth Street; and the Gant – Stites House; East Seventh Street, built in 1849 – 50 all of which are gone. The Bryan House, built in 1845 – 1847; East Seventeenth Street, is just one of several still standing.

A popular contemporary order with the Greek Revival was the Gothic Revival, 1840-1860, whose influence extended into the early 1870s. One of the first Americans to champion Gothic domestic buildings was Alexander Jackson Davis in 1832. His 1837

book, *Rural Residences*, was the first house plan book published in the United States which includes three-dimensional views complete with floor plans.

The Gothic Revival house often featured lace work on chimney stacks, pinnacles, towers, turrets, battlements, gables, overhanging eaves, and carved bargeboards on steeply pitched gables. Architect-builder, John McMurtry, 1812-1890, advanced the popularity of the Gothic Revival in Kentucky.

Church architecture was the first local visible example of Gothic Revival. In 1843-1844, the Baptist congregation built a new church, which still stands, on the northeast corner of South Main and Eleventh Streets. After the congregation built a stone Gothic structure at the southeast corner of South Main and Fourteenth Streets in 1894, the Eleventh and Main church was converted into apartments, called the Hille Flats, and some will remember the Cayce-Yost furniture display rooms located there from circa 1953 until 1994, when the store closed. The First Presbyterian Church, located on the southeast corner of Ninth and Liberty Streets, built in 1849, remains a striking example of restrained Scottish Gothic Revival.

Two local homes serve as examples of this style. While representing Christian County in the Kentucky General Assembly in the early 1850s, Ben S. Campbell (1811 – 1901) observed the classic Bibb House on Waping Street in Frankfort. He had a near duplicate constructed, circa 1853, on his Canton Pike farm near Square Deal Market, the landmark now known as the Joe Altsheler place. The Graves Homeplace, 203 East Sixteenth Street, another example of the Gothic style, stood on the southeast corner of Sixteenth and Virginia Streets from circa 1871 – 1872 until it was torn down in 1951.



The last of the Victorian styles popular in Christian County is the Italianate, in vogue from 1840 until 1885. Several examples of these large country homes were built by substantial farmers in this era. Two of three survive, Ben S. Wood's Blue Lantern, built by Salter and Orr, for Robertson T. Torian (1809 – 1882), between 1851 and 1854, and Dr. Pat Dougherty's home at Masonville, Elk Grove, built for the family of Col. William S. Moore (1801 – 1869), 1858-1861. Richland, the last of the three, was destroyed by fire on May 21, 1926. It had been built by Dr. James Wheeler (1811 – 1886) in 1851 – 1853.

Mickey  
Toms

Pattern books published in the 1840s and 1850s were those by Andrew Jackson Downing. These books created much interest in the Italianate style. Two-story brick homes, with a low-pitched roof, widely overhanging eaves with decorative brackets and narrow arched windows were the unusual characteristics of this style.

The term "Victorian" is generally applied to any phase of culture during the reign of Queen Victoria, 1837-1901. "Victorian" in the United States refers to several architectural styles that were popular between 1860 and 1900. Three of the six styles have surviving examples in Hopkinsville. The "Stick" style was a popular trend from 1860 to circa 1900. A steeply pitched gabled roof, overhanging eaves, wall shingles, and one-story porches with curved braces are general features common to this style.

Two of the three original "Latham Cottages", located on the west side of Campbell Street, at 803, 807, and 811, between Eighth and Ninth Streets are "stick" examples. Hopkinsville native benefactor, John C. Latham, Jr. (1844 – 1909), had the three constructed in 1889 and they were the first built in town to include running water, central heat and electric lights. They were built to conceal the railroad from the Latham

Homestead, located in present day Virginia Park. The house at 811 was torn down in 1962. One year later, Forbes Bros., J.K. (1847 – 1907) and M.C. (1852 – 1934), had the “Forbes Cottages” built on the west side of Clay Street, at 1101, 1107, and 1113, between Eleventh and Twelfth Streets. They were torn down: 1101, circa 1971; 1107, circa 1969; and 1113, circa 1976.

Nicholas Tobin, a tailor by trade, bought this two-story “stick” house in 1894. It was built in 1892 on the northeast corner of Walnut and Thirteenth Streets. For many years, this landmark was the home of Miss Anna Tobin Sugg (1911 – 1995), former director of the local Red Cross.

A new generation of Hopkinsville business and professional men made a social statement a century ago, typically in the period 1880-1920, when they built new homes in the most fashionable and popular style – Queen Anne. A drive out South Main or up East Seventh provided a vista of new brightly painted two-story frame or brick houses. Each one presented similar characteristics of a steep pitched roof, a front facing gable, cutaway bay windows, and a large front porch which extended along a sidewall.

Banker, Thomas W. Long (1858 – 1914) built and occupied the Robert Martin House, located at 2011 South Main, in 1893. Physician and Planters Bank President, Dr. Thomas W. Blakey (1858 – 1926) erected the Art and Glen Ward home at 1805 South Main Street, in 1899. And, attorney, Lawrence Yonts (1858 – 1910) constructed a brick veneer home, located on the northwest corner of Main and Fourth Streets, in 1904. Several other examples survive.

The most frequently produced houses of a century ago, standing in this first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, are styled Folk Victorian. These one-story frame structures,

dating from 1870 to 1910, feature a gable front and side wing porches with spindle work detailing, ornately carved, and cornice-line brackets. These homes were generally occupied by middle income merchants and professionals, salespeople, and blue collar workers. They are located throughout the older residential sections of Hopkinsville. A classic example of this style is the Chastain – Tucker – Petty home, built in 1877, located at 313 East Eighteenth Street.

Home styles, like cars, clothing, and tombstones convey the preferences, and whims of each generation. People of each generation leave their mark and they carve their niche as a benediction or epitaph for future generations.

Hopkinsville and Christian County have experienced the loss of many landmarks. From the accidental burning of Western State Hospital on November 30, 1860, the intentional burning of the Courthouse on December 12, 1864, and through the needless destruction by wrecking ball of First Baptist Church, at Main and Fourteenth Street, on October 12, 1965, Bethel College, on West Fifteenth Street, in May 1966, and Hopkinsville High School, on Walnut Street, in the spring of 1976, a great number of priceless architectural treasures have been lost.

The United States has its National Trust for Historic Preservation, organized in 1949. Hopkinsville has the seed for preservation which was planted ten years later by the late Lena Jones Wicks, part owner of a ladies clothing store, Wicarsons, on East Ninth Street. Mrs. Wicks took on a cause in crusade fashion. In 1959, then mayor, “Dutch” Lackey announced that the long unused Chapel at Riverside Cemetery would be torn down. Little did he realize the firestorm he had unintentionally unleashed. Mrs. Wicks organized “an army” of young people, including this presenter, to solicit funds from

community leaders to save the Chapel. Coupled with money and Mrs. Wicks' persuasive manner, Mr. Lackey's City Council voted to "save the Chapel". Mrs. Wicks, generated an awareness which has motivated several generations to become more conscious of a commitment to preservation.

The first municipal preservation came in 1974 when then Mayor, George L. Atkins, Jr., led the city effort to obtain ownership of the 1914 Post Office. The United States General Services Administration transferred title in 1975 and the Pennyroyal Area Museum opened in the building in July, 1976.

The first struggle between preservationists and those opposed came in 1983 when Martin Theatre Corporation failed to renew its lease on the Alhambra Theater. Fiscal Court considered transforming it into offices. Later that year, the Pennyroyal Arts Council, chaired by Carolyn Self, launched a study regarding the condition of the theater and to identify community needs for the theater. The Arts Council took over operation of the theater in April, 1984. A fund raising drive to save the Alhambra was launched in June, 1986. Across these past 25 years, generous state grants have helped, along with the support of state and local officials, to save the theater. But, it has been the dedicated effort of volunteers, young and old, to raise money, scrub and clean, and to lobby local politicians. Extensive remodeling in 1937 and 2007-2008 brought change to the theater, but it stands today a testimony of community commitment to preservation.

The old L&N Railroad Passenger Depot, constructed in 1892, was the next landmark to face possible destruction. At the end of local railroad passenger service on May 1, 1971, railroad officials used the building for storage and allowed it to deteriorate severely. City officials, led by then Mayor Al C. Rutland and City Council, bought the

land on October 12, 1980, including the parking lot for \$34,000 and received the depot without cost in the contract. In 1982, a Housing and Urban Development federal grant of \$120,000 aided in the building's exterior restoration. The landmark was dedicated on December 21, 1982. Pride, Inc. located its offices there on April 21, 1983. The Pennyroyal Art's Council office is located in the building today.

The old Central Fire Station, constructed in 1904 – 1905, located on East Ninth Street, is the most recent landmark to be restored. In 1998, the city of Hopkinsville bought the building from Centre College for \$30,000. It had been willed to the college by the late Golladay LaMotte. A state TEA-21 grant for \$200,000 was received with the Pennyroyal Area Museum providing a match of \$50,000. Those funds were used to install a new roof and to restore the first floor with the addition of restrooms and central heat and air. Through an outstanding example of volunteer cooperation, the Hopkinsville firefighters, led by firefighter, Jeff Slaughter, and labor from the Christian County Jail painted the first floor. The facility was named the Woody Winfree Fire-Transportation Museum in honor of the insurance agent, John W. "Woody Winfree", who donated his lifetime collection of fire related memorabilia. The museum opened to the public on February 6, 2008 with the mayor of the city of Hopkinsville, Dan Kemp, sliding down the brass fireman's pole.

Though some success in preservation has been achieved with public buildings, the extensive intentional destruction of landmark private homes has been epidemic. For the last fifty years, over twenty 19<sup>th</sup> century dwellings have been needlessly destroyed. Pay homage to our lost landmarks by saving those remaining.

Today, ten or more homes built in Christian County over 100 years ago have been carefully preserved and restored by their owners. The seeds of preservation once planted by Mrs. Wicks have now begun to bear fruit. Newspaper articles by Jim Coursey, Evelyn Boone, and Mary D. Ferguson have contributed the nourishment needed to keep the growth alive. Landmark preservation is a gift to the future. Do your part! Restore an old landmark. Let's start with the old Carnegie Library on Liberty Street.