

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

PROPERTY Louisville Historic District  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TENNESSEE, Blount

DATE RECEIVED: 11/08/13 DATE OF PENDING LIST:  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/25/13  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 74001902

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

     ACCEPT      RETURN      REJECT                      DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Additional Documentation Approved**

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept

REVIEWER Edson Beall

DISCIPLINE History

TELEPHONE                     

DATE 12-24-13

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Louisville Historic District  
Blount County, Tennessee

74001902

The property owner has asked us to submit additional historical information on the Harper House and Store, a contributing resource, located within the Louisville Historic District in Blount County which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 23, 1974.

The additional information is as follows:

### The Harper House and Store Building in Louisville, Tennessee: An Historical Summary

*Prepared July 13, 2013 by Philip J. Mummert and Ann K. Bennett*

Imagine what it must have been like in Louisville more than 160 years ago during the decades just preceding the Civil War. The town was a booming mercantile, warehousing and trade center; the most important steamboat port on the south bank of the Tennessee River and the most important town in Blount County. Records tell us that there were wagon shops, coopers, tan yards, merchandise stores, shoe making shops, blacksmiths, distilleries, saddle tree factories, and flour mills. The original portions of this house and store building were built during this boom period.

The store occupied a prime location at the intersection of River Street (today's front gravel driveway) and Gilbert Street (today's Cox Road). River Street connected points south such as Maryville and the mountains (via Louisville's Main Street) with Safell's Ferry, the wharf and warehouses at the river one quarter mile northwest of the store building. Gilbert Street provided access to other cross-river ferries and Knoxville and Concord.

According to historical records, John F. and James Henry first built a store where the current store building stands. The Henry brothers continued in the mercantile business for several years and sold their property to Horace Foster in 1853. A record of Louisville history states that the original buildings on the property had burnt to the ground. When this occurred is not known. Whether the Henry brothers or Foster were the owners is not known. What is known is that Mr. Foster and his two sons, Frank and Sam, operated a store at this location. The original residential structure and front portion of the store building that stand today were probably built by Horace Foster during the 1850's. The Harper House of today represents that original structure and 3 additions. The wide pine floorboards in today's entrance hallway, living room, side office and front dining room signify antebellum construction and mark the original footprint. The front section of the store building was also built in the 1850s, and the back section in the 1870s. The front portion was used to sell general merchandise; the back section, seed and feed. The Post Office annex was added in the early 1890s.

In addition to being a merchant, Horace Foster was a prominent and active member of the community before and during the Civil War. He was the signer of a January, 1851 petition to incorporate the town and one of the first aldermen when the Town of Louisville was first incorporated later in the year and also served as Town Mayor. Historical records tell us that he ran a cooper shop in the brick building across (Cox Road) from the store; the building still stands today and is believed to be the oldest building on the peninsula. Foster served as a trustee of the nearby Holston Academy and the local Methodist Church and was a Union sympathizer.

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Events of the Civil War had a damaging effect on Louisville. During the war years, both Confederate and Union troops occupied the Town. On at least one occasion, the Harper House served as an important relay point for a secret message from General Ulysses Grant to General Ambrose Burnside. In late 1863, Grant's message made it from his Chattanooga location to Kingston. From there, copies of the message were sent out using five different couriers to notify General Burnside, who was nearly surrounded by Longstreet's Confederate troops in Knoxville, that help was on the way. Only one of the five messages eventually got through to Burnside largely due to the heroic effort of Mary Love, a young woman who carried the message from Kingston on horseback to a close relative who lived in Louisville. Her 35-mile ride on a cold November night, which included crossing the Tennessee River and an encounter with Confederate troops, is well-recorded by Judge Oliver Temple in his book, East Tennessee and the Civil War (1899). Mary Love's destination that night was the home of her brother-in-law, Horace Foster. She stayed at the house and a thirteen year old neighbor, John Brown, was able to get the message through to Burnside the next day. The message, and the good news it conveyed, is given some credit for lifting the spirits of Burnside's men and their triumph over Longstreet's troops at the Battle of Fort Sanders. Love received a pension from Congress in recognition of her contribution.

During the war years, bands of raiders would frequently dash into Louisville and create consternation to the people who were on the opposing side. A painting by John Wiley Wallace, once on exhibit at the Knoxville Museum of Art, depicts an 1864 Confederate raid in Louisville remembered by the artist. It is recorded that one of these raiding parties captured Horace Foster, "a very active Union man. He thought for sure his time had come. It is said that he tried to escape from them by running through Cox's Mill pond, but they caught him and he was brought back home with a bullet in his leg."

Following the war, and through reconstruction, Louisville continued to prosper but began to lose its relative economic position in the area. Railroads had become a more preferable means of transporting goods than steamboats and the first rail line was located on the north side of the river in 1856. Horace Foster sold his property to Mary L. Jones in 1869. The property was acquired by Thomas Fergusson in 1874 and, after his death, owned by Albert Ferguson until 1886. Little is known about the Ferguson's (sp?).

In 1870, three rooms were added to the original house; today's front bedroom, den, and kitchen on the lakeside. During the latter part of the 1800s, the mercantile business continued to prosper. Louisville continued to serve as a commercial hub due in part to marble operations at the nearby Copley quarries at Sheep's Pen, the shipping of marble and other goods by steamboat across the river to railroad transfer points and commercial hubs like Concord, and continued area mercantile, milling and warehousing operations. But major flood events in 1867 and 1875 and railroads on the Knoxville side of the river and to Maryville helped diminish Louisville's stature as a trade center during this period.

Johnston and Co. assumed operations at the store building in 1882. In 1886, the property was conveyed to Joe M. Johnston who was the proprietor of the store. He and his family resided next door in the house.

The property was sold by Johnston to the Harpers in 1894. John Lonas Harper and Lafayette Rodgers (Doc) Harper moved to Louisville from Knoxville about the same time. John and Doc wanted to operate a general merchandise store. John, his wife Annie, and family moved into this house next to the store building. Doc and his family lived across River Street. A post office was added to the store building and

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Doc served as Louisville postmaster. The Post Office operated at this location until October 1943. In the store, general merchandise was available in the front section; seed and feed in the middle; perishables (meats, flowers, vegetables, eggs, etc.) stored in the rear. A large vegetable and flower garden between the store building and the house was accessible to customers from a side store door. A fish pond in front of the house kept fish caught in nearby waters fresh until they were sold or eaten at home. The Harper Brothers General Merchandise Store operated for forty-four years--from 1894 until 1938. Most of the store's ledger books are at the McClung Collection at the East Tennessee Historical Center in Knoxville.

John L. and Annie's home was always open for family and friends. Cakes, pies, vegetables from the garden, and fried chicken were frequent offerings. They had eight children that lived past infancy--five of them girls. Jennie, Della, Maude, Irene, and Cleo all grew up in the house on River Street.

During the early 1900's, Louisville had become primarily a residential community. Many residents were employed at the Alcoa Aluminum Company plant that opened in 1913 or at one of the nearby marble mines between Louisville and Friendsville that were experiencing a boom period. Demand for marble was boosted by "city beautiful" efforts and preferences for monumental architecture in public buildings in major cities across the country. The Light Pink Marble Company, located two miles west of Louisville, was the largest industry of the town by 1930.

Plans for a major TVA dam and the eventual impoundment of the Tennessee River near Lenoir City, meant that over 150 Louisville area households, 3 businesses, and 2 churches would have to be moved or demolished and relocated to make way for the new lake. Miss Jennie Harper was one of the members of the Louisville Relocation Committee that met with TVA and Tennessee State Planning Commission officials in the early 40's as plans unfolded. The town's street pattern and road layout would change forever and severely impact the store's primary market area and advantageous location. The Harper Brothers store closed its doors in December 1938 as TVA began to carry out its plan to build the dam twenty-two miles downstream and clear buildings and relocate roads for the reservoir. The impoundment of the river and creation of Fort Loudoun Lake would not affect the store building itself. A peninsula was formed leaving the Harper Brothers store, the house next to it and other old neighborhood houses on high ground.

John L. Harper died June 24, 1941. His wife Annie remained in the home even after TVA flooded much of Louisville. Prior to her death she deeded her home to her daughters, Maude and Jennie, who lived in the home with her. The property remained with Harper family members until 1979.

In September, 1943, as Fort Loudoun lake waters rose, the Harper House became a lakefront property, but the size and vitality of the town's economy around it continued to decline. By the late 70s, many of the old homes in the area had become either second homes on the lake for Knoxville residents or, as in the case of the Harper House, rental units. In 1975, Blount County and TVA developed the northeast end of the peninsula adjacent to the Harper property into a twenty-acre recreational area called Louisville Point Park.

Ann Bennett and Philip Mummert purchased the Harper property in 1984 and moved into the house one week after adopting their 2-week old daughter Kate. Mrs. Cleo Harper McCammon, one of the five sisters who grew up in the house, accompanied Ann, Phil and baby Kate to the closing. At 83 years of age, she was excited to know that another little girl was going to grow up in the house.

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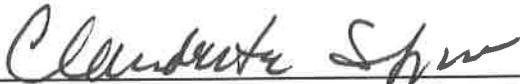
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In 1992, the Pellissippi Parkway and a new bridge across the Tennessee River greatly improved access between the Louisville area and Knoxville. Today, the neighborhood of older homes is interspersed with homes more recently built. The store building looks out of place, located on the peninsula cut off from much of the community by water and passed annually by thousands of persons going to and from Point Park. And the Harper House stands next to it, having survived the Civil War, Tennessee River flooding, decades of girls growing up, economic booms and decline, TVA dam building and a few years of neglect in between.

In 2010, a new car garage was built to blend in with the house and store building. On April 27, 2011, a severe weather system contributed substantial exterior damage to both the store and house. Subsequent repair of storm damage included roofs, gutters, siding, trim, porch floor, deck and store windows. A major renovation to the back of the house in 2012 included a new entrance way and back porch, interior hallway/laundry room, breakfast room, kitchen, bedroom and a modernized bathroom with shower.

## Sources:

Oliver P. Temple. East Tennessee and the Civil War (1899)  
Earl J. Hess. The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee (2012)  
Noel Fisher. The Civil War in the Smokies (2005)

  
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Claudette Stager, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

11/8/13  
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Date