

Buildings of Lexington's Historic Western Suburbs

Below is a partial list of some of the homes, businesses and other buildings located within the Historic Western Suburbs.

401 West Short Street

St. Paul's School - Classical Revival - 1913

500-506 West Short Street

Wilcoxon Building - 20th Century Wire-Brick Commercial - 1925

This 1920's apartment building was built on the site of a wagon and blacksmith shop that stood on the site through 1907. A 1920 photo shows the site as a vacant lot covered with weeds. Next door stood a frame house with a small 1-story brick "store" built in its front yard. This building is used today for professional offices and apartments.

501 West Short Street

St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church - Gothic Revival - 1865-68

The St. Paul's Catholic Church building dates to 1865. The tallest structure in town when it was built, it's exterior is dominated by a 210 foot tower topped by the first church clock in Lexington. Its rectory, located to the west of the church building, was built on the site where Mary Todd Lincoln was born - on December 13, 1818. (The bricks from that house were used to build the caretakers house at Calvary Cemetery on West Main Street opposite the Lexington Cemetery.)

511 West Short Street

Parker Place aka John B. Wilgus House - Italian Villa - 1870

Parker house, a large setback Italianate house was built around 1870 by John Wilgus, a grocer and prominent banker. The octagonal gallery, with its beautiful frosted glass door, was added between 1871 and 1875. Wilgus obtained the property in 1855. In the early 1850s, architect John McMurtry had a lumber yard and carpentry shop there. Before that Elizabeth Parker, Mary Todd Lincoln's grandmother, owned it. Currently used as a private residence, there are also offices in a rear addition. A log cabin obtained from property owned by the Parkers is at the rear of the house. Parker House has also been an orphanage, antique shop, museum, and reception hall. The southwest corner of its land was sold off in the late 1890s, and a ca.1900 Richardsonian-Colonial Revival Cottage was built (521 West Short).

514 West Short Street

Small Former Church - ca. 1920, renovated 2008

This building was formerly the First Congregational Church. It has recently been tastefully converted into condominiums. Prior to the construction of this church, a this site held an African-American 1-story church, which was preceded by a blacksmith shop. Around 1840, this was the site of the Lexington Theatre. In 1850, the theater was sold to the infamous Lewis Robards, who used it as a slave jail. Robards' office was in the house next door at 520. During the Civil War, it was used as a Federal prison. The old theater-jail burned in 1864.

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520 West Short Street

Robert King (double house with 522) - Greek Revival - 1836

Built by Elzy Harney and Benjamin Ford on the site of the old log Catholic Church. In 1854, this house was leased to Lewis Robards as the office for the Robards' Slave Jail. In addition to his office on the 1st floor, he used the 2nd floor as display parlors for his "choice" female stock.

521 West Short Street

Smiley House - Richardsonian / Colonial Revival - 1900

Smiley ran livery stables around Lexington, including one at 527 West Short. The house originally had a wrap-around porch in the front, that was later replaced by the colonial-revival doorway.

522 West Short Street

Robert King (double house with 520) - Greek Revival - 1836

535 West Short Street / 535 West Main Street

First Baptist Church - Collegiate Gothic - Late Gothic Revival - 1913

The 1st Baptist Church is located on the site of the congregation's original 1789 log meetinghouse. It is also the site of Lexington's earliest burying ground, used until after the 1833 cholera epidemic. The current building (built of Indiana Bedford limestone) covered the largest square footage of any Baptist church in the world, when dedicated in 1915. Seen from any direction, the building presents a pleasing mass of asymmetrical groups. Its sanctuary faces West Main and is approached by a climb of fifty steps with five landings. The magnificent sanctuary contains superb wide-grained chestnut timberwork over-arching the auditorium. The original pews and brass chandeliers are still present along with the original golden-oak pews (that suggest an Art Nouveau style) and brass chandeliers.

541 West Short Street

Opera House Square - 1980's - 1990's

A more recent addition to the Western Suburb, Opera House Square, designed by Dwayne Culp, is a townhouse complex built on the site of the old Coca-Cola bottling works.

562 West Short Street

Richardsonian - Colonial Revival - ca. 1915

This was the site of a coal yard at the start of the 20th century.

563 West Short Street

James Eades House - Federal Italianate - 1806

Eades purchased the land for this house from William Palmateer, who later became the original owner of what is now the Mary Todd Lincoln House on West Main.

566 West Short Street

Eastlate - Richardsonian - 1892

Remarkably intact.

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567 West Short Street

George Koonz House - Richardsonian – Queen Anne - ca. 1890

The George Koonz family owned this house from at least 1893 until 2006. The lot was originally part of the yard for 575 West Short. This house is amazingly intact.

568 West Short Street

Italianate T-Plan Cottage - ca. 1886

This section of West Short Street was used for commercial purposes until the late 19th century. This was built as investment property.

571-573 West Short Street

Late Richardsonian - ca. 1888

This lot was also part of the yard for 575 West Short Street. This interesting duplex features matching projecting bays on the front. It also has Flemish bond brick on all four sides which is unusual. It was probably built as investment property.

574 West Short Street

Greek Revival - ca. 1873

The house at 574 West Short (24) is a mid- nineteenth-century two-story, five-bay frame house which had six-over-six-paned sashes; it now has two-over-two and a new porch. The Holland family seems to have owned this property from the 1870's until the early 1900's. John Holland – who operated a wholesale coal dealership on the grounds – married Emma Mooney in 1887, daughter of the colorful Dr. C. E. Mooney, who lived next door at 578.

575 West Short Street

Stephen Holland Reid House - Federal with Changes - 1806

This is one of the oldest remaining houses in the Western Suburb. The western border of this property was the City's western boundary in 1805. Mary Owen Todd Polly Russell Wickliffe, the wealthiest woman in Kentucky, owned the land to the west of it. The original entrance was on the east front side of the house. At one time, John Bradford, Lexington's first newspaper publisher, bought the house and gave it to Dinah and William Hart, Bradford's daughter and her husband. Until 1888, the house's yard included the property that now is 571-573, and 567 West Short.

578 West Short Street

Dr. Charles Mooney House - Vacant Lot

Dr. Charles Mooney was living in a shotgun cottage house (razed in the last part of the 20th Century) on this property by 1887. At his death in 1900, his obituary identified him as "one of the best known men in Kentucky". Coming to Lexington at the age of 12 during the 1833 cholera epidemic, he eventually attended Transylvania. He became: a printer (working for abolitionist Cassius Marcellus Clay), a Mexican War soldier and prisoner (escaping 3 times), a news dealer (starting Lexington's first news stand), a confectioner, a grocer (opening Lexington's first fancy grocery), a saloonist (opening 2 very successful saloons in the Phoenix Hotel and in the Broadway Hotel), an editor, an actor (losing all of his clothing in the great Chicago fire of 1871), and a doctor. His deceased first wife's brother, Gus Jaubert, invented Burgoo, the famous Kentucky stew, while riding with Confederate General John Morgan (Morgan's Raiders). Mooney, however, was a Union man.

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579 West Short Street

Stephen Holland Reid House #2 - Federal - Richardsonian - 1812

Built by Stephen Holland Reid ca. 1812 as a Federal style house, it was substantially changed to Richardsonian style (with its rough stone lintels and recessed arch) in the late 19th Century. One of the Lexington characters that lived here was William "Billy" Mabon.

Mabon, a former member of the Morgan Raiders during the Civil War, was for years the auditor and cashier for the Lexington Water Works Company. (Mabon's sister, Mrs. Richard Morgan had married General John Hunt Morgan's brother, Richard Morgan.) By 1883, Mabon had found his way into the life of Belle Breezing, Lexington's most famous bawd. By 1888, Mabon was considered to be Miss Belle's "dandy man", a romantic and business arrangement common at the time. Mabon was Miss Belle's "outside representative" in handling business matters outside of her establishment.

580 West Short Street

Shotgun Cottage - ca.1885

582 West Short Street

Eastlake T-Plan Cottage - ca. 1880

583 West Short Street

Italianate - ca.1875

One of the few Italianate houses in the Western Suburb, it is intact except for a modern porch that was added across the front.

584 West Short Street

Italianate Shotgun - ca. 1880

588 West Short Street

Italianate - ca. 1880

A late 19th century house that provides a good transition between the Greek Revival house on the west to the smaller cottages to the east. It may have suffered a fire in its past that resulted in the roofline being altered and/or the cornice being made smaller.

591 West Short Street

Old Gas Station - 1928

592 West Short Street

Samuel McMeekin House - Greek Revival - 1838

Built by Robert King for Samuel McMeekin who owned a machine shop and carding factory on the corner of Short and Spring (now Algonquin) streets. It was in the McMurtry family for over 30 years starting in 1854. It has had few if any major alterations, although the front door has been replaced.

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601 West Short Street

James G. Mathers House - Greek Revival - 1840

Warren Gotten, or perhaps his associate Robert King, built this house in 1840. It was sold in 1841 to James G. Mathers, who owned other houses in the block. Greek Revival in style, it is two-story, three-bay, Flemish bond brick. It has a pilastered and recessed doorway. The railing on the front steps is a replacement, the original being on 258 Market Street.

603 West Short Street

ca. 1820

Built between 1815 and 1830, this two-story, two-bay brick house originally faced Jefferson Street. It was connected to 601 W. Short during the 1860's, at which time the door facing Short was created from enlarging a window opening. It was possibly used as a kitchen and dining area when originally connected. The original front door remains on the east side of the house. The two houses were separated back to their original states during a renovation.

606 West Short Street

Benjamin Ford House - Greek Revival - 1835

Benjamin Ford, brickmaker, bricklayer and house builder, built this house for his own use in 1835 on land belonging to William Keiser. Ford bought the land in 1837, two years after completing his home. Ford was responsible for a number of 19th century Lexington buildings, including several in the Western Suburb. In a renovation of the house, a new wing was added at the rear and a brick patio with a gazebo was built.

609 West Short Street

Charles R. Thompson House - Federal – Greek Revival - ca. 1818-1880

One of the finest houses in the Western Suburb, the small west rear portion of the house was begun in or before 1818 by builder John Shrock. He is known to have been living there in the 1830's. Charles Thompson bought the house in 1840 and built the main mass of the building. The DeLong family added the 2-bay addition on the west front of the house sometime in the 1870's. The scale of this house is excellent and even more remarkable considering that it evolved through 3 different owners and periods. (At one time, when being used as apartments, the house had a fire escape at the rear of the house that came from Belle Brezing's infamous house).

633 West Short Street

Two-story red brick -- 1842