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Planning the First Two Towns in Central Kentucky: Harrodsburg and Lexington

Clay Lancaster

Unlike in Central and South America, where sixteenth-century invaders from southwest Europe plundered and then took over native cities, some of which were better planned, larger, and more splendid than those in their homeland, seventeenth-century immigrants from England encountered no substantial indigenous communities in North America. The British had pirated the Spanish treasure fleets for their share of Aztec and Inca spoils, and they recognized that the North American tribes had no such portable wealth. The prize here was the land, which was to be wrested from the aborigines methodically. The first step was establishing a foothold—towns laid out for future expansion, and fortified. Fortification was not originally prompted for protection from the natives—as they generally were helpful and trusting—but from other nations from across the Atlantic, who had become land-grabbing competitors. Native Americans were solicited as allies by the various groups, and thus naively became involved in the foreigners' rivalries. Such is memorialized in the name "French and Indian Wars," which was actually a conflict between France and Great Britain. As all of the competitors were their enemies, the "Indians" merely weakened themselves and had nothing to gain. The English internal disruption that followed, known as the American Revolution, showed that members of a single invading nationality could not even get along among themselves.

By the time the aliens penetrated beyond the Cumberland Mountains into what was to become Kentucky, the dusky aborigines had learned that the whites were undesirables who were out to take their country from them. They launched a positive, if poorly organized, resistance. It was less effectual here than elsewhere because of the scarcity of native occupation, as the region was reserved for a hunting ground by tribes living north of the Ohio and south of the Cumberland rivers. Forts built by the newcomers did not need to be as sturdy as those constructed to the eastward to resist European artillery. Thus the first, Fort
Harrod and Fort Boone, erected during 1775-1776, both consisted of rows of cabins surrounded by a palisade of upright logs, with blockhouses at the corners. Only later (in 1780 at Lexington and 1781 at Louisville), when British military outposts to the north threatened conducting campaigns with cannon, was it necessary to construct stronger fortifications of rammed earth. But these depredations ended with the conclusion of the American Revolution in 1783. Both types of forts were dismantled, and with the expatriation of surviving natives to the western wastelands, the conquerors settled down to a civilized way of life in the fertile east.

The first permanent settlement in Kentucky was established by James Harrod and some thirty men from the Monongahela River district of Pennsylvania. They were Scotch-Irish, pursuing earlier investigations made by Robert and James McAfee south of the Kentucky River.¹ They repudiated the unique Quaker policy at Philadelphia of compensating the natives (at least nominally) for their land, but rather adhered to the prevalent practice of taking what they wanted by force. In the spring of 1774 they parcelled the south slope of a stream (later Town Branch) issuing from an ample fount (Big Spring, back of the present high school) and built "improvement cabins." These were pens of felled logs ten feet square, covered by a pitched roof of clapboards. There was no chinking between the logs and only a crawl hole for entrance, but they were better than shelters of earlier scouts fashioned of already available materials. The settlement was called Harrodstown, eventually Harrodsburg. It consisted of "a number of cabins on their respective lots of one half acre, and a five-acre out lot."² The wording reflects the distribution of community parcels in Virginia town acts since the late seventeenth century.

It was almost a century after Sir Walter Ralegh's abortive attempt to establish a colony on Roanoke Island before an assertive effort was made to implant viable towns by the colonial government of Virginia. Jamestown had been founded in 1607. It was the principal port and capital, but it was said to have contained only sixteen or eighteen houses when it was burned during Bacon's Rebellion in September of 1676.³ New England was growing through refugees from religious persecution, but the southern colony offered no more incentive than making a living through cultivating tobacco on plantations that represented substantial investments. The planters wanted organized export
centers to regulate and bolster returns on their product, and the Crown desired them for facilitating the collection of tariff. In 1680 the Virginia Assembly passed An Act for Cohabitation and Encouragement of Trade and Manufacture, recommending twenty sites for new towns that were located along the shores of Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Each town was to occupy fifty acres, for which the owners of the land were to be compensated by ten thousand pounds of tobacco. The oldest surviving delineation is for Tappahannock in Essex County. Identified by its original name of New Plymouth Towne, it shows two groups of evenly spaced gable houses, aligned ten deep, and parallel to a straight stretch of the Rappahannock River. The group to the left is four houses across, and that to the right five across. A later map of “Tappahannock Town,” dated 1706, indicates half-acre lots, four to a square, on a rectangular grid in which the streets vary from five poles (82-1/2 feet) to three poles (49-1/2 feet) in width. Usually, however, the sites of these towns were of irregular shape, due to the erratic shore line of the streams, and their plans were considerably less than ideal. Squatters often built fishing shacks, warehouses, shops, inns and ordinaries promiscuously along the waterfront, which added a note of perimeter confusion.

Inland towns might be expected to be more regular. Such was the case with Williamsburg, which was laid out to be the second capital of Virginia in 1699. Harrod’s party was in western Fincastle County, Virginia, when they built cabins south of the watercourse issuing from Big Spring in 1774. The site was abandoned in July, after several of the men had been attacked and killed by natives at Fountain Blue Spring, four miles to the northwest. James Harrod with a much larger force returned in March of 1775. They reoccupied the cabins, and began building Fort Harrod downstream from (west of) the cabins. The fort was located about a pole below the branch, and it was sixteen poles (264 feet) square. Gates were centered in the north and west palisades. A row of cabins spanned the south side, and the enclosure included a school house and blacksmith shop. The site of the fort was to figure as the nucleus of the later town plan.

On 17 December 1776 the Virginia legislature separated Kentucky County from Fincastle. In May of the following year the first court met in Harrod’s fort. The town outside had not been developed, and its form was to be affected by the Virginia Land
Act of 1779, which designated a square-mile unit of 640 acres as the standard size for future towns in the commonwealth. The following year Kentucky County was divided into Fayette, Jefferson and Lincoln counties. They honored the colonies' French ally and military leader the Marquis de Lafayette, the author of the Declaration of Independence and current governor of Virginia Thomas Jefferson, and the American Revolutionary southern commander Benjamin Lincoln, who received General Cornwallis' sword following his surrender at Yorktown. Present Harrodsburg was the county seat of the last until Mercer County was formed in 1785, named after another Revolutionary War hero, General Hugh Mercer.

Also in 1785, residents in Harrods' settlement drew up a petition to be submitted to the Virginia Legislature, stating their compliance with the requirements of the latest land act, listing the natural advantages of the site, and requesting that the "Honble House would take the whole into consideration, [and] pass an Act for conveying the same to freeholders and other citizens in a manner most agreeable to your wisdom and determination." The document bore the signatures of 140 men.

At the October session of 1785 the Virginia Assembly established the town, which was to be "known by the name of Harrodstown, in the county of Lincoln." The act confirmed its right to a 640-acre tract. It named thirteen trustees, who were authorized to dispense maximum half-acre in-lots (for residence) and ten-acre out-lots (for pasturage and farming) to persons of just claim, and sell the balance. All persons acquiring in-lots were required to "erect and build thereon a dwelling-house of the dimensions of twenty feet by sixteen, at the least, with a brick or stone chimney," within a period of three years, or else the trustees could repossess the property and dispose of it "for the best price that can be got, and apply the money arising therefrom to the use and advantage of the said town." The trustees also could "cause an accurate survey to be made of the said township." With the official nod from Williamsburg, the town could now take on definitive form.

The earliest 640-acre town squares did not coincide with the official plat that was drawn in 1787. One predecessor had for center "the place of the cabins in the year 1780," which was a little west of Big Spring. This figure included the site on which the courthouse was to be built, but not the fort. A second contestant
was shifted a third of a mile to the west and about an eighth of a mile southward. It took in both the future courthouse site and existing fort, the latter being in the middle of the west half. The north and south boundaries were at the latitudes they were to keep, and another shift westward about equal to that just made would bring the layout to its final position. Whether either of these concepts was actually delineated at the time it was being considered seems unlikely. No such item is mentioned in the petition submitted to the capital in 1785.

In meetings at the beginning of August 1786, the Court of Mercer County "nominated and recommended to the President and Masters of the William and Mary University as a proper person to be considered as County Surveyor" the local resident John Thomas. The location of the college on Middle Plantation had been the main incentive for the siting of the Virginia capital at what was to be called Williamsburg, and the school exerted influence upon governmental affairs. Several months earlier in 1786 the town trustees had been installed, and the permanent name of Harrodsburg had been adopted in Kentucky. On 4 April 1787 the town trustees appointed Samuel Taylor "surveyor of the Town of Harrodsburg;" but three weeks later John Thomas produced "a Commission from his Excellency the Governor," and he was duly processed for the office, taking the proper oath of fidelity and providing sufficient bond (£ 1000). Thomas, it seems, had already drawn the plan during December of 1786 and January of 1787. It is not known to have survived, but a facsimile was made by order of the Court on 5 January 1818, which document, formerly at the courthouse, reposes now in the archives of the Harrodsburg Historical Society. John Thomas had been succeeded in the post as county surveyor in April of 1805 by Thomas Allin, followed three years later by George C. Thompson, and resumed in 1811 by Allin. Although the earliest existing plan postdates the original by almost three decades, its inscription attests to its being an accurate facsimile. There also are two identical copies of the 1818 version at the courthouse. One is framed and kept in the vault with early deed books; the other is that drawn on page 75 of Plat Book 1. The three equally present a number of incongruities, such as differences between the size noted on some of the lots and their actual measurements, and the location of buildings that were not standing in 1818, the latest being that of Bacon College, built in
1843. The mystery may be solved by examining the Historical Society's drawing. It has been tampered with: the college building—shown as an elevation looking like an old needlework sampler—is sketched on top of out-lot #10, and streets have been extended into the out-lot section in an ink different from that used at the core. The courthouse copies were drawn following the change. Legends read alike on all three examples, including John Thomas' signature above references to the building sites.

The early plan of Harrodsburg accompanying this article is a redrawing of the three copies without subsequent addenda. Streets and lot outlines are oriented to the cardinal directions. Street designations belong to the 1818 era. The layout represents a square mile, with a narrow strip of eighteen poles (317 feet) appended above North Jane at the top. In the middle is the downtown section, consisting of a regular grid of streets four poles (66 feet) wide, with the exception of Water Street, which is six poles (99 feet) wide, and North Lane, which is only two poles (33 feet) wide. Although it does not show on the 1818 map, Warwick Street was enlarged to five poles (82-1/2 feet) in 1814. A thousand-foot stretch of Big Spring Branch flows through Water Street, and below it are four blocks (shaded) that were reserved for public use. The fort stood in the northwest rectangle, and the legend above John Thomas' "signature" calls the four blocks the "Schoolhouse Squares." The first schoolhouse had been inside the fort, and the Kentucky legislature founded the Harrodsburg Academy in 1798, authorizing it to occupy Fort Hill, the site considered. Following the construction of a small brick schoolhouse here in 1812, it became Seminary Hill. The building was destroyed in 1874, and the land was sold for other purposes six years later. The old graveyard occupies the upper part of the southeast block, which it now shares with the facsimile of Fort Harrod built in 1927, and today both south blocks provide the site for Pioneer Memorial State Park.

The four public squares originally were meant to accommodate civic and judicial as well as educational buildings, but about the time Thomas' survey was made, it was decided to build the courthouse elsewhere. The site chosen was south of the street running below the Schoolhouse Squares, second block to the east. Thomas identified it by in-lot numbers 53-56. A stone courthouse was built on the south half of the block by John Mosby during 1787-1788.
The town proper occupied a little more than one-fourth of the square mile. Equisized blocks (264 by 330 feet) were arranged in six courses of nine across. Each contained two acres, and was divided into four in-lots, altogether making a total of 198 in-lots for private occupancy. The location of the courthouse prompted commercial concentration in the southeast quadrant of the plan, and the town's slow growth left the west—especially the southeast corner—undeveloped. The street in front of the courthouse was called first Court, then Stage, and finally Main, which it has remained. The next street west was called Broad, but after mid-century it was changed to Chiles, after the name of the proprietor of the later tavern in Morgan's Row. When a clerk's office supplemented the courthouse in the southeast corner of the square, the adjoining street was named Office. Greenville Street derives from Greenville Springs (near to and south of present Beaumont Inn), to which it was aligned but never reached. An early hat factory and other industries gave title to Factory Street. What before 1815 was called Low Street afterwards became East Street. One street penetrated the out-lots to connect with the outside world. Water Street was extended to the west. Today it is called Broadway, but was never taken beyond West Lane. Main Cross Street, briefly formerly called Shawnee Run, and now Lexington Street, connected eastwardly with the Lexington-Harrodsburg Pike. Warwick Street continued northwardly to the port of that name on the Kentucky River. A nameless street two blocks to the west ran southward to the town limits, but it did not develop, and the south exit was a jog off the end of Main Street to the Danville-Harrodsburg Pike, via present Beaumont Avenue. Subsequently, with US 127 passing through Harrodsburg, Warwick Street was extended to connect with the Danville-Harrodsburg Pike, and it acquired its present name of College Street, in remembrance of Bacon College, defunct since 1864.

The enveloping area was divided into eighty-three lots. Most were from five to nine acres in size, though one was only a single acre, another two-and-a-half acres, several were about four, and the largest (at the southwest corner) exceeded nine by three-tenths of an acre. Out-lots adjoining the in-lot section were accessible to the street grid; those in the second ranges to the west and north, as well as the third to the north, were reached by West Lane and North Lane; but seven out-lots in the east, and three in the south ranges, had no connection with the street system, and they would
have had to be approached from the outside.

The plan of Harrodsburg included on Beers’ Map of Boyle and Mercer Counties, published at Philadelphia in 1876, shows that the town layout had remained essentially the same. Spring Hill Cemetery occupies some half-dozen out-lots in the northeast corner and beyond. As mentioned earlier, streets in the southwest quadrant failed to materialize. Short Street had been cut through Courthouse Square in 1810. Main and Greenville streets had been elongated northward (the latter interrupted by the Dedman property), and a street just south of the in-lot section (currently Mooreland Avenue) connected the lower ends of the vertical streets to Macksville (Springfield) and Perryville Pikes. Entering the town plan from the right is the “PROPOSED SOUTHWESTERN R. R.” tracks, a four-mile junction line that was to begin operating in 1877, and later was taken over by the Southern Railroad. The line was extended up East Street, curved over to and crossed Factory Street, and headed northwestwardly toward Louisville. Except for commercial growth along US 127, and a few suburbs, mostly outside of the old town limits, Harrodsburg’s plan has not been altered drastically as of today.

According to tradition, Lexington was named by a party of Pennsylvanians led by William McConnell, camping to the west of the town site, on 5 June 1775. It commemorated news of the first engagement of the American Revolution, which occurred at Lexington, Massachusetts, seven weeks earlier. The McConnell group had followed in the footsteps of James Harrod and his men, who, at that time were constructing their fort about thirty miles away. The Lexington contingent proceeded to make “improvements” and plant corn. But there was confusion over ownership claims, and in the fall of 1776 native harassment prompted those who had remained to retreat to the fort at Harrodsburg.

Ensign Robert Patterson had been with McConnell since early in 1776, and at Harrod’s fort in March of 1779 he received orders from Williamsburg to establish a garrison north of the Kentucky River. He led a force of twenty-five back to the Lexington area, where already he had staked a land claim. They cleared about thirty acres, and with the timbers erected a blockhouse with a stockade around it, and planted corn. In the fall they harvested the crop, and they spent the winter, about a third sleeping in the blockhouse and the remainder sheltered in bark huts inside the
Their stronghold was located near a spring southwest of the later intersection of Main and Mill streets in Lexington. When weather permitted in the following year, the frontiersmen built a fort here modelled on Harrod's. Josiah Collins described it in April of 1780 as consisting of three rows of (22) cabins surrounded by a rectangular palisade. But it did not even have blockhouses, and fear of retaliation against George Rogers Clark's campaign in the Old Northwest Territory prompted the settlers to construct a log-sheathed fort of earth eighty-feet square, with bastions at the corners, and circumscribed by a moat. It was designed to withstand "Swivels and small artillery" that the British and natives might direct against it. The enemy attack on nearby Bryan's Station in August of 1782 prompted a second facsimile fort on the hill (Broadway at High Street) in Lexington.

Meanwhile, as at Harrodsburg before the building of its fort, on 25 January 1780 the inhabitants at Lexington met and devised a formal agreement for establishing a town. The original Patterson troop had nearly doubled, as there were forty-four signers. It provided that every man over 21 years of age, who had been a resident for six months or had grown corn for the ensuing year, and widows, were entitled to an in-lot and an out-lot in the settlement. A plat was drawn, and after the election of five town trustees on 26 March 1781 it became page 2 in the Trustees' Book. The plan was adopted on 20 December 1781. The official version was a later facsimile dated 5 February 1817, whereon the out-lot section had been doubled at the top.

The layout of Lexington resembled that of its parent town, only its orientation was practically aligned to the secondary points of the compass, which had been determined by the direction of Town Fork of Elkhorn Creek, along which had been established an elongated "Commons" ten poles (165 feet) wide, with Water Street running alongside the stream. Half-acre in-lots were grouped five or six to the block. Six of the blocks were on the less steep north side of Water Street, and they were separated by Main Street from another six blocks bounded by Short Street. The road terminating the in-lot section on the west was called Locust Street, and that at the east was Mulberry (later Limestone). Intermediary streets were Lower (Patterson), Spring, Main Cross (Broadway), Mill and Upper. Main and Main Cross streets were five poles (82-1/2 feet) wide. Short and Mulberry were four poles (66 feet), and the others were three poles (42-1/2 feet) across. The Public Square, reserved
for the courthouse, interlay Short, Upper, Mill and Main streets. As at Harrodsburg it was to be cut to half size, here being the portion lying east of Cheapside. Even counting the few lots formed on the west moiety of the public square, there were less than half the number of in-lots here than in the Mercer County town plan.

By comparison, the Lexington layout also contained only about five-eighths as many out-lots. They averaged five acres in size. Two groups of narrow out-lots flanked Main Cross Street beyond Hill Street, extending to later Maxwell Street. Others were in block-deep rows above Short Street originally as far as Fourth Street, and a row was southeast of the Commons. Also a large square was beyond Mulberry, between Main and Second streets, which was divided by Walnut and Back (later Deweese) streets. Shifting the town limits beyond Seventh Street added forty-five additional five-acre out-lots, and fifteen that were a fraction of the size. The town occupied 710 acres.

On 14 April 1782 the citizens prepared a petition to be submitted to the Speaker of the Virginia Assembly requesting the establishment of Lexington. It carried forty-two signatures. Lexington already was the county seat of Fayette County, and the Assembly complied promptly by an act passed on May 6th. The building of streets and structures that began was a slow process. Trees had to be felled, and stumps removed. The first building erected was a small log schoolhouse in the middle of the public square. It was considered advisable to keep the boys in school, for if they wandered they might be molested by the natives. John McKinney was the initial teacher. Also constructed in the spring of 1782 was a log courthouse, with cellars, and two eighteen-foot square rooms with fireplaces on each of two floors. It was not on Public Square but at the northwest corner of Main and Main Cross streets. The first courthouse to occupy the block set aside for it was a stone building erected by John Cape in the fall of 1788. The forts had been demolished the previous year, signifying the beginning of a new era of peace, and the first newspaper in the West was the Kentucke Gazette, whose first weekly issue appeared on 18 August 1787, testifying that Lexington was the leading community in Kentucky.

Lexington strove to live up to this distinction in the 1790s. At the beginning of the decade a stone jail was built as a companion to the new courthouse a block away at Short and Mulberry streets. A straight channel was dug for Town Branch through the
On 19 March 1791 the courthouse was designated the center of a mile-radius circle whose circumference was to be the town limits for 116 years. It enclosed 2,011 acres, or almost three times the area of the original bounds. Within a few days a market house was begun on part of the site of the old fort. It was a two-storied building, the lower part open, with sixteen brick piers, three feet square and twelve high, supporting a 25-by-50-feet enclosed upper hall with two chimneys. The building was completed in the spring of 1792, at which time Kentucky was granted statehood, and the market hall served as the meeting place for the first General Assembly in June. It was hoped that the hospitality extended would lead to Lexington’s becoming the capital of the commonwealth; but toward the end of the year the rivalry between Lexington and Louisville was allayed by choosing instead the town of Frankfort which lay between them. Lexingtonians continued to refer to the market hall as the “state house.”

An institution that better justified pride than a political center was the transplantation of Transylvania Seminary from near Danville to Lexington in 1792. A two-story brick building containing a large assembly hall and smaller class rooms was built for it at the north end of out-lot No. 6, the site of present Gratz Park. The building was enlarged three years later, and several dependencies were added to the complex before the end of the century. The Seminary amalgamated with Kentucky Academy, formerly at Psgah, becoming Transylvania University in 1799.

A map of Lexington, surveyed and drawn by John Lutz in 1835, identified Transylvania University (Shryock’s Morrison College building) on the later site above Third Street, the Orphan Asylum a block to the left, and the Roman Chapel (adjoining the Episcopal Burying Ground) several blocks to the right. The Lunatic Asylum is above the Georgetown and Fourth Street intersection. The Episcopal Theological Seminary is above Second Street, left of Main Cross Street or Broadway. The Old Masonic Hall is at the east corner of Walnut and Short streets, with the City School below. An African Church is on the north corner of Maxwell and Mulberry or Limestone Street, and the Old Steam Mill is below what is now Bolivar Street, between Mill and Upper streets. The Court House is in the center of the circular city limits. Twenty-one other public buildings are located by letters and identified by two lists in the corners of the map. They include eight churches, four
inns, the Market House, Post Office, City Library, Jail, the new Masonic Hall, Transylvania Preparatory School, the Medical Hall, the Bank of the U.S., and a Ware House for the Rail Road. The last is in the narrow block bounded by Water and Vine streets, Broadway and Mill Street, and it either designates the Lexington and Ohio depot built the year the map was made or its predecessor. Town Branch had proved a nuisance through flooding the downtown area, and the stream had been covered from a point opposite Walnut Street to Broadway early in the century; the railroad tracks entered the town from the west, above the streams, and its "Ware House" was built in the nearest block covering the stream. Eight residences are identified by site, four directly and four by letters in the corner legends. The circumference of Lexington embraces the top of the 1817 plat between Broadway and Limestone Street, curves clockwise to where Walton Avenue meets Winchester Pike, cuts through Woodland Park, passes where Washington Avenue connects Limestone and Rose streets, touches the fairgrounds, includes about half of the Lexington cemetery, and completes its circuit around the Lunatic Asylum back to above Seventh Street.

The growth of Lexington over the next fifty years filled in the circular city limits. During the 1880s, as the economy recovered after the Civil War, new streets were cut through former estates near the perimeter. Notable are Woodward Heights, between West High and Maxwell streets, Fayette and Elsmere parks, off North Broadway above Fifth Street, and Woodland Subdivision, adjacent to the park out East Main Street. In 1887 it was proposed increasing the radius of Lexington to 1-1/2 miles, but the proposal was considered immature. The southeast quarter of Lexington began developing into residential districts early in the twentieth century. They included the Aylesford Subdivision, east of Rose Street and above Rose Lane, Bell Court, above Main Street adjoining the city limits, and the Chautauqua Woods Addition, which extended beyond the mile radius perimeter. Ashland Avenue and Mentelle Park were entirely outside of town, and in 1907 the city limits were dilated to include the new developments. All were laid out in conformity with the grid scheme, but it was set aside with the planning of Ashland Park. Ashland Park was the subdividing of the part of Henry Clay's estate nearest town, extending from Hanover Avenue to Sycamore Road. It was planned by Olmsted Brothers, and the lots were auctioned off in
1919. Streets undulated, and one (Slashes Road) had a greensward median with a stream (now gone) running down the middle. The scheme reflected earlier suburban residential complexes preserving a rural atmosphere in the vicinity of New York City, such as Llewellyn Park (1857), near East Orange, New Jersey, and Tuxedo Park (early 1880s), in Orange County, New York. Ashland Park provided a charming verdant environment for cozy bungalows and craftsman houses. Although these dwellings were more than a mile from the business district, there were electric trolleys that offered frequent transportation for the minimal fare of five cents. Despite the city’s growth, the electric public-transit system maintained the commercial-domestic integrity of Lexington’s original plan.

But Ashland Park was enlarged, and it set the precedent for subsequent developments of promiscuous layouts that mushroomed over an ever-widening perimeter. After World War II, due to the population explosion and the increased use of automobiles, the city’s expansion got out of hand. Street traffic became a menace. Electric trolleys were supplanted by motor buses emitting poisonous fumes. Private cars, formerly a family luxury, became a vanity symbol of adulthood. They banished electric interurban and steam passenger trains, and monstrous 18-wheel trailer trucks joined the mad rush on new and widened highways. Home-owned stores suffered, and corner groceries were exterminated. Business decentralized to satellite shopping centers dominated by big chain marts, where featureless, squat buildings enframed monotonous sprawling acres of parking lots. The implanting of a major IBM facility on Newtown Road in 1950 sparked rapid industrial influx, which added manufacturing to the residential, shopping, banking, professional services and cinematic jumble in future expansion. In deference to the accelerated traffic, Main Street was made a one-way thoroughfare through Lexington, which practically annihilated downtown retail trade, and the centrifugal tendency materialized in the construction on New Circle Road around Lexington. Unlike the regular town design in force up to the early 1900s, New Circle Road was characteristically modern in its amorphous shape, which varied from a two- to a four-mile radius. From the Lexington courthouse, New Circle Road is almost one-fourth of the distance to Scott County on the north, one-third of the way to Bourbon County on the northeast, nearly one-fifth to Clark County on the east, nearly one-fourth to Madison County on the southwest, three-fifths to Jessamine County on the southwest, and more than
halfway to Woodford County on the west. The city has grown beyond, and New Circle Road is now being circumscribed by another traffic artery, the Man-o'-War Boulevard.

The eighteenth-century layout of Harrodsburg still functions adequately for a population of less than 9,000, whereas that of Lexington has become an uneasy symmetrical nucleus in a disorderly urban megapolis of more than 213,000. The great pity is that it overspreads and has destroyed the natural beauty that once surrounded the modest city, and justified pride in its quality.
Rappahannock River

OCTOBER 10, 1637

This surveyor at the request of the Trustees of Virginia, under 35 acres of land beginning at a point of land by a long more of Rappahannock River in King William County running by northward to the line between said land and 35 acres to a corner stone in the 35 acres, thence south 35 acres prior to a certain tree in the corner thereof, parallel with the first bearing one where it first begins and at the request of the aforesaid God he doth the said land into one hundred parts with stakes at the corners of the same half and walks in the design God aforesaid mentioned on all other.

George Clare

Surveyor 1637

17 LANCASTER
ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1. The Plan of Tappahannock, Virginia, 1680. John W. Reps, *Tidewater Towns* (Williamsburg, Virginia: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1972), Fig. 45, p. 68.

Fig. 2. The Plan of Tappahannock, Virginia, 1706. Reps, *Tidewater Towns*, Fig. 46, p. 69.

Fig. 3. Restored Perspective of Fort Harrod (1775-1776). Drawn by the author.

Fig. 4. Town Plan of Harrodsburg (1786-1787, 1818). Redrawn by the author.

Fig. 5. Plan of Harrodsburg a Century Later. From Beers’ *Map of Boyle and Mercer Counties*, Philadelphia, 1876.

Fig. 6. Restored Perspective of the Earthwork Fort at Lexington (1780). Drawn by the author.

Fig. 7. Plan of Lexington (1780, revised 1817). Clay Lancaster, *Vestiges of the Venerable City* (Lexington: Lexington-Fayette County Historic Commission, 1978), p. 10, Fig. 4.

Fig. 8. John Lutz’s Survey and Plan of Lexington (1835). Lafayette Studio Copy, Negative #1477.


Fig. 10. Contemporary map of Lexington showing the urban development.

NOTES


5 Reps, op. cit., pp. 68-70, figs. 45-46.
6 In 1791 Benjamin Van Cleve examined the (enlarged) fort at Harrodsburg and interviewed the settlers about its original state. He drew a plan and compiled a description, which were reproduced in Willard Rouse Jillson, ed., Harrod's Old Fort, 1791 (Frankfort: Kentucky State Historical Society, 1929). They were reprinted in the Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society 28 (January 1930): 105-114.
9 A township is six-miles square, containing thirty-six units the size of Harrodsburg.
10 These alternatives for the town layout figured in establishing the exact site of Jacob Bowman's 1,000-acre survey. Jacob Bowman v. Daniel Brewer, Box B, Bundle 38, Mercer County Court Records, dated 6 September 1811.
11 Mercer County Order Book 1, pp. 3, 58; Trustees Book 1, p. 3.
12 Trustees Book 1, pp. 27, 28, 31.
13 Trustees Book 1, p. 34.
15 Mrs. Rebecca Wilson Conover found the earlier street names in her researches, and kindly passed them on to the author.
17 As stated on the Kentucky Department of Highways marker on West Main Street at the entrance to the Lexington Cemetery.
22 Henning's Statutes, Vol. 11, p. 190.
25 Ibid., pp. [70], 73, 80-81.
27 Lancaster, Vestiges of the Venerable City, p. 49.
28 Ibid., pp. 156-9.