

GRASS HILLS

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Grass Hills, Carroll County

Unusually large log house with dogtrot, near I-71 in southern Carroll County, built of hand-shaped shingles, flooring, rafters, and notched logs. Home of Lewis Sanders, leading importer of blooded cattle and sheep, built 1823, and added on several times, National Register of Historic Houses, 1975, Kentucky State Historical Marker, 1184.

(See Lewis Sanders)

Grass Hills was the homestead of Lewis Sanders (1781-1861), one of Kentucky's first agricultural experts. Famous as an antebellum experimental farm, Grass Hills was home to Sanders descendents to 1883. It was also the site for many political meetings during the 1830s and 1840s especially during the build up to the Mexican War.

This unusually constructed home was built on 750 acres of land that Anna Nichols Sanders inherited from her father, George Nichols, a politically powerful Lexington attorney. Lewis Sanders began construction on the foundations and barns in 1819. The main house dates to 1823. It was built chiefly by slave labor of notched logs, shingles, rafters that were hewn and shaped by hand on site. According to biographer Anna V. Parker, there was no saw mill available. A stickler for detail, Lewis Sanders had his men age the cut flooring in the farm pond for two years to season it prior to using the planks.

The main floor of Grass Hills consists of two large front rooms about 20-feet square connected by a 15-foot wide main corridor. At the far end of the hall a dining

room had a large kitchen adjacent to the right. Two small bedrooms lay to the left. Another three bedrooms, used for guests, lay behind the right chimney corner, and a narrow, winding staircase led around the chimney to an upstairs bedroom. A large veranda fronted the hall and a small porch lay at the back with a door into the dining room. Large wood fireplaces were in the two front rooms.

All of the rooms were plastered except for Mr. Sanders' own room on the left which had exposed rafters and chinked logs. There are traces of early Georgian moldings, and some of the staircases were typical of early log construction. In the hall and right (east) large room, Greek Revival elements were added in the 1830s or 1840s at a time when Lewis Sanders hosted many political events at Grass Hills.

A basement included a wine cellar and, when two families occupied the house, Mr. Sander's kitchen was located there as well. Upstairs were two large rooms with a wide hall between them, each with a separate stairway.

Grass Hills consisted of the rambling main house, barns and several outbuildings, a large pond, a 25-acre orchard, a race track just beyond the front yard fence, and fields of experimental grasses, grains, hemp, and other crops. In addition to thoroughbred racing horses, Lewis imported strains of Merino sheep and short horn cattle. He became an expert and judge of Kentucky's hemp and wool production. His longtime friendship with the Dufour family of Switzerland County, Indiana, gave him an interest in vineyards and wine production as well.

Grass Hills was awarded Kentucky State Historical Marker 1184 and on August 22, 1975 was listed on the National Register of Historical Places. Approximately ninety-

one acres from the Grass Hills estate was taken when I-71 was constructed through Carroll County.

Sources: Mrs. Rex L. Diuguid, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form," 1971; Anna V. Parker, The Sanders Family of Grass Hillss, Madison, Indiana: The Coleman Publishers, 1966; Kentucky Heritage Commission, "Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky" 1971 and 1981; Kentucky Historical Society, *Grass Hills*, State Historical Marker 1184.

