

Nannie Bynum Clay Residence
265 East Main Street (NW cor. Main and Clay Sts.)
Rogersville
Hawkins County
Tennessee

HABS No. TN-220

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C.

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

NANNIE BYNUM CLAY RESIDENCE

HABS No. TN-220

- Location: 265 East Main Street, beginning at the northwest corner of Main and Clay Streets, Rogersville, Hawkins County, Tennessee.
- Present Owner: Dr. William Kenner, 3714 Richland Avenue, Nashville, Tennessee.
- Present Use: Vacant.
- Significance: The residence of Mrs. Nannie Bynum Clay is an excellent example of early Italianate or "bracketed" style architecture in Tennessee. The house is noted for its spiral staircase, plaster ceiling moldings, marble and wood mantels, jib windows, spacious rooms, and its elaborate built-in bookcases and cabinets. The house is similar to many of those illustrated in A.J. Downing's Architecture of Country Houses of 1850.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: c. 1855
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners:
 - a. Description of property: a parcel of land containing 6.6 acres and measuring 800 x 360.5 feet, north of Main Street, and beginning at the northwest corner of Main and Clay Streets and running north with Main 360.5 feet, and also a 40 foot square around the spring at the foot of the knob, and the right of way for a pipeline from said spring to the house located on the property, in the town of Rogersville, Hawkins County, Tennessee.
 - b. The following is a complete chain of title (all Hawkins County Deed Books):

Grant Book 2, Grant #234
State of North Carolina to Thomas Amis. 100 acres in Sullivan County, lying on both sides of Big Creek "including where Thomas Amis now lives" for 50 shillings for every 100 acres. Signed at New Bern, North Carolina, Nov. 10, "in the 9th year of our independence", 1784.

Grant Book 1, p.38: Grant #22.

State of North Carolina to Thomas Amis. 200 acres in Hawkins County lying on the North side of the Holston. 50 shillings per hundred. Dated 3/14/1789.

Grant Book 1, p.39: Grant #463.

State of North Carolina to Thomas Amis. 150 acres in Sullivan County on the north side of the Holston. Dated 3/14/1789.

Grant Book 1, p. 162 Grant #671:

State of North Carolina to Thomas Amis. 100 acres in the Eastern District on the north side of the Holston. Dated 1/19/1790.

Will Book 1, p.1

Will of Thomas Amis, dated Nov. 16, 1797.

"I give to my son Lincoln Amis the five lots in the town of Rogersville which I purchased of Daniel Hamblen. I also give him all my lands lying the west side of the main road and adjoining the town of Rogersville."

Book 15, p.200. 2/1835.

William Lyon, U.S. Marshall of East Tennessee to S.B. and W.B. Mitchell. A Fusi Facia was issued by the U.S. Circuit Court at Knoxville and judgment against Richard Mitchell (the holder of the property - no deed) on 10/15/1829. Property sold at Hawkins County Courthouse 1/13/1830 for \$1050 for 100 acres. Recorded 3/11/1835.

Book 18, p. 546. 3/27/1843.

Stockly D. and Wille B. Mitchell to John A. McKinney. 81 1/2 acres for \$1222.50. Recorded 5/22/1843.

Book 25, p.403. 1/12/1861.

Charles J. McKinney to John G. Bynum.

50 acres for \$10,000 "a certain tract of land whereon the said John G. Bynum now resides." Recorded 1/22/1861.

Will Book 3, p. 459.

Will of Nannie Bynum Clay, dated 12/9/1914 and filed 6/22/1916.

The residence was left to her son O.B. Bynum and the land and furnishings, farms, and stock were divided into five parts, one part to her husband Henry Clay and one to each of her four children. Will was amended 1/11/1915 giving Elsie Clay McDowell the large building lot on the east side of the home place consisting of 10-15 acres.

Book 74, p. 188 9/22/1930.

W.R. Alton, Clerk and Master, to W.K. Armstrong and F.H. Rogan.

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Bill filed 5/20/1927 by R.C. Coleman, Adm. vs. John Gray Bynum, et al to settle the estate of O.B. Bynum, deceased. Decree of 3/1928 commanded the sale of the property. 36 acres sold for \$15,500. Sale confirmed 9/1928.

Book 74, p.355 10/30/1930.

W.K. Armstrong to F.H. Rogan - Partition of Property. Armstrong received the land around the Mansion House being 800 x 360.5 feet or 6.6 acres. Rogan received all the rest of the land containing 30 acres. As Armstrong's property was more valuable he paid Rogan 3 notes of \$833.33 each. Also included in Armstrong's property was a "40 ft square around the spring near the foot of the knob...for the purpose of preserving and maintaining the said spring" as well as the right of way for the construction of the pipeline from the spring to Armstrong's land.

Book 74, p.561. 4/22/1931.

W.K. Armstrong et al - Repartition. (no alterations in previous deed)

Book 74, p.563. 4/22/1931.

W.K. Armstrong and wife to W.D. Kenner and wife, Mary Clay. for \$1000 plus notes.

Will of Mrs. W.D. Kenner to Dr. William Kenner
(Date not given).

4. Original plans and construction: This two-story, symmetrical, brick (Flemish bond all sides except for the ell which is running bond), "bracketed" residence has jib windows in the ell, solid cherry doors in the parlors, a curved door on the open well spiral stairway, elaborate egg-and-dart ceiling moldings and a ceiling medallion all in plaster, late neo-classical wood mantles and marble Italianate mantles with cartouches, tall built-in walnut bookcases and cabinets, and spacious rooms (all extant). The south veranda was removed in the 1930's and the front (east) veranda was removed in 1961. The north veranda was replaced with a two-story porch in the 1870's. Originally lead pipes carried water from the spring at the foot of the knob to the house which had running water and bathrooms before the Civil War. These pipes were supposedly dug up and used to make bullets during that war. The servants' addition with its stylized oculus window and high pitched roof dates stylistically from the 1870's, as does the smokehouse.
5. Alterations and additions: In the mid 1870's several additions and alterations were made. The rear servant's quarters were added, as were the smokehouse, the second story porch on the ell, and walnut interior doors in the ell with frosted glass. The front second story center window was converted to a door and a small balustrade was

added. The brick was painted, the interior stairway in the ell was removed. And two jib windows on the first floor north veranda were removed (but restored in 1962).

After Mrs. Mary Clay Kenner moved in 1931 the heating plant was converted and hot air ducts and grates were installed. Also, bathrooms were added in the living room and on the landing. In the 1930's the south veranda was removed. In 1952 the front veranda was removed and replaced by the present portico but using some of the details of the original. Also the carriage house was torn down and replaced by the present brick garage. In 1962 the second story of the ell and the servants' quarters were converted to an apartment. The walls were papered, the old bedroom was paneled and equipped as a kitchen, and the large linen closet was converted to a bathroom. Also, an asphalt roof replaced the old tin roof, the floor of the side porch was concreted, and the first floor ell porch windows were restored to the original jib.

- B. Historical Context: John A. McKinney, an owner of the property, has been described as "one of the ablest of the early members of the Rogersville bar." He began his practice in 1807. He was appointed U.S. District Attorney by President John Quincy Adams, and represented the county at the Tennessee Constitutional Convention of 1834. He died in 1845. The house was the property of his son, Charles J. McKinney, when it was bought by the Bynums.

John G. Bynum raised one of the first Confederate companies in Rogersville. He was murdered by a disgruntled private. After a drill session, Bynum was shot in the back in front of the present Courthouse.

As the Bynums had been Confederate activists their property was confiscated and the household furniture was actually sold by the court. It was only through family connections within the staff of President Lincoln that they were able to recover the house after the war. (A special dispensation for this matter was signed by Abraham Lincoln; it is probably filed in the National Archives, Washington, D.C.).

After her husband's death Mrs. Bynum married Henry Clay, relative of the nationally known statesman from Kentucky. Household and personal articles as well as the papers of the Senator are in the family.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The two-story residence has a H-shaped plan, which includes the ell. The walls are of brick bearing masonry construction. Flemish bond is employed on the main block, and running bond on the ell. The front (east) facade is three bays wide and five bays deep. The brick foundations have a molded brick water table. The main gable roof has a sawn frame truss, and its ridge is parallel

to the front facade. The three brick chimneys have additional layers of brick that give them a castle-like appearance (see photo TN-220-5). The veranda on the north side of the house has interesting millwork of the 19th century (see photo TN-220-8).

See Original plans and construction, Historical Information (Part I), for description of the interior elements that are still intact.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views: Photograph c. 1949. Notice the original front veranda. (Source not noted).

B. Interviews:

Interview with Mrs. Kenneth Kenner, 267 Main St, Rogersville -daughter -in-law of Mrs. W.D. Kenner, and mother of the present owner.

Interview with Mrs. R.C. Lewis, 400 Circle Drive, Rogersville. - local historian.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Hawkins County Deed Books, Registry's Office, Rogersville.

Hawkins County Will Books County Court Clerk's Office, Rogersville.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Goodspeed's History of Tennessee. Hawkins County. p.876.

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Historic American Buildings Survey
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Historic American Buildings Survey
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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This 1974 project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the Tennessee Historical Commission and the East Tennessee Historical Society. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief

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of HABS, the paper was written by Joseph L. Herndon, HABS Historian for the Tennessee project.

The paper was edited in the Winter of 1986 by Susan McCown, HABS Architectural Historian in the Washington, D.C. office, for transmittal to the Library of Congress. The photos of the house were taken in February 1983 by Jack E. Boucher, HABS Staff Photographer.