

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**



**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Cate, Elijah, House  
and/or common Cate House

**2. Location**

street & number Route 1 N/A not for publication  
city, town Niota <sup>vic</sup> X vicinity of congressional district Second  
state Tennessee code 047 county McMinn code 107

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A <input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Emily Scott Cate  
street & number Route 1  
city, town Niota X vicinity of state Tennessee 37826

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. McMinn County Courthouse  
street & number Public Square  
city, town Athens state Tennessee 37303

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
date N/A N/A  federal  state  county  local  
depository for survey records N/A  
city, town N/A state N/A

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The ca. 1823 Elijah Cate House is a two story brick Federal style building, with a one and a half story rear ell, located on the rural Big Springs Farm near Niota, Tennessee. Resting on a slight slope, surrounded by rolling farmland and wooded areas, the house and 1.5 acres are enclosed by a wire fence. A long gravel driveway leads from the front fence southeasterly approximately 1200 feet to U.S. Highway 11, crossing the east-west running Mouse Creek. Built in an L shape with stepped, flush chimney gable ends and a five bay facade featuring a central single-leaf door and 12/12 light windows, the house remains practically unaltered in good condition.

The Cate House is constructed of bricks laid in the common bond pattern and rests on a brick and stone foundation; its roof, with stepped gable ends, is covered with asphalt shingles. The symmetrical five bay facade, facing southeast, has a central recessed, wide paneled wood door with a rectangular four-light transom. Cable molding decorates the paneled door reveal. Windows flanking the door and the five second story windows are 12/12 light double hung sash with stone sills. Heavy stone lintels with bull's eye corner blocks cap the first story windows and door. A molded brick cornice extends across the facade below the roof eaves. Centered on the first story of the facade is a three bay raised Victorian period porch with hip roof, turned posts, scroll-motif brackets, cut-out patterned sawn balustrade, and brick foundation supporting a wood floor.

The stepped gable northeast side elevation features two 12/12 light windows with stone sills on the first story. Two original second story windows were not replaced when this wall was somewhat rebuilt following tornado damage in 1953. On the opposite side or stepped gable southwest elevation of the two story front section of the house, are two 12/12 light windows with stone sills and bull's eye corner block stone lintels on each story. A small porch with gable roof, below the left first story window, serves as an entrance to the cellar beneath the house.

The rear ell is one and a half stories with a central brick chimney and a plain, stepped gable end wall. On the southwest side of the ell is a one story 1977 brick addition (housing bath and laundry) which conceals original doors and windows. Only one 6/9 light window at the far left can be seen. The four second story windows, not concealed by the addition, are short and have six lights. A molded brick cornice decorates this side of the ell.

An L-shaped screened verandah with pierced brick foundation is found on the northeast side of the ell. Neglect and water damage during the house's ten years of vacancy necessitated replacement of the original verandah, which was built in the same configuration, in 1977. The verandah covers two rear 12/12 light windows and a central wide paneled door of the front two story section of the Cate House; it covers one paneled door, small French doors and two 6/9 light windows of the ell. A 12/12 light second story window and molded brick cornice are also found on the rear elevation of the front section of the building.

The interior plan is unaltered and consists of a central hall, with staircase, dividing two rooms on each story of the front section; the ell has a dining room, with small enclosed staircase, and end kitchen over which are two bedrooms. The original interior

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details, extremely fine, remain unchanged and include the mantles, wainscoting, doors, molding around doors and windows, staircases, floors, dining room cabinets and the unusual front (southwest) parlor ceiling with board and batten-type treatment.

A deteriorated original half-dovetailed log slave cabin, located northeast of the house, is rectangular in shape with a metal gable roof. A plain vertical board door is centered on the facade, which faces southwest. To its southeast side is a small weather-boarded storage building with a metal gable roof and central board door on the southwest elevation.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1823-1826

Builder/Architect Samuel Cleage

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Elijah Cate House, nominated under National Register criteria C, is significant as an outstanding example of the Federal style of architecture in Tennessee and as an example of the work of Samuel Cleage, one of East Tennessee's finest master builders. Built between 1823 and 1826, the Cate House exhibits details typical of Cleage's work; for example, it has a true one-and-a-half story brick ell, a molded brick cornice across the front and rear elevations, and stepped gables on the main house and the rear ell. Additional importance stems from the close proximity of the Cate House to the house Cleage built for his own family ca. 1826 (listed on the National Register, May 12, 1975). Located less than one mile apart in Mouse Creek Valley, the houses exemplify two diverse approaches to the Federal style. Furthermore, historical significance derives from the continued ownership of the house by the Cate family since its construction.

Elijah and Nellie Davis Cate moved to McMinn County in 1823 and settled on 640 acres of farmland along Little Mouse Creek. Elijah, a farmer and democrat, served as Justice of the Peace for eighteen years. He was instrumental in establishing a store in Niota prior to 1850 and promoting the development of the East Tennessee, Virginia and Georgia Railroad. In 1873 John Cate, Elijah and Nellie Cate's ninth child, acquired total ownership of the property. John had served with Company F, Thirty-first Tennessee Regiment, Confederate Army and was in the Battle of Vicksburg. Like his father, John was a farmer, democrat and Justice of the Peace. The house is now owned by Emily Scott Cate, great-great-granddaughter of Elijah and Nellie Cate.

The Elijah Cate House is a Federal style two-story brick house with a brick one-and-a-half story rear ell, a five bay facade with a central entrance and interior end chimneys. Brick is laid in common bond. Alterations to the structure, both interior and exterior, have been minimal. A porch covering the three central bays was added in the Victorian era. The rear porch along the interior of the ell was rebuilt in 1977 and the brick end walls were repaired and partially rebuilt in 1953 after damage from a tornado. Interior details such as staircases, mantels, wainscoting, and flooring are original.

Samuel Cleage, master builder and brickmason, was born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania in 1781 and moved to Botetout County, Virginia about 1800. After the death of his parents in 1819 Cleage moved to McMinn County, Tennessee where he settled. It is believed that Cleage financed his move by building houses along the trail through Jonesboro and Greeneville, Tennessee. His own house is "a peculiar Philadelphia type of townhouse in an unadorned Federal style situated on a hilltop in Mouse Creek Valley."<sup>1</sup> Cleage's three-bay wide house with offset front entrance has been vacant for several years and has been badly vandalized. It should be noted that Samuel Cleage retired to farming

<sup>1</sup> Herndon, Joseph L. "Architects in Tennessee until 1930: A Dictionary." Master's thesis, Columbia University, 1975.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Allen, Penelope Johnson. "Leaves From The Family Tree: Crutchfield and Cleage Built Many Historic Buildings." The Chattanooga Times, January 21, 1934.  
 Allen, Penelope Johnson. "Leaves From The Family Tree: Cate Family of McMinn County." The Chattanooga Times, November 4, 1934.

# 10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property 1.5  
 Quadrangle name Niota, Tennessee

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

1	6	7	2	1	0	0	0
Zone	Easting			Northing			

  
 C 

Zone	Easting			Northing			

  
 E 

Zone	Easting			Northing			

  
 G 

Zone	Easting			Northing			

B 

Zone	Easting			Northing			

  
 D 

Zone	Easting			Northing			

  
 F 

Zone	Easting			Northing			

  
 H 

Zone	Easting			Northing			

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The boundaries of the Elijah Cate House nomination are outlined in red on the accompanying survey map, drawn at a scale of 100 feet to the inch, to include the house, slave cabin and 1.5 acres enclosed by a wire fence.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Cynthia Cole, Coordinator of Field Services  
Shain T. Dennison, Architectural Historian  
 organization Tennessee Historical Commission date January 28, 1981  
 street & number 4721 Trousdale Drive telephone 615-741-2371  
 city or town Nashville state Tennessee 37219

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:  
 national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature Herbert E. Byers  
 title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission date 2/12/82

**For HCRS use only**  
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register Entered in the National Register date 3/25/82  
 Keeper of the National Register Delores Byers  
 Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chief of Registration

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after his own house was built, but his influence on architecture in southeast Tennessee was carried on through the work of his sons and grandsons, Thomas A. Cleage and David and Alexander Crutchfield.

The Elijah Cate House has been partially restored by the current owner, Emily Cate, and her cousin, Dr. John Cate, IV. A new roof was installed in 1977 and the rear porch rebuilt following the outline of an earlier porch. Much of the work which remains to be done is on the interior of the second floor.

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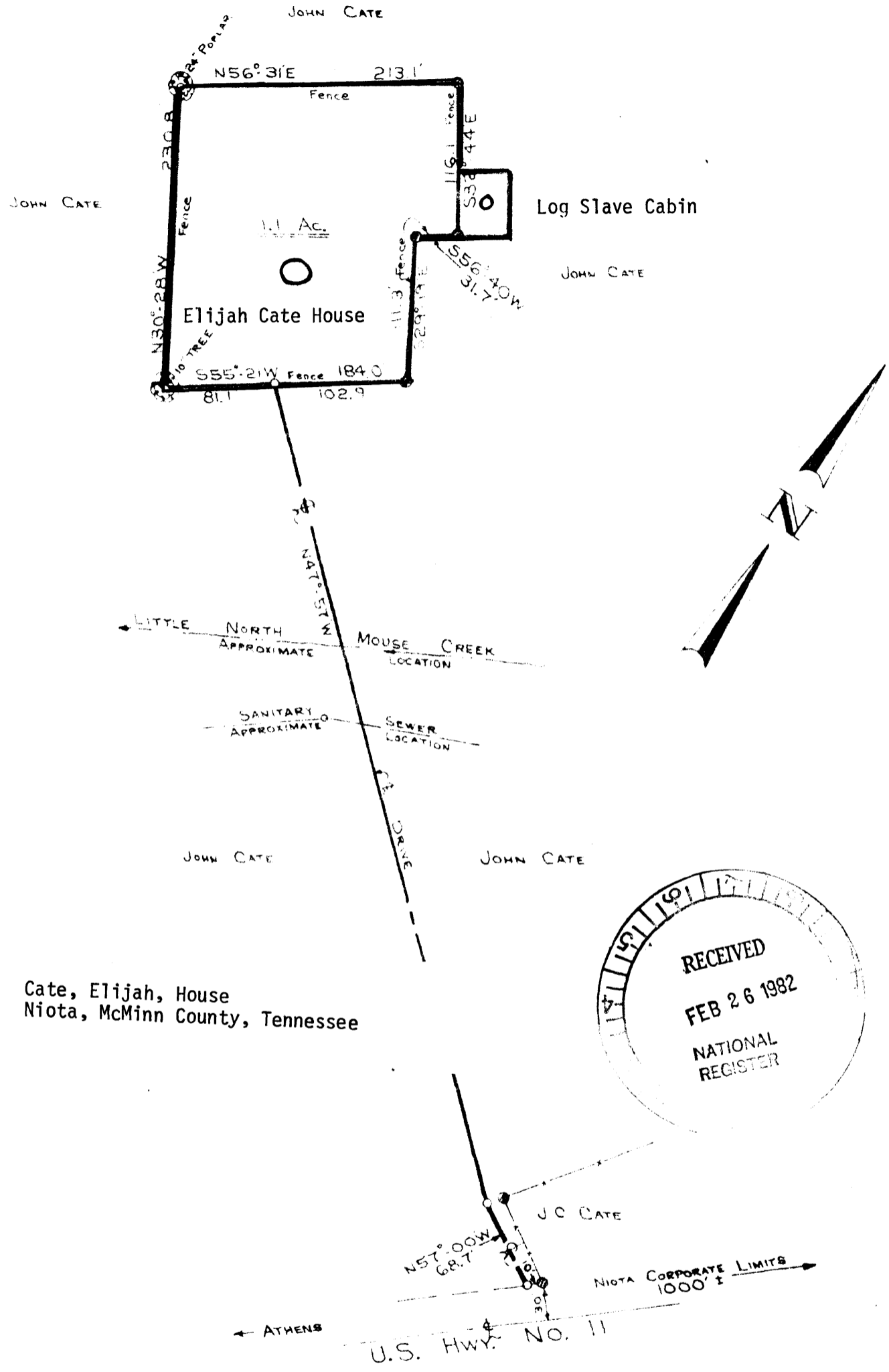
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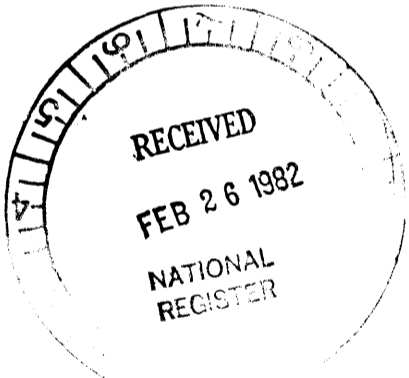
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Goodspeed Publishing Company. A History of East Tennessee. Nashville: Goodspeed, 1887; Rpt. Nashville: Elder, 1972.

Herndon, Joseph L. "Architects in Tennessee until 1930: A Dictionary." Master's thesis, Columbia University, 1975.



Cate, Elijah, House  
Niota, McMinn County, Tennessee



○ - FENCE POST

We made a survey of  
the property hereon shown

Troy R. Slack, R.L.S., Tn No 680

PROPERTY OF  
**JOHN CATE**

---

LOT NO. \_\_\_\_\_, BLOCK NO. \_\_\_\_\_, SUBDIVISION \_\_\_\_\_  
 U.S. Hwy. No. 11, CITY OF \_\_\_\_\_  
 2ND CIVIL DISTRICT, McMINN COUNTY, TENNESSEE

SCALE 1" = 100, DATE: MARCH 19, 1979, Dwg. No. 79075

Morgan Watkins Engineering Co., Inc.  
 BOX 578  
 ATHENS, TENNESSEE 37012

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