

**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 Isbester, Caleb, House

and/or common The Dugger House

2. Location

street & number 551 Oak Street N/A not for publication

city, town Chattanooga N/A vicinity of congressional district Third

state Tennessee code 047 county Hamilton code 065

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name William Henry Chapin

street & number Rock City Gardens, 1400 Patten Road

city, town Lookout Mountain N/A vicinity of state Tennessee 37350

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Hamilton County Courthouse

street & number Fountain Square - Georgia Avenue

city, town Chattanooga state Tennessee 37403

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

Condition		Check one	Check one
<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 Caleb Isbester House is a two and one-half story brick Queen Anne structure with slight Chateausque influences. The home occupies a small lot on the northwest corner of Oak and Douglas Streets.

The southern elevation faces Oak Street and serves as the structure's major facade. The foundation is constructed of locally quarried rusticated limestone and contains its original decorative iron ventilator coverings. The facade is dominated by a two-story, wrap-around porch, which extends around to the structure's eastern elevation creating a small vestibule connecting to the main body of the house. This original porch, which is in great need of repainting, features short, fluted cast iron columns with foliated capitals set on brick railing on its first floor and turned wooden posts with wood balustrade on its upper level.

The west bay of the Oak Street facade is constructed as a brick mock-turret stretching through the second story. Elaborately designed original stained-glass accentuates the first floor windows and interestingly cut limestone lintels with low relief sculpture frame the windows on both floors. This entire side of the structure is capped with a limestone cross gable with low relief sculpture, accentuated with a decorative caulicoli, all reminiscent of the Chateausque style. The eastern elevation features a brick mock-turret similar to the Oak Street facade. It too features elaborate stained glass decoration and a fan light window in the upper story. Windows are generally one over one double hung sash, sometimes occurring in pairs or grouped in threes.

The structure features a steeply pitched hip roof with original fish-scale shingles and decorative cooper ridge flashings. The corner of the porch is capped with a turrett typical of the Queen Anne period; it is also covered in fish-scale shingles and retains its original torch-like finial. Three very tall brick chimneys project above the structure's roof. One, an interior chimney, is found on the eastern elevation and is distinguished by a large brick cap and brick fluting.

The small yard that surrounds the home on the south and east appears to be somewhat overgrown today. The yard is now separated from the street by a very early fence with a concrete base and decorative iron railings. Few of these fences, which were quite popular in the local area, now survive.

A two story rear section of the home, now covered in asphalt shingles, is not original and appears to be an addition of perhaps the 1920s.

The interior of the Isbester House is also quite significant as great amounts of the original detailed wood-work still remain. The home contains several fireplaces that still retain their original mantels. The mantels feature egg and dart molding and other fine crafted details. Each fireplace still retains its original decorative iron cover and decorative tile surrounds. This tile exhibits exquisite detailing, with a different pattern featured on each fireplace. Many of the original doors still remain in the house and many of these retain the original molding, hinges, and door knobs. One of the most impressive interior features is the original stair rail, which remains in a very good state of preservation.

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The Isbester House was once part of a section of fine residential structures which bordered both sides of Oak Street near its intersection with Douglas Street. Today, modern urban development has destroyed much of the architectural context in which the home originally existed. The structure itself, however, appears much as it did at the time of its construction in 1896. It typifies the Queen Anne style as it was represented in Chattanooga in the late 1880s and with its Chateausque influences is strikingly similar to the Henry Bond House, also constructed in 1896, a few blocks away on McCallie Avenue.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1896 Builder/Architect Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Criteria B,C

The developments surrounding the construction and later occupancy of the Caleb Isbester House reflect the growth and urban development of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Chattanooga. By the early 1880s the area around the intersection of Oak and Douglas Streets had become a residential area for some of Chattanooga's more successful merchants and industrialists.¹ This section of the city was dominated by the large, two-story frame homes of the Queen Anne period.² In 1896, however, a change in Chattanooga's urban fabric was taking place and many of these older frame structures were being replaced with more substantial brick dwellings.³ It was in that year that Caleb Isbester constructed his "elaborate"⁴ new brick home on the northwest corner of Oak and Douglas Streets.⁵ The home is reported to have had a slate roof and a furnace to provide efficient central heating.⁶

Caleb Isbester was one of Chattanooga's leading industrialists and the development of his life reflects the industrial development not only of Chattanooga but of much of late nineteenth century America.⁷ Isbester was born in Glasgow, Scotland and immigrated to the United States with his family during his youth.⁸ The Isbester family settled in Pennsylvania and Caleb eventually followed a career in the foundry business. In 1868 he located in Chattanooga and later joined David Giles in the formation of the Chattanooga Foundry and Pipe Works.⁹ This company, which became one of Chattanooga's largest foundries, was organized in 1877 and chartered in 1882.¹⁰ By 1895 the foundry had a capacity to produce 250 tons of iron soil pipe a day.¹¹ Isbester was considered a prominent man in his field and is reported to have patented several devices which increased efficiency and production capacity in the process used to manufacture iron soil pipe.¹²

Caleb Isbester died two years after completing his new home, and it became associated with the life of another local figure who played an important role in the development of Chattanooga during the early part of the twentieth century. After the death of Caleb Isbester, his home was occupied by his widow Virginia and his daughter Ginny. In 1900, however, Ginny married William Riley Crabtree and the new couple occupied the Isbester House.¹³ Crabtree was born in Franklin County, Tennessee, and educated at Trenton, Georgia. Crabtree made his livelihood from investments and real estate transactions. He specialized in the purchase and sale of farm lands and in fact maintained a large farm with a country home even after his marriage to Ginny Isbester.¹⁴ Besides engaging in real estate and investments, Crabtree also published a weekly agricultural paper under such names as Crabtree's Saturday Press and Crabtree's Home Journal.¹⁵ Crabtree became a popular and well-known local businessman and in October of 1907 was elected Mayor of Chattanooga.¹⁶

Crabtree served as Mayor from 1907–1909, a significant period of urban development in Chattanooga. When he took office Crabtree discovered that the financial records of the city were in a serious state of disarray. This situation was caused by the practice of allowing bills to accumulate for several months before the city attempted to pay them.¹⁷

9. Major Bibliographical References

UTM NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

See accompanying bibliography

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 1/4 acre

Quadrangle name Chattanooga

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	6	6	5	4	6	9	0	3	8	7	9	4	9	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing						

C

Zone			Easting				Northing						

D

Zone			Easting				Northing						

E

Zone			Easting				Northing						

F

Zone			Easting				Northing						

G

Zone			Easting				Northing						

H

Zone			Easting				Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

The Isbester House occupies the lot at the northwest corner of Oak and Douglas Streets. The lot measures 70 ft. to the west along Oak Street and 100 ft. along Douglas Street to the north, and conforms to the dimensions of the lot on which the house is situated.

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 Ray Manieri, Executive Director

organization Landmarks Chattanooga date November 5, 1980

street & number P.O. Box 614 telephone (615) 266-5009

city or town Chattanooga state Tennessee

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 L. Angier

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission date 2/10/82

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u>Wayne A. Decker</u>	date <u>3/25/1982</u>
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest: <u>Wayne A. Decker</u>	date <u>3/25/82</u>
Chief of Registration	

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Perhaps because of his business background, Mayor Crabtree was vitally concerned with fiscal responsibility. In order to put the city on a sound financial footing again, he instituted a new system of bookkeeping in which he required the city to pay all accounts charged against its treasury as soon after the first of each month as was possible.¹⁸ Crabtree's plan for improving the city's financial situation was so successful that Chattanooga's floating debt had been reduced by \$45,000 at the time Crabtree left office.¹⁹

Chattanooga's city government also embarked upon a massive program of public works during Crabtree's term as Mayor. During this period of time the present City Hall was constructed, several miles of sewers were installed and a large number of Chattanooga's streets were paved for the first time.²⁰ The citizens of Chattanooga also voted to sell \$900,000 in municipal bonds to construct a new city-owned water works. Mayor Crabtree championed this project and fought the efforts of a private water company, which served the city, to sabotage the project.²¹ It was also during Crabtree's term as Mayor that the city commission form of local government, which Chattanooga adopted a few years later, was first debated.²²

By 1911 W. R. Crabtree had vacated the Isbester House on Oak Street and the home was occupied by a succession of people who were significant in the commercial development of early twentieth century Chattanooga. Between 1911 and 1912 the house was occupied by J. F. Tarwater and N. C. Blanchard, both connected with the operation of the James Supply and Hardware Company.²³ In 1913, however, the Isbester House was occupied by J. R. Pitner.²⁴ Pitner came to Chattanooga from Cohutta, Georgia and operated a cigar and tobacco store with his brother. Eventually, Pitner joined B. C. Peebles in the establishment of the Peebles-Pitner Company, a wholesale supplier of cigars and tobacco products.²⁵ Pitner occupied the Isbester House until 1922 at which time it became the home of Dr. O. B. Wunschow.²⁶

Dr. Wunschow was one of Chattanooga's leading physicians during the early part of the twentieth century. He was also an important local businessman and served as President and General Manager of the National Manufacturing Company. This company produced perfumes, toiletries and drugs of various kinds.²⁷ Evidence suggests that Dr. Wunschow owned, and at times, occupied the Isbester House with his widowed sister-in-law during the period 1922-1934.²⁸

In the mid-1930s the ownership of the Isbester House passed from Dr. Wunschow to the University of Chattanooga. During the late 1930s and early 1940s the structure was used by the university as a boys' dormitory. It was known as Varsity Hall during this period and evidence suggests that it may have housed members of the university's athletic teams.²⁹

By the late 1940s the Isbester House was occupied by R. J. Dugger.³⁰ Dugger served for many years as a local employee of the U.S. Postal Service and the house has remained in the ownership of Mrs. Dugger until recently purchased by the present owners.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Information from Chattanooga City Directories show that Isbester and other successful businessmen were living in this area as early as 1883.
2. Atlas of the City of Chattanooga, 1889.
3. Several of Chattanooga's more successful businessmen such as Caleb Isbester, constructed new brick homes around the city in 1896. This trend toward the construction of larger more substantial, and more expensive residences may indicate a return of economic prosperity following the disastrous financial depression of the mid-1890s.
4. Wilson, John, The Chattanooga Story, Chattanooga: The News-Free Press, 1980, p. 260.
5. Comparison of information from the 1889 Atlas of the City of Chattanooga, the 1901 Sanborn Map, and Chattanooga City Directories, 1889-1898.
6. Wilson, The Chattanooga Story, p. 260.
7. It was during the period of the late 1880s and 1890s that Chattanooga, because of its access to river and rail traffic, became a regional center for the manufacture of iron and steel. The number of foundries increased from 22 in 1889 (1889 Manual, Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce) to 65 in 1905 (Chattanooga Up-To-Date, 1908).
8. Wilson, The Chattanooga Story, P. 186.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. The Chattanooga Times, September 18, 1895, p. 13.
12. Ibid.
13. Wilson, The Chattanooga Story, p. 329.
14. The Chattanooga City Directory, 1912. According to John Wilson's The Chattanooga Story, pp. 365, 410, the Crabtree farm, Belvoir, was developed as suburban community of the same name in 1929. The Crabtree country home which stood at the corner of present-day Belvoir Avenue and Brainerd Road was demolished by the Grace Episcopal Church in the 1950s to provide space for the church's parking lot.
15. Chattanooga City Directory, 1906 and 1907.

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16. The Chattanooga Times, October 9, 1907, p. 7.
17. Ibid. October 19, 1905, p. 5.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Minutes of the Board of Aldermen, Chattanooga, TN, October 21, 1907 - October 18, 1909.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Chattanooga City Directory, 1911, 1912.
24. Ibid., 1913.
25. Wilson, The Chattanooga Story, p. 272.
26. Chattanooga City Directory, 1921.
27. Ibid.
28. Comparison of information from Chattanooga City Directories 1922-1934.
29. Chattanooga City Directories, 1936-1944.
30. Ibid., 1948.

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BIBLIOGRAPHYPrimary Sources

Maps:

- 1889 Atlas of the City of Chattanooga, TN
- 1901 Sanborn Map, Chattanooga, TN
- 1904 Real Estate Plat Book, Chattanooga, TN
- 1914 Real Estate Plat Book, Chattanooga, TN
- 1928 Real Estate Plat Book, Chattanooga, TN

Contemporary Pamphlets:

- Manual, the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, Chattanooga, 1889.
- Chattanooga Up-To-Date, 1908, Chattanooga, 1908.

Public Records:

- Hamilton County Deed Books, 1896-30.
- Minutes of the Board of Aldermen, Chattanooga, TN, October 21, 1907-October 18, 1926.

City Directories:

- Directory of the City of Chattanooga, TN, 1880-1950.

Newspapers:

- The Chattanooga Times, September 18, 1895, p. 13.
- May 9, 1900, pp. 16-17.
- October 9, 1907, p. 7.
- October 19, 1909, pp. 5, 10.

Secondary Sources

- The Chattanooga Story, John Wilson, Chattanooga:
The News-Free Press, 1980.