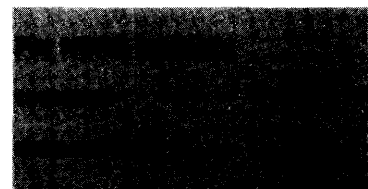


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 McCrary House
and/or common

2. Location

.6 m. east of Riverton Road on a graveled road
street & number 1.7 m. north of U.S. 64 (SE1/4 S.23T2,R1E) NA not for publication
city, town Huntsville vicinity of congressional district 5th
state Alabama code 01 county Madison code 089

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input checked="" 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	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input 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
	NA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Miss Alice McCrary Thomas
street & number 356 McVilhehn
city, town Huntsville vicinity of state Alabama

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Probate Office, Madison County Courthouse
street & number Court Square
city, town Huntsville state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1970-present federal state county local
depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission
city, town Montgomery state Alabama

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input 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 seat of a 500-acre farm, the Thomas McCrary house is an L-shaped, gable-roofed structure of brick and frame construction. It is one story high, except for the raised ell at the southeast rear.

The asymmetrical facade, 65 feet long, is composed of an advanced one-bay end-pavilion which adjoins a three-bay setback partially screened by a balustraded wooden porch. The end pavilion is two rooms deep, the setback one. In the latter, a bisecting hall is flanked on the west by the parlor, with a single bedchamber beyond--accessible only from the back porch. A louvered gallery runs the length of the rear of the house, forming an open passage between the main block and the ell. The west end of the gallery terminates in a small shedroom, now containing a modern bath. A porch along the east side of the house, slightly modified since its construction around 1900, covers the entrance to the open hall between the ell and the main portion of the house. Folding wooden louvers screen the entrance to the passage.

Windows in the main house are segmentally arched, with splayed reveals and six-over-six sashing. Back-to-back fireplaces serve each pair of rooms in the front part of the house. Interior woodwork here represents at least three distinct periods. Heavily molded, transomed doors at each end of the hall are doubtless contemporary with the 1870s rebuilding of the house. Doors between the hall and the east bedrooms, however, as well as those leading into the west bedchamber and the adjacent shedroom, are low and wide, with the usual six-panel "Christian" configuration of the Federal period. Of the same vintage are the paneled closet doors in two of the bedrooms, as are some of the baseboards. Ceilings in the post-bellum section of the house are 8 feet 3 inches high.

The oldest part of the dwelling, the circa 1840 ell, measures approximately 19 by 22 feet, and contains a single chamber above a partially sunken basement dining room. From the open passage between the house and the ell, a short flight of railed wooden steps leads to the upper room. An adjacent run of steps descends to the dining room. Here, the walls have been covered with sheetrock, the dado removed, and the original floor replaced by one of the linoleum-covered concrete. Windows in the ell are six-over-six above, six-over-three below. Beside the massive chimney breaking from the rear wall of the ell, a flight of rough-hewn granite steps leads from the upper room down into the modern wing. Formerly, they dropped into the open passage separating the ell from the kitchen which was razed for the new construction.

Dependencies include (1) a log smokehouse, possibly dating from the early 19th century and now covered with siding; (2) a "shop," which abuts the smokehouse and may be nearly as old; (3) a frame commissary that once served tenant families on the place; (4) a frame carriage house; (5) a large 19th-century "crib" or barn; and (6) a 20th-century gambrel-roofed barn immediately west of the crib. Until 1980, a wellhouse of undetermined date stood just south of the keeping-room wing.

Located several miles away from major thoroughfares, in an area still devoted principally to agriculture, the entire setting preserves an unspoiled rural flavor.

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 checked="" 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/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
	<input type="checkbox"/> invention			

Specific dates ca. 1815-1875 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The McCrary house is one of the earliest expressions of Victorian domestic design to be found in rural Tennessee Valley architecture. The house mirrors the demise of colloquial forms during the post-Civil War period, as they were supplanted by forms adhering more closely to national architectural trends. At the same time, certain features such as the semidetached dining wing reflect the tenacity of domestic arrangements traditional to the rural South. With satellite structures that include a log smokehouse, a commissary, a carriage house, and crib, the McCrary house comprises what is, for the area, an unusually intact 19th-century farm complex.

The land surrounding the house has been cultivated by the same family since a decade before Alabama entered the Union: first as a cotton plantation with slave--then tenant--labor; today, as a diversified and mechanized farm. Thus the house and its setting symbolize, on the one hand, a continuity of use stretching back to the earliest days of settlement; and on the other, the metamorphosis itself which has occurred in Alabama agriculture over a century and a half.

* * * * *

On November 2, 1809, Thomas McCrary purchased from the Federal government some 480 acres of land in what was then Madison County, Mississippi Territory. This tract encompassed the site of the present house. Born at Charleston, S. C. in 1789, McCrary was one of the first settlers in the northeastern part of the county. His land lay on the west side of the Flint River, a tributary of the Tennessee, in a promising cotton-growing district. In 1812, McCrary married Betsy Wright, the daughter of a neighboring landowner, Daniel Wright. She died but nine years later, whereupon McCrary married her cousin, Nancy Wright, on November 23, 1823. Over the next four decades, McCrary expanded his landholdings, and to farming he added other enterprises that eventually included two tanyards and significant mercantile interests. The 1859 Huntsville city directory lists McCrary as a partner in the firm of McCrary, Patterson, and Sprague--grocers, ropemakers, and cotton-goods manufacturer. During the same period, from 1856 to 1863, he served as one of the county commissioners for roads and revenue.

Exactly when McCrary built the first permanent residence on his Flint River place is unclear. Federal-period woodwork reused in the present house when its predecessor was demolished would seem to indicate a date no later than the 1820s. This includes low, wide Christian doors, narrow beaded baseboards, and simply molded architraves. Whatever its date of construction, McCrary's early house was a two-story brick structure with a central hall. There was a cellar beneath, while the kitchen was located in a separate building to the rear. Tradition asserts that family servants were quartered in several nearby brick cottages. Some years after completing the main block of the house, Thomas McCrary added a raised ell at the southeast rear. Stylistic evidence suggests that this occurred about 1840.

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED
UTM NOT VERIFIED

9. Major Bibliographical References

Alabama Historical Commission. File folder on the Thomas McCrary House (including field notes and photographs).
Jones, Virgil Carrington (Pat). True Tales of Old Madison County. Huntsville: Johnson Historical Publication, undated.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 4.68

Quadrangle name Maysville

Quadrangle scale 7 1/2 minute

UMT References

A

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

B

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Zone	Easting							Northing						

C

1	6	5	4	6	8	2	0	3	8	5	5	6	9	0
Zone	Easting							Northing						

D

1	6	5	4	6	8	2	0	3	8	5	5	8	3	0
Zone	Easting							Northing						

E

Zone	Easting							Northing						

F

Zone	Easting							Northing						

G

Zone	Easting							Northing						

H

Zone	Easting							Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

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

state NA code county N/A code

state N/A code county N/A code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robert S. Gamble, Architectural Historian

organization Alabama Historical Commission date December 1980

street & number 818 Johnston Street, S. E. telephone 832-6621

city or town Decatur state Alabama

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.

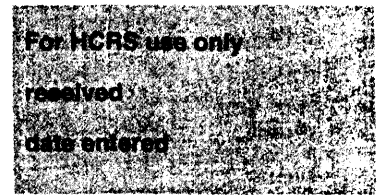
State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Therese Jones*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 4/11/82

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u><i>Melrose Byers</i></u>	Entered in the National Register date <u>6/1/82</u>
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

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

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



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

At Thomas McCrary's death in August of 1865, his eldest son, Williams Wright McCrary (1827-1891) inherited the house. It was at the behest of the younger McCrary's wife, Alice Ellett McCrary, that the ante-bellum residence was replaced by the dwelling which stands today. One source places the date of the reconstruction at 1873.¹ Of the earlier house, only the ell-addition was retained intact. The asymmetrical arrangement and milled trim of the new house bespoke the stylistic and technological changes that half a century had wrought in American domestic design. Yet in accordance with long-standing southern custom, the kitchen continued to be isolated by an open passage beyond the south end of the ell. The dual function of the louvered back gallery, as both an outdoor living area and a passage linking the west bedchamber to the rest of the house, likewise expressed the characteristic informality and warm-weather orientation of rural southern domestic architecture. Remarkably, this layout survives today, completely undisturbed. In fact, porches added to the front and to the east side of the house at the turn of the century constitute the only noteworthy changes which have occurred to the main block of the house since its completion.

It is probable that the frame commissary building east of the house also dates from the post-bellum era, when the tenant-system replaced slavery on the McCrary farm. Other dependencies may be earlier.

From Williams Wright McCrary, the house descended to three unmarried children: Thomas, Hattie, and Lucy McCrary. At the latter's death in 1970, the house and the 500-acre tract surrounding it were inherited by a niece, Miss Alice McCrary Thomas, daughter of John R. and Mamie (McCrary) Thomas, and a granddaughter of Williams Wright McCrary. The semi-detached frame kitchen behind the ell was subsequently replaced by a keeping room, designed by Huntsville architect Harvie Jones to be compatible with the contiguous pre-Civil War structure. Now the year-round home of Miss Thomas, the McCrary house is maintained in excellent condition.

¹ See Virgil Carrington (Pat) Jones, True Tales of Old Madison County (Huntsville: Johnson Historical Publication, undated), p. 19.

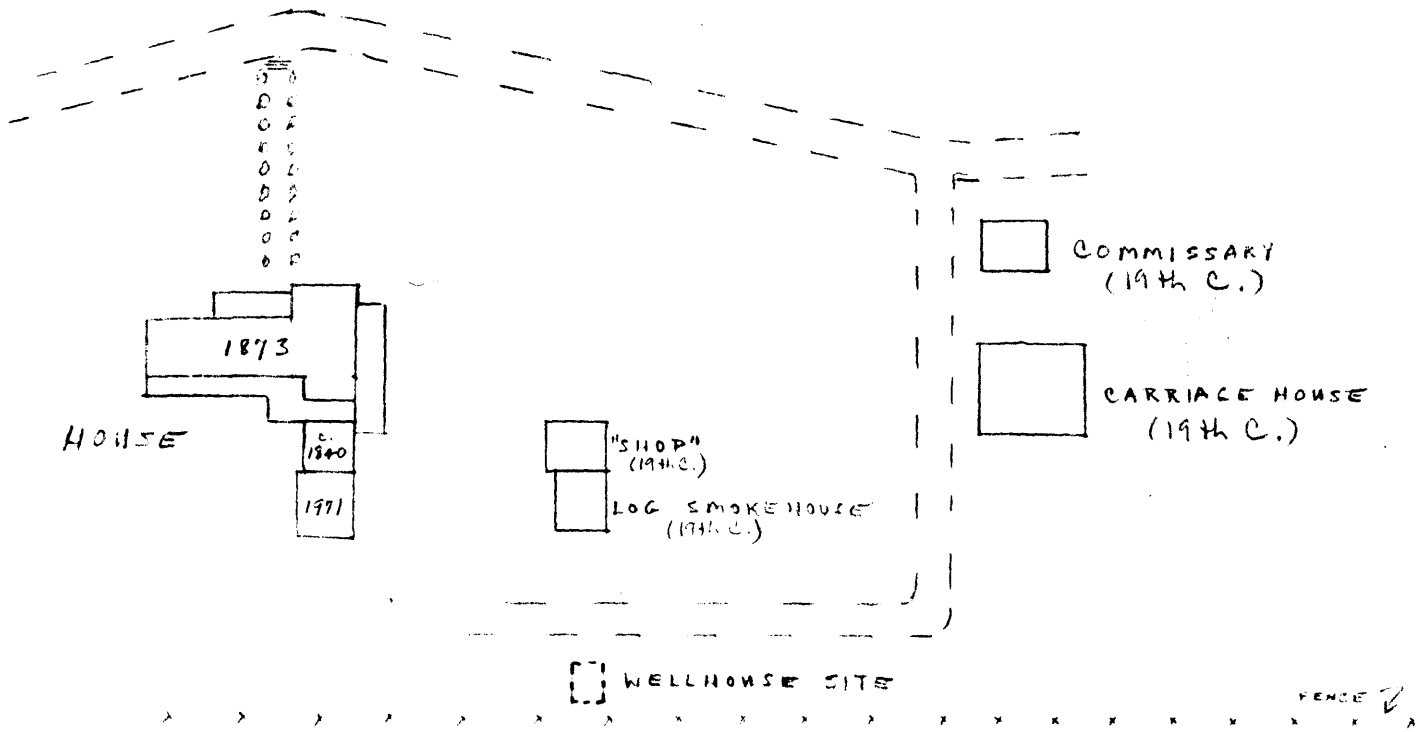
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

Beginning at the juncture of sections 23, 24, 25 and 26 Township 2 South, Range 1 East; then 1600' west to a point; then 666' North to a point on the south side of a graveled road; then south 466' to a point; then East 500' to a point; then North 350' to a point on the South side of the graveled road; then Westerly along the south side of the road to the true point of beginning.



STAIRS

1873

HOUSE

c. 1840

1971

"SHOP" (19th C.)

LOG SMOKE HOUSE (19th C.)

COMMISSARY (19th C.)

CARRIAGE HOUSE (19th C.)

WELLHOUSE SITE

FENCE

STORAGE c. 1950

"CRIB" (19th C.)

BARN (c. 1930)



T. McCRARY HOUSE

MADISON COUNTY, ALABAMA - 1981

SCALE: 1" = 60'

