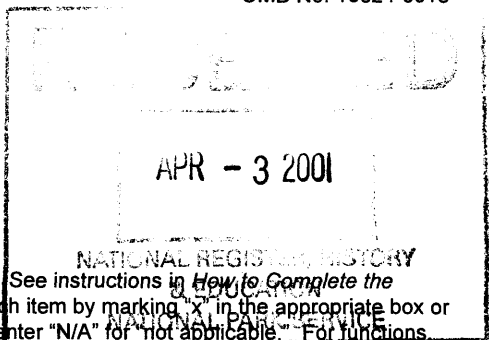


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

504



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name McMillan, Alexander, House

other names/site number N/A

### 2. Location

street & number 7703 Strawberry Plains Pike  NA not for publication

city or town Knoxville  NA vicinity

state Tennessee code TN county Knox code 093 zip code 37914

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Herbert L. Boye 3/20/01  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register.

other,

(explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall

5.10.01

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in count)

	Contributing	Noncontributing	
	2	1	buildings
	0	0	sites
	1	0	structures
	0	0	objects
	3	1	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Historic & Architectural Resources of  
Knoxville & Knox County

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

Domestic: secondary structure

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

Domestic: secondary structure

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style: side gable, L-plan

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Limestone

walls Weatherboard

roof ASPHALT

other BRICK; STONE

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations** N/A

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 year of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Exploration/Settlement  
Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1787-c.1920  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1787;c.1791; c.1820; c.1920  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(complete if Criterion B is marked)  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

McMillan, Alexander  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):** N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State Agency
  - Federal Agency
  - Local Government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: McClung Historical Collection, Knox County Public Library, MPC  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

McMillan, Alexander, House  
Name of Property

Knox County, TN  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Approximately 2-1/2 acres John Sevier 146 SE

**UTM References**

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 250620 3988440  
Zone Easting Northing  
2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing  
4 \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**John Sevier Quad**

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Ann K. Bennett (MPC), Cathryn Irwin, Executive Director and Ted Karpynec  
organization Knox Heritage, Inc./ Tennessee Historical Commission date July 5, 1998  
street & number 803 S. Gay Street telephone (865) 523-8008  
city or town Knoxville state TN zip code 37902

**Additional Documentation**

submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 Or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO) or FPO for any additional items

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Mr. and Mrs. Chris Zachary  
street & number 7703 Strawberry Plains Pike telephone 865.933.7251  
city or town Knoxville state TN zip code 37914

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

McMillan, Alexander, House  
Knox County, Tennessee

---

## DESCRIPTION

Located on 7703 Strawberry Plains Pike, Knoxville, Knox County, and resting on a 2-½ acre lot, the Alexander McMillan House consists of a farmhouse and three contributing outbuildings. The house sits approximately 200 feet northwest of Strawberry Plains Pike, formerly known as the old New Market Road, and faces southwest along a private drive. The residence was initially a rectangular, side gabled house that was sheathed in clapboard siding, and flanked by two exterior end chimneys. Originally designed in the hall and parlor plan c. 1787 by Alexander McMillan, the house evolved as it underwent several historic and non-historic changes during the course of its 214-year history. Today, the McMillan House represents an early 20<sup>th</sup> century family residence. The evolution of the house began with Alexander McMillan in the 1780s and continued up to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century as succeeding generations of the McMillan family customized the house to suit their needs. Despite the changes, the McMillan House retains a high degree of historical integrity and remains as a great example of an evolved house reflecting settlement patterns in Knox County.

Alexander McMillan is responsible for two major alterations to the house in order accommodate his growing family. The first occurred in 1791 with the addition of a rear, two-story, ell on the northeast elevation that included a central chimney. The second alteration to the house occurred c. 1820 when the southeast portion of the original structure was extended by one bay. This extension added a third room to the first floor, effectively changing the original hall and parlor plan of the house. Both the rear addition and the extended bay are of post and beam construction, which conforms to the design of the original structure. Further additions to the McMillan House include a c. 1797 side porch along the northwest elevation of the rear addition, which was enclosed in 1960 and a c. 1880s, square, one-story, springhouse that is attached to a portion of the side porch. In the 1920s, the interior of the house was modified as the common wall in the main room was removed. It was during this period that the window sashes were replaced along with the weatherboard siding. Lastly, non-historic, exterior and interior additions to the house occurred in the 1960s. These consisted of the two-bay garage that is joined to the northwest gable end of the original structure; a one-story bedroom addition nestled in the ell of the northeast elevation, and the removal and replacement of the box stair with an open stringer staircase. It is through these alterations that the Alexander McMillan House received its current, irregular shape.

Situated in a rural setting, which is indicative of the farmland from which it is derived, a one-lane drive leads to the front entry of the house. Beyond the house at the end of the drive is the granary building, which faces southwest. A c. 1960 barn is located in a field at the end of the driveway. Extensive non-historic gardens mark the southeast elevation of the house, facing Strawberry Plains Pike, and mature trees and landscaping are present on all sections of the site. The elevation of the house is fairly level with Strawberry Plains Pike, but the land falls away sharply on the northwest side of the house, where a spring known historically as Deep Spring is the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

McMillan, Alexander, House  
Knox County, Tennessee

headwater for one branch of Sinking Creek. The two branches of Sinking Creek carry water to the Holston River, which is located approximately a mile northwest of the site of the house. A c. 1920 stone cistern is located down the hill from the house and near the Deep Spring.

The Alexander McMillan House is an irregular shaped, post and beam house that rests on a stone foundation and is capped with an intersecting side gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. Three original chimneys adorn the McMillan House. One is an exterior end chimney (on the southeast elevation), and two are offset interior chimneys. Each of the three chimneys has a stone foundation and firebox with a brick chimney stack. The 1791-ell addition consists of a central chimney, which provides fireboxes to the dining room and kitchen. The other interior chimney was an exterior end chimney prior to construction of the garage on the northwest elevation of the house in the 1960s. There is evidence of a stone foundation to a fourth chimney, which was located between the two rooms of the first section of the house, however, it is not known when that chimney was removed.

The façade of the McMillian House exhibits symmetrical fenestration, which consists of two sets of windows with six-over-six, double-hung, wood sash that flank a centrally located door opening. Positioned in the half story above the main entrance is a small one-over-one wood sash replacement window. Covering the exterior wall of the façade is weatherboard siding, which was probably installed in the late 1920s.

Joined to the west of the main block is the c. 1960s garage. Resting on a stone foundation and flush with the main block, the wood frame structure is clad in weatherboard siding and capped with a side gable roof covered in asphalt shingles. The addition of the garage did not result in the alteration of the exterior wall of the main block, such as door openings to provide internal access from within the house to the garage.

The southeast elevation of the McMillan House consists of an irregular window arrangement because of the additions that have been attached to the original structure. A wood raking cornice and returns, which are accented with a centrally located exterior brick chimney, highlights the gable end of the main block. Two small louvered vents flank the chimney in the half-story. Northeast of the gable end of the main block is the one-story c. 1960 bedroom addition. Resting on a stone foundation, the wood frame addition is sheathed in weatherboard siding and is capped with a sloping shed roof covered in asphalt shingles. Punctuating the addition along this elevation are two casement windows with six lights. A portion of the two-story 1791 ell emerges northeast of the 1960 addition and is adorned with a first story window opening with three-over-three, double-hung, wood sash. The second story consists of two window openings with three-over-three, double-hung, wood sash.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places

## Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

McMillan, Alexander, House  
Knox County, Tennessee

The rear of the McMillan House (northeast elevation) is dominated by the open gable end of the 1791-ell, which is pierced with a first story window opening containing one pair of one-over-one wood sash. The second story is marked with a c. 1960 extended aluminum porch roof supported by four square wood columns that rest on brick plinth blocks. Above the porch roof, a window opening with one-over-one, double-hung, wood sash and a small louvered vent in the gable field completes the fenestration of the gable end. The elevation also reveals the one story c. 1960 bedroom addition to the east of the gable end, which is marked with two window openings with six-over-six, double-hung, wood sash. Attached to the west of the gable end is the enclosed 1797-side porch that is accessible through a multilight wood door. Connected to the enclosed porch is the c. 1880 springhouse. This wood frame structure rests on a stone foundation, is clad in weatherboard siding and capped with a gable roof covered in asphalt shingles. West of the springhouse, the rear of the c. 1960 garage is punctuated with a multi-pane wood door and a window opening to the west containing one-over-one, double-hung, aluminum sash.

The northwest elevation reveals the enclosed 1797 side porch, which is flanked by the gable ends of the c. 1880-springhouse and the c. 1960 garage. The fenestration of this elevation reveals a window opening with two-over-two, double-hung, wood sash that adorns the springhouse and single pane, horizontally configured windows along the enclosed porch. A pedimented dormer window with a single light, fixed, wood sash protrudes from the roof.

The primary entrance to the Alexander McMillan House provides access to a large rectangular room originally built as two rooms wide and one room deep. The common wall was removed on the first floor c. 1920, but still exists in the half-story. Highlighting the interior walls of this section of the house are paneled in hand-planed boards, laid horizontally, and exceeding fourteen inches in width. Located on the first floor of this section is a fireplace framed by square pilasters supporting a raised paneled frieze that is capped with a molded shelf. The first floor ceiling reveals the original wood beams that support the beaded planks of the second story floor. An open stair with a simple sawn wood balustrade provides access to the second story from the central room. This staircase replaced the original box stair c. 1960. In addition, pine-flooring c. 1960 covers the original pine planks.

Through a door opposite the front entry is the c. 1791 section of the building, which is the first addition built by McMillan. It consists of two rooms, which today function as a dining room and kitchen, with a central fireplace forming the separation wall. The fireplace in the dining room consists of a mantel made of hand-planed square pilasters capped with a molded architrave that supports a paneled entablature that is topped with a molded cornice. The kitchen is located behind the dining room, and contains a large fireplace with shelving above, which stands opposite a bank of cabinets and modern appliances. Changes in the kitchen probably began c. 1920, and kitchen modernization has continued intermittently to the present. Hand-planed horizontal boards form the wall covering of both rooms in the c.1791 section of the structure, while the ceiling reveals

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

McMillan, Alexander, House  
Knox County, Tennessee

---

support beams and the exposed beaded edge planking of the second floor. The original pine floor in each of these rooms is covered with a newer pine floor c. 1960.

To the right of the first floor entry room, a c. 1850 Italianate door with a shouldered architrave surround containing a vertical two panel wood door that provides access to the c. 1820 extended bay. An examination of the attic framing and sidewalls confirms that this section of the house is also of post and beam construction. An end fireplace with a simple mantel built of hand-planed boards provides a source of heat for the room. The fireplace is built with a stone foundation and firebox. The original plaster ceiling of this room was concealed by a dropped, beamed ceiling c. 1960, and a small closet was added c. 1920. The walls of this room are plaster and the original wide board pine flooring is intact. The room also boasts wide baseboards.

The c. 1791 ell of the house provides access to a former side porch located on the northwest elevation. This porch, which was constructed c. 1797, is enclosed with wood vertical boards c. 1960. The porch contains an entry door to the northeast (rear) yard and holds a sitting room and bath. An entry is also provided to the attached springhouse, which is located on the northwest elevation. The springhouse was probably constructed c. 1880, and serves as a storage and laundry area. The floor of the springhouse is poured concrete, with a historic concrete trough that once provided cold water for storing perishable dairy products. An electric pump is now located in this area and was probably installed c. 1920, when electricity became available to the region.

On the northeast elevation of the house is a c. 1960 bedroom addition containing paneled walls and a sheet rock ceiling. The floor of this room is finished with pine flooring. Access to this room is gained through a door opening located east of the dining room. This door opening faces Strawberry Plains Pike, and at one time may have been a secondary entrance to the McMillan House.

The stairway in the main room leads to a half story composed of four rooms. Three of these rooms are finished in hand planed wide pine boards. A small set of stairs, c. 1791, provides access to two rooms in the 1787 half story, which was originally one room, but divided into two rooms in the 1960s to accommodate a bathroom. The remaining two rooms are located in the original house and are separated by a plank door. The floors in these two rooms are covered with c. 1960 pine boards; the original pine floorboards are exposed in the c. 1791 section of the second story. Original clapboards that cover the rear of main block are visible in the c.1791 half-story room.

A second contributing building on the site is the granary, built in the 1850s. It provided storage and office space for a mill that is no longer present on the property. Resting on a rebuilt



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

McMillan, Alexander, House  
Knox County, Tennessee

---

foundation of concrete blocks, the one and one-half story post and beam structure is clad in weatherboard siding and capped with a gable roof covered with v-crimp metal. The entrance to the granary is adorned with a four-panel wood door that is topped with a fixed, horizontal wood, three-pane window. The southeast and northeast elevations each contain one, six-over-six, double-hung, wood sash. A c. 1920 shed roof addition supported by wood posts provides weatherproof storage on the southeast elevation.

The third resource covered in this nomination is a stone-lined cistern located downhill and to the north of the house. The cistern was probably constructed c. 1820 and is a contributing resource.

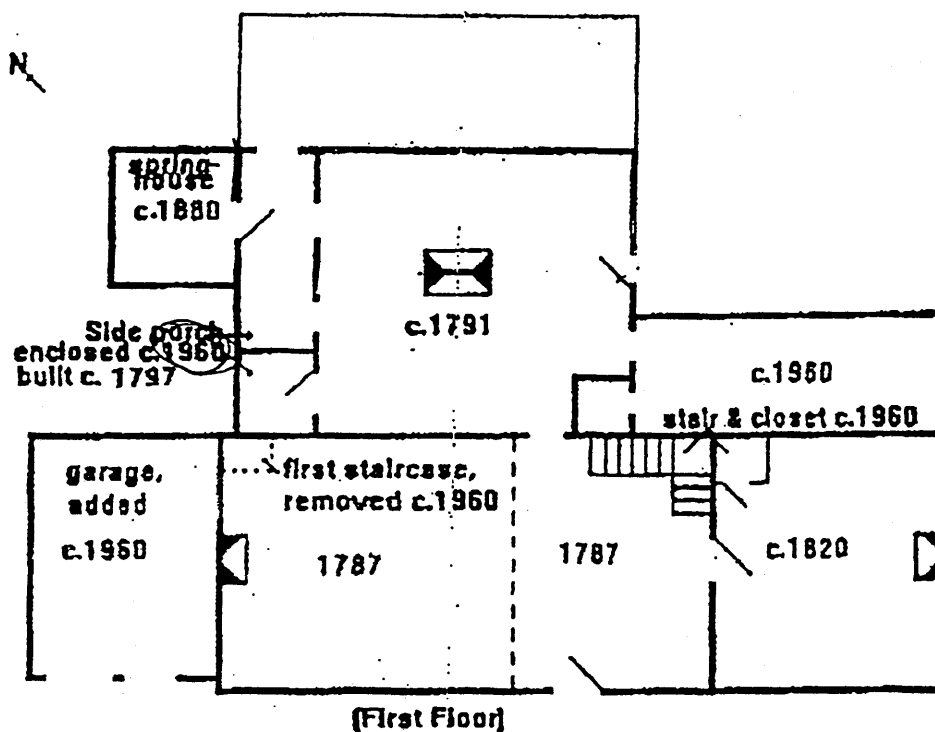
The fourth building noted on this nomination is a c. 1960 board and batten barn with a front gable roof covered with a v-crimp metal. This structure is considered non-contributing due to its age.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6

McMillan, Alexander, House  
Knox County, Tennessee



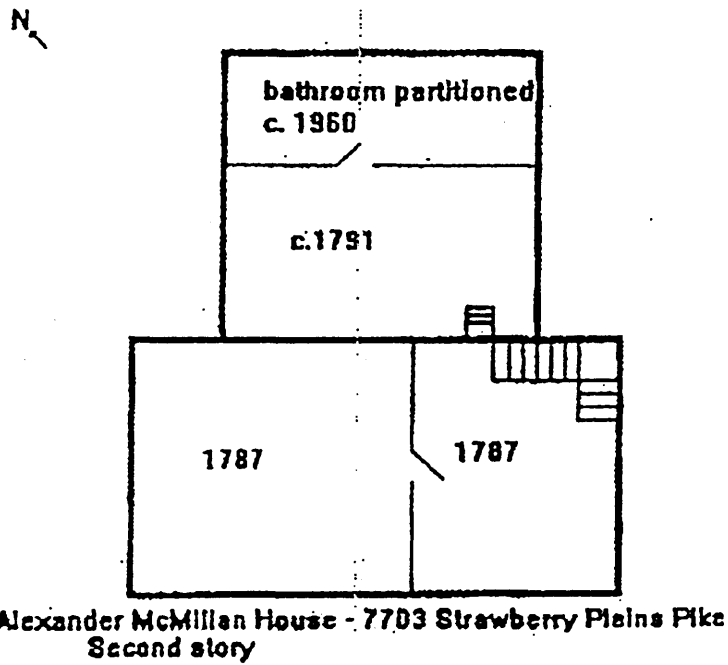
Alexander McMillan House - 7703 Strawberry Plains Pike

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 7

McMillan, Alexander, House  
Knox County, Tennessee



Alexander McMillan House - 7703 Strawberry Plains Pike  
Second story

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

McMillan, Alexander, House  
Knox County, Tennessee

---

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Alexander McMillan House is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, the house is a representation of settlement patterns in Knox County. The structure was built by Alexander McMillan who explored the Knox County area, along with a contingent that included Knoxville founder James White, as part of the North Carolina Land Grab Act of 1783. Families of early settlers in the county continued to live in their original dwellings and made changes to their properties as they prospered and grew. These changes often reflect the economic and social status of the family over many generations. Architecturally, the McMillan House qualifies under Criterion C as one of the few surviving examples of an evolved house in Knox County. With its post and beam construction, early detailing, and additions, the McMillan House reflects the architectural evolution of an early house from the period between the 1780s to the 1920s. The property meets the registration requirements of the multiple property documentation form, *The Historic and Architectural Resources of Knoxville and Knox County, Tennessee*.

The evolution of the McMillan House is illustrative of the ways in which frontier families adapted to the increasing demand to provide housing for their growing families. Additionally, changes to the house also reflect McMillan's social status as a wealthy farmer. Alexander McMillan and his descendants continued to live in the house until the mid-twentieth century. As the family grew and prospered, the house changed to reflect their status. Alexander and Margaret McMillan had five children when they came to Knox County. As he and his wife continued to have children (nine in all), and as their wealth increased through their farm, they made additions to the original house.

In 1791, four years after the completion of the house, McMillan constructed a two-story rear ell section. Further alterations included the expansion of the 1787 portion of the house in 1820, to increase its size from two rooms to three. This change occurred when his son William McMillan, whose wife had died leaving him with seven children to raise, moved to his father's house. The extension of the main block provided necessary space for the suddenly expanded family group. By the 1880s and again c.1920, although the size of the household had shrunk considerably, changing technology made improvements necessary for comfort. These included the construction of the springhouse, interior and exterior alterations, and the inclusion an electric pump. Changes in those years have contributed to the architectural history and significance of the Alexander McMillan House, acquiring their own significance both for the statements they make about building technology and for the picture they paint of life in rural Knox County over time.

As his children reached adulthood, much of the land was deeded to them. At the time of his death, when he was 88, three of McMillan's grandchildren had survived their parents and were raised by Alexander McMillan. It was to these three grandchildren, Andrew Thompson (son of Sally McMillan Thompson), A. A. McMillan (son of William McMillan) and Alexander McMillan (son

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

McMillan, Alexander, House  
Knox County, Tennessee

of Andrew McMillan), that the portions of the McMillan holdings containing the Alexander McMillan House were distributed. McMillan and his wife are buried on property that once was part of his land near Calidonia church on the Sherrod Farm.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the grave markers are missing and the exact location of the graves is unknown.

The McMillan farm was deeded to Martha McMillan Cobb and her husband Samuel Cobb in 1846. Martha McMillan Cobb was the granddaughter of Alexander McMillan, but it is unknown who her parents were or how she managed to obtain the property. Cobb probably built the granary now adjacent to the house. It remained in the Cobb's hands until 1865, when it was deeded to John T. Blake, whose wife was a great-granddaughter of Alexander McMillan. It remained with the Blake family and their descendants until the 1970s. Blake had a number of business interests, including a mill that operated on the property.

Although the last name of the owners of the Alexander McMillan House changed over the first 180 years of its history, from McMillan, to Cobb, to Blake, the McMillan House remained in family hands until it was sold in the 1970s. Other descendants of Alexander McMillan moved from east Knox County shortly after the Civil War. Some of the family members moved to Fountain City, also in Knox County and now a section of north Knoxville, where they were prominent in that community. Several others moved to Texas after the conclusion of the Civil War, as part of the tide of emigrants from Tennessee who settled that western state.

Alexander McMillan was one of the first settlers in Knox County. Under the North Carolina Land Grab Act, McMillan was entitled to a grant of land for his military services in the American Revolution. He traveled to Knox County in 1783 with Robert Love, Francis Ramsey and James White, who were making an exploratory tour to select the location of land grants. Each of the men settled in the area between the French Broad and Holston Rivers, known historically as the "forks of the river," probably because no American Indian tribes claimed these lands, which were used primarily as hunting grounds. Therefore, settlers in this area experienced fewer altercations with American Indian tribes than in other parts of Knox County. Dr. J. G. M. Ramsey in his *Annals of Tennessee* reported that in 1787 "McMillan moved to the house he had built while living in Strawberry Plains; the house was four miles from the Armstrong Ferry on the New Market Road" (now called Strawberry Plains Pike).<sup>2</sup> This ferry service was operated by Moses Armstrong and is located roughly three and half miles west of the McMillan residence.<sup>3</sup> Ramsey goes on to note that McMillan lived there until his death in 1837. The location described in this passage by Ramsey coincides with the property known as the Alexander McMillan House.

<sup>1</sup> White, *The King's Mountain Men: The Story of the Battle, with Sketches of the American Soldiers Who Took Part*, 205.

<sup>2</sup> Ann K. Bennett, "Historic and Architectural Resources in Knoxville and Knox County" (Nashville, TN: Tennessee Historical Commission, 1994, photocopied), Section E, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

McMillan, Alexander, House  
Knox County, Tennessee

Alexander McMillan was born in County Deery, Ireland in 1749 and immigrated to America in 1775 with the intent of joining his uncle and other family members in Virginia.<sup>4</sup> Instead, shortly after landing in Boston, he joined the Continental Army and fought in Quebec, probably with Benedict Arnold's troops. He reportedly lost a finger due to frostbite while on picket duty during the American attempt to take Canada.<sup>5</sup> After the conclusion of that campaign, McMillan traveled to Virginia to join his family members. In 1778, McMillan married his first cousin, Margaret Martha McMillan, and two years later, participated in the Battle of King's Mountain.<sup>6</sup> Shortly after the battle, he and his wife moved to Knox County after a brief stay in Washington County. During the war of 1812, at the age of 66, Alexander McMillan participated in the Battle of New Orleans as a sergeant under Colonel Edwin Booth of the East Tennessee Militia.<sup>7</sup>

Alexander McMillan settled in the area that became Strawberry Plains around 1778, shortly after he married. McMillan was one of the largest landholders in Knox County. Initially, he received several property grants in east Knox County between 1785 and 1791; they totaled over 900 acres. In addition, there is a deed reference to a purchase of over 20,000 acres between the French Broad and Holston Rivers. Because of his large landholdings, McMillan's house was not located near other pioneer dwellings, which were often located near forts and "stations." According to his will, McMillan was a wealthy farmer who had extensive livestock holdings that included horses, cattle, hogs and sheep. What is particularly interesting about McMillan's property is that he had over 14 slaves by the time of his death in 1837.<sup>8</sup> Although slave ownership in East Tennessee existed, it was relatively low compared to Middle Tennessee during this period. In addition, anti-slavery sentiment in the area was strong, with over 25 abolitionist organizations in East Tennessee by 1830.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, McMillan's slave holdings, coupled with his landholdings placed him in an unusual position among early Knox County settlers.

Early settlers to East Tennessee and Knox County arrived mainly from Virginia and North Carolina around 1740. These early settlers are commonly referred to as "longhunters," traders, adventurers and explorers who built temporary shelters in the wilderness or settled in Indian villages.<sup>10</sup> As a result of Cherokee land claims in East Tennessee, and the King of England's (King George II) prohibition of his subjects settling on lands west of the Appalachians, the early days of the settlement period witnessed a relatively small portion of pioneers into the region. However this

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Section E, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission, *The Future of Our Past: Historic Sites Survey and Cultural Resources Plan for Knoxville and Knox County Tennessee* (Knoxville: Metropolitan Planning Commission, 1988), 1-13.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 1-3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> J.G.M. Ramsey, *Ramsey's Annals of Tennessee* (Knoxville, The East Tennessee Historical Society, 1967), p. 372.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

McMillan, Alexander, House  
Knox County, Tennessee

condition quickly changed in response to two major treaty signings that spurred settlement into East Tennessee and subsequently Knox County.

The signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763 ended the French and Indian War (1754 – 1763), with England prevailing over France for control of the eastern portion of the Mississippi Valley, which included East Tennessee.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, signed in New York on November 5, 1768, provided for the cession of Indian lands north and east of the Tennessee River to the King of England by the Confederacy of the Six Nations. This had the dual affect of reducing the Indian threat in East Tennessee and allowing English settlers to ignore the King's prohibition against the settlement of land west of the Appalachians. As a result of these treaties, settlers slowly began to occupy lands in East Tennessee, which became a territory of North Carolina in 1777. A catalyst for the rapid settlement of East Tennessee can be attributed to the passage of North Carolina's Land "Grab" Act of 1783. This act provided for the sale of the state's western lands to settlers at a cost of ten pounds per one hundred acres.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, land claims were legitimized and recorded in official county deed records. All the land grants that were issued in Knox County during this period were registered in Greene County, North Carolina.<sup>13</sup>

Some of the first areas in Knox County to be settled were along the northwest corner of the county along the river valleys and headwaters of Beaver and Bull Run creeks, and in the northeast along Flat Creek.<sup>14</sup> Settlement naturally concentrated around major waterways, such as the Holston, French Broad, and Tennessee rivers, which provided vital transportation routes to settlers migrating to the west and south. In addition, water routes provided a useful means to trade with the Cherokee Indians who were concentrated in the Little River Valley in present day Blount County.

In 1784, due to its inability to provide troops and money for the protection of settlers in East Tennessee, North Carolina ceded its western territories to the United States government. Consequently, settlers in the region, believing that only through self-sovereignty as a new state could they be assured of retaining their lands, formed the State of Franklin. Upon receiving news of the creation of the State of Franklin, North Carolina swiftly rescinded its cession of her western territories. Yet, sentiment for statehood was too strong among the western settlers who, led by John Sevier, supported their claims against the Indians and encouraged pioneers to buy land in the region now known as Knox County. By 1785, settlements emerged along the banks of the

<sup>11</sup> Bennett, "Historical and Architectural Resources in Knoxville and Knox County", Section E-10.

<sup>12</sup> Mary Hardin McCown, Colonel David Henley Chapter, Inez E. Burns, Major James Houston Chapter, *Soldiers of the War of 1812 Buried in Tennessee* (Johnson City, Tennessee: The Tennessee Society USD of 1812, 1959), 82.

<sup>13</sup> Katherine Keogh White, *The King's Mountain Men: The Story of the Battle, with Sketches of the American Soldiers Who Took Part* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1966), 205.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

McMillan, Alexander, House  
Knox County, Tennessee

---

French Broad and Holston Rivers where present day Knoxville is located.<sup>15</sup> The United States government and the State of North Carolina, however, refused to recognize the new state and in 1789 the counties that made up the State of Franklin were restored to North Carolina.

The failure of the State of Franklin, coupled with the formation of the Territory South of the River Ohio (basically the State of Tennessee) prompted Sevier to negotiate the Treaty of Holston with the Cherokees in 1791.<sup>16</sup> The treaty called for the Cherokees to rescind their claims to land in the entire Knox County area. As a result, the region opened to rapid settlement and a boundary was established in an effort to separate settlers from the Cherokees. This boundary became the southern boundary of Knox County with settlers to the north and the Cherokees to the south. Unfortunately, due to the vague description of the boundary line, settlers continued to encroach on Indian lands, causing bitter resentment among the Cherokees.<sup>17</sup> In 1792, a territorial ordinance established Knox County and in 1796, the counties that once comprised the former State of Franklin became part of the new state of Tennessee.

Enticed by the prospects of owning land, settlers began to pour into Knox County. Pioneers often settled close to each other and near a fort, "station" or ferry, which provided services, such as protection from Indians, gristmills, and river transport.

Additional information on the early settlement of Knox County can be obtained in the Multiple Property Submission, *Historic and Architectural Resources in Knoxville and Knox County, Tennessee*.

The Alexander McMillan House is significant architecturally as one of the few surviving examples of an evolved house in Knox County. Very few of the area's earliest buildings exist, and only two or three of those are frame, which leads to the possibility that this may be the earliest surviving frame house in Knox County. The house maintains the original block built by McMillan in 1787 and the subsequent additions built by him and his descendants up to the 1960s. In addition, the residence is also significant for its use of materials and design. Its construction, using post and beam framing with wide board beaded paneling, is highly unusual for buildings built in East Tennessee during the early settlement era.

The additions to the structure illustrate the architectural evolution of an early house, which employed post and beam framing and the use of wide board beaded paneling. These additions reveal McMillan's desire to maintain the architectural consistency of the original house. This is especially evident in the 1820 extended bay, which was inconspicuously added to the original structure. Although it appears that McMillan desired to maintain the original character of the

---

<sup>15</sup> Byron and Samuel Sistler, *Tennesseans in the War of 1812* (Nashville: Byron Sistler & Associates, Inc., 1992), 82.

<sup>16</sup> Knox County Will Book Vol. 6, p. 133.

<sup>17</sup> Carroll Van West, ed., *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History & Culture* (Nashville: Rutledge Hill Press, 1998) 853.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 13

McMillan, Alexander, House  
Knox County, Tennessee

---

house, he included a new interior element when the extended bay was constructed. This element consisted of a shouldered architrave door surround leading into the new room. McMillan's decision to introduce this style may reflect his architectural awareness of the growing use of classical detailing in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which eventually culminated in the popular Greek Revival style.

The evolution of the property is evident not only in the changes to the house, but the construction of resources adjacent to the structure. The addition of the stone-lined cistern c. 1820, the granary c. 1850, and the springhouse c. 1880, illustrates the growth of the McMillan farm as each succeeding generation added necessary resources to maintain the farm.

The period between the 1920s and 1960s witnessed numerous changes to the house by McMillan descendants. Under the Blakes' ownership, the common wall in the main room was removed, while the window sash and clapboard siding on the house were replaced in the 1920s. Moreover, an electric pump was installed in the springhouse. By the 1960s, a 1-story bedroom addition and a two-car garage were added to the house. In the interior, the box stair was removed and replaced by an open string staircase. Lastly, pine floorboards were laid over the original floorboards in the main room, kitchen and dining rooms. The alterations to the house by McMillan descendants illustrate the desire of the family to modernize the house to meet the needs of new technology and conveniences of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Alexander McMillan House, with its unadorned post and beam construction, is a prime example of an evolved house in Knox County. The history surrounding the house and its owner provide an invaluable insight into the settlement patterns of the county. The Alexander McMillan House is one of the few remaining residences from the earliest days of Knox County, and is one of the most intact. Its documentation and recognition of its importance via National Register listing would join early settlement houses such as the Ramsey House (NR 1969), Sevier House (Marble Springs NR 1971) and the Blount Mansion (NR 1966) in increasing the general understanding of the settlement history of Knox County.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 14

McMillan, Alexander, House  
Knox County, Tennessee

---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bennett, Ann K. *Historic and Architectural Resources in Knoxville and Knox County, Tennessee*. (A National Register Multiple Property Listing). Knoxville: Metropolitan Planning Commission, 1994.
- Knox County Will Book, Vol. 6.
- McCown, Mary Hardin, Colonel David Henley Chapter, Inez E. Burns, and Major James Houston Chapter. *Soldiers of the War of 1812 Buried in Tennessee*. Johnson City, 1959.
- Ramsey, J. G. M. *Ramsey's Annals of Tennessee*. Knoxville: The East Tennessee Historical Society, 1967.
- Sistler, Byron & Samuel. *Tennesseans in the War of 1812*. Nashville, Byron Sistler & Associates, Inc., 1992.
- Van West, Carroll, ed. *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History & Culture*. Nashville: Rutledge Hill Press, 1998.
- White, Katherine Keogh. *The King's Mountain Men: The story of the battle, with sketches of the American soldiers who took part*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1966.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 15

McMillan, Alexander, House  
Knox County, Tennessee

---

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary for the Alexander McMillan nomination is delineated on the accompanying plat map F19.73 (scale 1" = 100'). It includes the house, cistern, granary building, and the 2 ½ acre lot that the house rests on.

## BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated boundaries contain all extant significant resources associated with the Alexander McMillan House. The boundary includes the house, cistern, granary building, and the 2 ½ acre lot that the house rests on. These resources maintain historic integrity and best represents the historic qualities of the McMillan House. There are no other domestic or farm related outbuildings outside of this boundary that are associated with the nominated property.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number      Photos      Page      16

McMillan, Alexander, House  
Knox County, Tennessee

---

## PHOTOS

Photos by: Cathryn Irwin  
Knox Heritage Inc.  
Date: July, 1998  
Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission  
2941 Lebanon Road  
Nashville, TN 37243

View of the façade and garage, facing northeast  
1 of 21

View of the façade, facing east  
2 of 21

South elevation, facing north  
3 of 21

Southeast elevation, facing northwest  
4 of 21

Chimney detail, south elevation, facing north  
5 of 21

Granary, facing northeast  
6 of 21

Barn, facing northwest  
7 of 21

House and garage, east elevation, facing southwest  
8 of 21

1791 addition, fireplace and mantle  
9 of 21

Planed wall boards, main room  
10 of 21

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number         Photos    Page        17    

McMillan, Alexander, House  
Knox County, Tennessee

---

Main room  
11 of 21

Second floor, stairwell ceiling  
12 of 21

Second floor, 1820s addition, trace of original clapboards  
13 of 21

Second floor, traces of original boxed stair  
14 of 21

First floor, former side porch  
15 of 21

Kitchen wall and floor  
16 of 21

C. 1960 bedroom addition  
17 of 21

C. 1820 bedroom addition and fireplace  
18 of 21

C. 1820 bedroom addition, Italianate door with shouldered architrave surround  
19 of 21

C. 1960 open stair, main room  
20 of 21

First floor, main room  
21 of 21