

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received FEB 2 1987

date entered MAR 6 1987

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

1. Name

historic Gernt, Bruno, House

and/or common same

2. Location

street & number Base Line Road N/A not for publication

city, town Allardt N/A vicinity of

state Tennessee code 047 county Fentress code 049

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Estate of Bruno Gernt, Inc.

street & number P.O. Box 69

city, town Allardt N/A vicinity of state Tennessee 38504

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register's Office, Fentress County Courthouse

street & number Courthouse Square

city, town Jamestown state Tennessee 38556

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Fentress County Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1984  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Tennessee Historical Commission

city, town Nashville state Tennessee 37219-5237

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" 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
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

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

The Bruno Gernt House is located one mile east of Allardt (pop. 654) in Fentress County, TN. Built circa 1881, the two story frame farmhouse is sheathed with poplar weatherboards, rests on a stone foundation, and is surmounted by a standing seam metal roof. The L-shaped house contains three brick chimneys and has three porches. Elaborate wood window lintels and an arched pocket door are unique architectural features of the residence. In addition to the house, four outbuildings are included as contributing resources. All retain a high degree of integrity.

The northern facade contains the most decorative elements of the exterior. The eastern section of the facade has a front gable roof, two 2/2 double-hung sash windows on the first story, and one 2/2 double-hung sash window on the second story. These windows are embellished with lintels comprised of carved brackets and molded cornices, a style unique to the Gernt House. A simple frieze molding is situated below the eaves on the gable end (and on all other gable ends). One entrance leads to the dining room. It is flanked by two 2/2 double-hung sash windows without decorative lintels. A second entrance, situated at the east end of the porch, leads to the parlor. This entrance consists of arched glass panels and wood panels. Much of the facade is covered with a hip roof porch delineated by simple wood columns and cornice balusters. Two of the three chimneys pierce the roof line from this view.

The two story gable end section of the west elevation contains two 2/2 double-hung sash windows on the first story and a paired 2/2 double-hung sash window with decorative lintels, identical to those on the facade, on the second story. A one story extension is pierced by a single 2/2 double-hung sash window.

Three 2/2 double-hung sash windows without decorative lintels are located on the gable end of the south (rear) elevation. The one story extension has a single 2/2 double-hung sash window and a four-panel wood entrance. A shed roof porch with a wood deck covers this area.

The east elevation consists primarily of a porch with a hip roof. The same columns and cornice balusters as are on the northern porch are seen here, in addition to a matching balustrade at the floor level. A door, comprised of two arched glass panels in the upper half and a wood panel bottom, is on the left and leads to a bedroom. A window to the right is like those on the north elevation without the decorative lintel. To the south of the porch is the wing housing the kitchen. There is one window on the east elevation of the single story wing. All windows on this elevation are 2/2 double-hung sashes.

The first floor of the interior of the Gernt House consists of a parlor, bedroom, dining room, kitchen, bath and utility room. The second floor, accessed by a closed staircase leading from the dining room, has three bedrooms, one to the west of the staircase and two to the east. A cellar, accessed by a staircase also leading from the dining room, is situated below the dining room. The focal point of the interior of the home is a double leaf arched doorway leading from the parlor to the bedroom. The pocket door is unique to the Gernt House. Each of the leaves contains four vertical panels and one horizontal panel in the center. Also of special interest are the original walls and ceilings of tongue and groove paneling found in the kitchen, in the downstairs bedroom, and in the closed staircase leading to the second floor, the matched wainscoting in the dining room, and the wood plank flooring found throughout the house.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Bruno Gernt House

Item number 7

Page 2

Other than the residence, the Bruno Gernt House has four extant outbuildings: well house, barn, garage, privy. The well house, constructed in the late 1800s, is approximately five feet square and six feet high. It is sided with poplar weatherboards and has a gable roof. The north and south elevations have pentagonal openings while the east elevation has a doorway and a water trough. The well itself is pulley style. The English-style barn is a rectangular frame board building constructed in the late 1800s. It has a gable tin roof. The third dependency, a frame board building with a gable roof, was built in 1902 for use as a tool shed and began use as a garage in 1920. The fourth dependency, a frame privy, is located southeast of the dwelling. Until the late 1930s, a smokehouse stood south of the dwelling. Completing the grounds of the property is a vineyard. Lying south and east of the barn, this vineyard still supports about twenty-five vines planted by Bruno and Selma Gernt. A garden which was located west of the barn no longer exists.

Utmost care has been taken to preserve the integrity of the Gernt residence. Decorative window lintels exist only where originally located. Less than two percent of the weatherboard has been replaced; exterior paint has been carefully matched to original colors; matured metal, in the original style, has replaced the rolled material on the dwelling and dependencies. Sheetrock has replaced the plastered walls of the bedrooms and parlor, new light fixtures have replaced the old ones, insulation and central heat and air have been installed, city water has replaced well water, and the closet and pantry are now a bathroom and utility room, respectively. None of the improvements done have involved alteration of the home's structure.

## 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" 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** c. 1881-1932

**Builder/Architect** Charles Weber

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Bruno Gernt House is being nominated under National Register criterion B for its association with a prominent individual. Bruno Gernt was instrumental in the founding of the town of Allardt in Fentress County. His efforts to establish clear title to land in the area made permanent settlement and development a reality. In addition, Gernt was an important entrepreneur in the region, helping to promote and exploit the natural resources on the Cumberland Plateau. Constructed in around 1881, Gernt's house has recently undergone renovation. It still retains a high degree of historical and architectural integrity.

Bruno Gernt was born in Dresden, Saxony, Germany on May 15, 1851 to Ernst and Johanna Gernt. He first emigrated to England where he joined other German emigrants. Fluent in both English and German, in around 1873 Gernt became the spokesman for a group of Germans intent on moving to the United States. This group established the settlement of Saxonia in Sanilac County, Michigan. In the mid-1870s, Gernt and several other German emigrants moved to Forestville, Michigan. Here, Bruno Gernt married Selma Weber (1858-1953), a native of Saxony, Germany.

In 1879, the Cincinnati-Southern Railroad created a link to the South, making colonization of the Cumberland Plateau feasible. Probably this same year, Gernt saw Fentress County, Tennessee, for the first time, perhaps after visiting the settlement of Rugby in Morgan County. Realizing the potential markets made available by the railroad, Gernt was convinced of the possibilities for development in the region with its abundant natural resources. He became the land agent for Cyrus and James N. Clarke of Nebraska who held title to lands on the Plateau. By 1881, a circular had been printed, advertising the Plateau lands. The acreage offered for sale was given as 300,000 at \$4.00 per acre in parcels of 25, 50, and 100 acres. In the first year, 9,000 acres of land were sold. Gernt helped directly by providing easy financing, requiring only one-fourth purchase price as down payment, and by finding settlers interested in establishing a permanent, self-sufficient colony. Named in honor of M.H. Allardt, Gernt's partner who died before actual settlement was accomplished, the colony was to be a model city. Under Gernt's direction, the town was laid out geometrically, and lots were designated for churches, businesses, and schools. Streets and alleys were located, and a reception house was built as temporary lodgings for those seeking to purchase land.

While settlers from Sanilac County, Michigan, and Cincinnati, Ohio, began to arrive in Allardt, Gernt returned to Germany with his wife and daughter. He recruited other skilled craftsmen and professionals for the settlement in Allardt. He sought carpenters, coopers, watch repairmen, blacksmiths, furniture and cabinet makers, surveyors, merchants, teachers, and farmers. These emigrants, who joined those already in Allardt, soon led the region in production of hay, apples, grapes, and vegetables. Eventually, their products were shipped to northern markets and to Europe.

Always interested in young people, and particularly in their education, Gernt was insistent that schools be built immediately upon settlement. By 1883, Allardt's first school began classes, with Miss Nina Giles as teacher. Among the other teachers at Allardt were Max

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1.83 acres

Quadrangle name Stockton, TN 115 NE

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	6
---	---

6	9	0	8	6	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	0	2	7	8	9	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

B 

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

C 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

F 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

G 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

H 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The nominated property is 1.83 acres in size and rectangular in shape. It is bounded on the north by the Base Line Road and on the east, south, and west by adjacent property lines. It includes enough land to protect the historical setting and architectural integrity of the Bruno Gernt House. (See tax map).

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

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

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

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gerald W. Gernt and Yvonne M. Gernt

organization Estate of Bruno Gernt, Inc.

date October 1986

street & number P.O. Box 69

telephone 615-879-8517 (office)  
615-879-8305 (home)

city or town Allardt

state Tennessee 38504

# 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 National Park Service.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Norbert L. Hays*

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

date 1/27/87

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

~~Entered in the~~  
~~National Register~~

*for Melvyn Byer*  
Keeper of the National Register

date 3-6-87

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Continuation sheet Bruno Gernt House

Item number 8

Page 2

Colditz, a world traveler fluent in five languages, who was recruited by Bruno Gernt to come to Allardt, and Mr. Virgil Easley of Johnson City, Tennessee, who was hired by Gernt to teach high school at Allardt. High school was held in the community until 1927 when the Alvin C. York Agricultural Institute was opened. Although never materializing, Bruno Gernt envisioned a college at Allardt.

More than any other man's, the efforts of Bruno Gernt led to establishing clear ownership of lands on the Cumberland Plateau. As no system for public surveys existed on the Plateau, grants to its lands were often issued with overlapping boundaries and claims. Further, grants were sometimes issued by three states - Tennessee, Kentucky, and North Carolina. Spending almost fifty years of his life in this endeavor, Gernt himself often purchased the same tract of land from different sources just so he could perfect title and legal claim. Often, he was involved in court cases. Two cases involving Mr. Gernt which are still used as precedents are Brier Hill Colleries v. Gernt and Gernt v. Floyd, et al. (Both of these cases were heard in 1914 and are included in the current Tennessee Digest, pages 542-553 and 119-125, respectively.) The decisions resulting from these cases include adverse possession, construction and description of deeds, ejectment, chaperty and maintenance, and mortgages. The driving force behind Gernt's efforts was the realization that major development and further settlement of the Plateau would be unlikely unless land titles and claims could be assured. Ultimately, Gernt and others benefited from the establishing of clear land titles and claims. The timber and other natural resources could be developed without concern over ownership.

Between 1900 and 1950, the chief industry of Fentress County was the timber industry. As Bruno Gernt made clear the ownership of land, large-scale production of native yellow pine lumber became possible. Production led to establishment of large mills and lumber yards - and a search for markets and transportation. In 1913, the Oneida and Western Railroad, a branch of the Southern, was built in Fentress County. For many years, Fentress County produced and shipped more yellow pine lumber on the Southern Railroad than any other area. A large percentage of this lumber was produced and sold by Gernt's sons, Hugh and Arthur, who at one time had an inventory of 12,000,000 board feet. There is no question but that the efforts of Bruno Gernt contributed directly to the success of the timber industry in Fentress County. Though he himself did not own a lumber mill or yard, he did receive stumpage from timber sales.

Gernt was a pioneer in Fentress County's oil industry, privately drilling test wells. He helped to develop the coal and timber industries which still contribute significantly to the county's income and employment. In the early 1900s, Gernt financed several wells, known as the Poplar Cove Field and Riverton Field, in the western part of Fentress County. He was also a large stock holder in the Indian Creek Oil Company, a local company. Pipe lines were laid and oil was sold at Burkesville, Kentucky. Due to an exorbitant tax imposed by Pickett County, Tennessee, however, the pipe line was removed and the oil fields were eventually flooded with fresh water and destroyed. In the early 1920s Gernt drilled two wells three miles east of Allardt on the Burrville Quadrangle, the first wells in Fentress County on the quadrangle. Although no commercial oil or gas was found, Gernt did prove the existence of strata that would likely produce oil and gas. It was over sixty years later that the evidence found by Gernt proved correct. In the past ten years, hundreds of wells have been drilled in this area. Gernt's first well was only 4,000 feet south of Fentress County's largest producing oil field.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Bruno Gernt House

Item number 8

Page 3

Gernt was also interested and involved in the coal industry. Again, clear titles to lands aided in the development of this industry. Gernt personally purchased coal rights to many tracts of land, even when surface ownership was not clear. Remembering his first impression of the value of natural resources, Gernt was convinced of the value of these mineral rights. He was involved in the Wilder-Davidson complex, helping to organize mining operations, operating a store, purchasing coal rights so that he received royalty from mines. His personal interests were centered in the Little Laurel and Horse Pound mines. Gernt's influence on the building of the railroad extended to the coal mining industry. The Zenith mines in eastern Fentress County were made possible as a direct result of the railroad. The Zenith coal is the highest quality ever produced in the State of Tennessee. Much of the work done and the coal rights purchased by Bruno Gernt have not been realized, yet his family's holdings produce over 1,000 tons per day.

Gernt's residence was one of the first built in Allardt and is currently one of the three oldest extant homes in the community. Charles Weber, architect and brother-in-law of Gernt, directed its construction and upon its completion returned to Michigan. After Gernt's death in 1932, his widow remained in the home until 1939. Only direct descendants of Bruno and Selma have occupied the residence since, and these for relatively short periods of time. A list of the occupants since Mrs. Gernt and their residencies is as follows: Jenny Easley Baese (granddaughter) and Clyde Baese--1948-1951; David Gernt (grandson) and Lola Atkins Gernt--1952-1958; Marie Easley Johnson (granddaughter) and Kenneth Johnson--1958-1959; Janice Baese Robbins (great-granddaughter) and Randall Robbins--1967-1968 (summer months only). Since 1968 the home has been unoccupied.

The present owners purchased the residence from Bruno Gernt's grandchildren, Charles, David, Phillip, and Richard Gernt, and Doris Gernt Cowan. The purchase was made in 1985, and plans for restoration were initiated. There has not been, nor will there be, alteration of the original structure. Plans for the home include use as a Bed and Breakfast inn, a place to have local social events, and a community museum.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Bruno Gernt House

Item number 9

Page 2

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Allardt: A History. Compiled and updated by Allardt Homecoming Committee.  
Jamestown, 1986.

Dickenson, Dr. Calvin, Associate Director, Upper Cumberland Humanities and Social Science Institute.

Kemp, Dr. Homer, Director. Upper Cumberland Humanities and Social Science Institute.  
"Final Report: Fentress County, 1983-1984." County Survey report done for the Tennessee Historical Commission.

Fentress County. Deed Book Q, p. 19. Fentress County Courthouse. Jamestown, Tennessee.

Smith, Daniel. Personal evaluation and written description of architecture of Bruno Gernt home. December, 1985.

Tennessee Digest. Volume 131. 1914-1918.

21/2



110.02 (75)

52  
297 AC.<sup>c</sup>

FRITZSCHE

53  
50 AC.<sup>c</sup>

56  
9.7 AC

(2  
13)

51  
4.16 Ac.

Gernt, Bruno, House  
Base Line Road  
Allardt, Fentress County, Tennessee

BASE  
LINE

TAX MAP 1" = 400'

50  
2 Ac.

126.02  
1181.00

7.9 AC.<sup>c</sup>

5801  
7 AC.

CREEK

5802