

**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 Bills-McNeal Historic District

and/or common Same

2. Location

Irregular pattern along Lafayette, McNeal, Bills, Union,
street & number Lauderdale and Washington Streets not for publication

city, town Bolivar vicinity of congressional district Sixth

state Tennessee code 047 county Hardeman code 069

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use | |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Ownership

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Hardeman County Courthouse

street & number Court Square

city, town Bolivar state Tennessee 38008

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historical and Architectural Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date November 1976 federal state county local

depository for survey records Tennessee Historical Commission, 4721 Trousdale Drive

city, town Nashville state Tennessee

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved

except No. 5, which was moved
date June 1978

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Bolivar is the county seat of Hardeman County, which is located in southwestern Tennessee. The Bills-McNeal Historic District is located southwest of the court square and contains eleven buildings and one site; nine of these contribute to the significance of the district, and there are three other buildings. The district has nine residences, two church buildings, and a cemetery.

Buildings contributing to the character of the district.

1. Hudson-Wood-Fish House (322 South Washington Street): 1835, Federal 2 story frame house and ell with weatherboard siding, modern Greek Revival type portico, elliptical head light and side lights, one exterior and one interior brick gable chimney.
2. St. James Episcopal Church (West Lafayette Street): 1869, Gothic Revival, brick with attached tower incorporating entrance, buttresses, lancet windows, quatrefoil window in gable. Architects were Willis and Sloan. Church incorporates part of an 1840 church.
3. St. James Episcopal Chapel (West McNeal Street): 1870, Gothic Revival, frame with weatherboard siding, Gothic-style porch, bell steeple, entrance door with lancet headlight with tracery.
4. Ingram House, "The Columns" (303 West McNeal Street): 1860, remodeled 1909, Greek Revival, 2 story brick with paired parapetted chimneys at both gables, paired lunar window in each gable, Colonial Revival portico with clustered Ionic columns (1909), center attic dormer (1909), brick ell (1909), back porch incorporates one story Ionic columns originally used at entrance.
5. Wright-Smith House (West McNeal Street): 1867, 2 story frame house with weatherboard siding, bracketed cornice, front bay window with Italianate detailing, 1 story front porch. Moved in June 1978 from West Lafayette Street to avoid demolition.
6. Bills House, "The Pillars" (322 South Washington Street): ca. 1831, combination 2 story Federal style brick covered with hip on hip roof and 1½ story Greek Revival cottage with gable roof and entrance with rectangular head and side lights, one story front porch with fluted Roman Doric columns on brick piers with lattice fills between piers. One story additions form ell behind two story section. Outbuildings include 2 story brick schoolhouse with gable roof, one room frame with weatherboards, servants house with eaves brackets and gable roof, and square, frame, smokehouse (semi-ruin) with wood siding, pyramid roof covered with wood shingles.
10. Mark House "Wrens Nest" (308 Bills Street): ca. 1860, 1 story frame Gothic-Revival cottage with weatherboard siding, some round headed windows, built for John Houston Bills.
11. McNeal House (Bills and Union Street): 1856, Italianate, 2 story brick, stuccoed, symmetrical, slightly projecting center pavilion, square cupola in center of roof, iron front porch, side entrance in pedimented pavilion. Outbuildings: 1 story brick double slave quarters with inside gable chimneys, 1 story brick kitchen with center chimney, 1 room frame with weatherboards playhouse with gables, 2 polygonal gazebos with lattice siding, frame with weatherboards, octagonal wash house with brick chimney, frame with weatherboards smokehouse with pyramid roof.

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/ 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. 1825–1869 **Builder/Architect**

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Tennessee General Assembly created Hardeman County on October 16, 1823 from a portion of neighboring Hardin County. Named for Colonel Thomas Jones Hardeman, an early settler in the area, the new county was organized in November 1823. The county court chose as the temporary county seat Hatchie Town, which was located one mile north of Bolivar. Four commissioners were appointed by the state legislature to select a permanent county town, and they chose Bolivar; William Ramsey and Ezekiel Polk donated fifty acres for the new town on April 22, 1824, and the town was named for the Venezuelan independence leader Simon Bolivar. The county court appointed a committee to sell town lots and erect public buildings. Bolivar was incorporated in 1827.

The Bills-McNeal Historic District has six contributing residences, two churches and a cemetery. Five of the buildings were built before the Civil War, during the period 1831–60; the remaining three buildings were erected immediately after the war, and the newest of these, St. James Episcopal Chapel (No. 3), is nearly 110 years old.

The two church buildings in the district, St. James Episcopal Church (No. 2) and St. James Episcopal Chapel (No. 3) were designed by Willis and Sloan, who, together with Trigg, were the architects of the Hardeman County Courthouse. The church was a drastic remodeling of an 1840 building which stood on the site. Both buildings are Gothic Revival in style. The primary building, the church, was constructed of brick, while the chapel, which served as a Sunday School and parish house, was of frame construction. These are among the best examples of Gothic Revival ecclesiastical buildings found in West Tennessee.

There are three Greek Revival residences in the district; these are the Ingram House, "The Columns" (No.4); Bills House, "The Pillars"(No.6); and Hudson-Wood-Fish House (No.1). Again, the use of brick and wood as building materials are evident. Although the designs of the Ingram House and the Hudson-Wood-Fish House conform in plan and design to Greek Revival residences built in West Tennessee and other parts of the state, the Pillars is unique. Built by John Lea in 1831, it was purchased by John Houston Bills in 1837. He altered the house numerous times; it now reflects his varied talents and interests. An avid horticulturalist, Bills developed an extensive garden on the property. Alterations to the house and grounds were meticulously recorded in a diary which he kept from 1843–71. All three buildings are in excellent condition, and the owners carefully maintain them.

The McNeal House (No. 11) is the finest Italianate house in West Tennessee and among the most outstanding in the state. The use of filigreed cast iron porches is rare in Tennessee; the interior of the McNeal House is sumptuous and in excellent repair.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bolivar Bulletin Times, July 4, 1976.

Sophie and Paul Crane. Tennessee Taproots. Old Hickory, Tenn: Earle-Shields Publishers, c. 1976.

The Goodspeed Histories of Fayette and Hardeman Counties of Tennessee. Columbia, Tenn: Woodward & Stinson Printing Co., 1973 (originally published in 1887).

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreage of nominated property 30

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle name Bolivar East, Tenn.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

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| Zone | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | | | |

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| Zone | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | | | |

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| Zone | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary of the Bills-McNeal Historic District is shown as the red line on the accompanying tax assessment maps No. 79-A and No. 79-B for Bolivar, Hardeman County, Tennessee; these are drawn at a scale of 100 feet to the inch. The boundary of the

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

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Barbara Hume Church, Architectural Historian
Robert E. Dalton, Director of Field Services

organization Tennessee Historical Commission

date November 1979

street & number 4721 Trousdale Drive

telephone (615) 741-2371

city or town Nashville

state Tennessee 37219

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Harriet L. Hoge

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

date 11/16/79

For HCRS use only

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

Sally G. Oldham
Keeper of the National Register

date 2/12/80

Attest: *Beth Groves*
Chief of Registration

date 2/8/80

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Mr. Terry Fish 322 South Washington Street Bolivar, Tennessee 38008 | 11. Mr. J. W. McDonnell 1 Cherokee Drive Memphis, Tennessee 38111 |
| 2. St. James Episcopal Church West Lafayette Street Bolivar, Tennessee 38008 | 12. Mayor of Bolivar Bolivar City Hall Bolivar, Tennessee 38008 |
| 3. St. James Episcopal Church West Lafayette Street Bolivar, Tennessee 38008 | |
| 4. Mesdames Elizabeth, Zerelda, and Katherine Ingram 303 West McNeal Street Bolivar, Tennessee 38008 | |
| 5. Rev. Cordell Smith McNeal Street Bolivar, Tennessee 38008 | |
| 6. Ms. Charlotte Hooker, President Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities Robinhood Trail Lookout Mountain, Tennessee 37357 | |
| 7. Mrs. Robert T. Ingram Bills Street Bolivar, Tennessee 38008 | |
| 8. Mr. Charles Orr Bills Street Bolivar, Tennessee 38008 | |
| 9. Mr. James E. Eubanks South Lauderdale Street Bolivar, Tennessee 38008 | |
| 10. Mrs. Betty Mask Tuckaway Inn University of the South Sewanee, Tennessee 37375 | |

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12. Polk Cemetery (Union Street): Mid-19th century, many early residents of Bolivar, including Ezekiel Polk, are interred in this .22 acre cemetery; it also contains monuments which are excellent examples of the stonecutters art of the mid to late nineteenth century.

Buildings detracting from the integrity of the district.

7. Ingram House (Bills Street): 1966, 1 story ranch house, frame with brick veneer.
8. Orr House (Bills Street): 1968, 1½ story frame with brick veneer.
9. Eubanks House (317 South Lauderdale Street): 1966, 1 story frame ranch house with brick veneer.

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Italianate influence on essentially vernacular forms appears in the Mark House "Wren Nest (No. 7) and again in the Wright-Smith House (No. 5). The last-named building was moved from the northeast corner of Washington and Lafayette Streets a short distance to its present location on McNeal Street in June 1978. The need for additional bank parking space necessitated the move, and the present house site probably duplicates the original as it appeared when the Wright-Smith House was erected in 1867.

Three of the houses--"The Pillars" (No. 6), McNeal House (No. 11), and Ingram House, "The Columns" (No. 4) still retain many of their original or nineteenth-century dependencies. On the grounds of The Pillars are a brick school building, which served for a time as the town's library; a servant's house, and the ruins of a distinctive pyramidal roofed smokehouse also survive. A similar smokehouse in considerable better condition stands behind the McNeal House; other outbuildings include brick slave quarters and kitchen, frame playhouse, octagonal wash house, and two polygonal, latticed gazebos. In the garden of The Columns are a small frame barn or carriage house and a diminutive playhouse. That so many early outbuildings survive at all is most unusual and that these are in such excellent condition is rare.

Charles Perry Polk established the Polk Cemetery in 1824, the same year that Bolivar was established. One of the first persons interred there was Ezekiel Polk, the grandfather of President James K. Polk. The elder Polk wrote the following epitaph, which was later inscribed on his monument:

*Here lies the dust of old E. P.
One instance of mortality
Pennsylvania born, Car'lina bred
In Tennessee died on his bed
His youthful years he spent in pleasure
His latter days in gathering treasure;
From superstition liv'd quite free
And practiced strict morality,
To Holy cheats was never willing
To give one solitary shilling.*

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*He can foresee, and for foreseeing
He equals most in being
That church and state will join their pow'r
And misery on this country show'r;
And Methodists with their camp bawling
Will be the cause of this down-falling
An era not destined to see
It waits for poor posterity
First fruits and tenths are odious things
And so are Bishops, Priests and Kings*

It is reputed that during the 1844 presidential campaign, the supporters of James K. Polk had the controversial line referring to the Methodist expunged from the stone. Recently, the offending line was recarved on the monument.

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

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Information provided by James T. Stevens, Jr., and Ms. Faye Tennyson Davidson,
Hardeman County historians, both of Bolivar.

Smith, J. Frazer. White Pillars. Early Life and Architecture of the Lower
Mississippi Valley Country. New York: Bramhall House, 1941.

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

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nominated district was drawn to include the contributing properties and to exclude intrusive buildings. The buildings in the district are predominantly nineteenth and the area is surrounded by residences and commercial and professional buildings which were largely erected after World War II.