



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

March 15, 2011

Notice to file:

This property has been automatically entered in the National Register of Historic Places. This is due to the fact that the publication of our Federal Register Notice: "National Register of Historic Places: Pending Nominations and Other Actions" was delayed beyond our control to the point where the mandated 15 day public comment period ended after our required 45 day time frame to act on the nomination. If the 45th day falls on a weekend or Federal holiday, the property will be automatically listed the next business day. The nomination is technically adequate and meets the National Register criteria for evaluation, and thus, automatically listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 John's Place

other names/site number Ed's Place; McClellan's Cafe

2. Location

street & number 11 Gibson Avenue

NA ☐ not for publication

city or town Cookeville

NA ☐ vicinity

state Tennessee code TN county Putnam code 141 zip code 38501

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.)

E. Patrick McHenry Jr.
Signature of certifying official/Title

January 21, 2011
Date

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 Beall

3.15.11

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 1 Page 1 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

NAME

Originally called Ed's Place and McClellan's Café, the building has been known since 1957 as John's Place. This name has gained its own significance to the community and is the name that best reflects the historic importance of the building as a community center and pioneering integration center in the county.

John's Place
Name of Property

Putnam County, Tennessee
County and State

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

1

buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

0

Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: gable front

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls CONCRETE

roof METAL

other WOOD

Narrative Description

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

DESCRIPTION

Constructed in 1949 in Cookeville (26,656 pop. 2010), John's Place is a one story concrete block commercial building with a front-facing metal gable roof. The rectangular plan building has a small one story extension at the rear (west) elevation. The interior contains a variety of seating, bar area, small kitchen, and is embellished with a variety of materials. Around 1963, the inside was altered when the restaurant and bar were made into one room and the semi-circular (or horseshoe shaped) bar was added. There is a narrow porch on the façade and the building is surrounded by parking lots.

The east façade has four window openings and two door openings. All openings except one of the single-leaf doors are blocked over with plywood. The entry door is a modern paneled door. Lintels and sills are concrete. An aluminum canopy shields the door and blocked openings. Signs with "JOHN'S" and "PLACE" are located above the canopy, over the door openings. A "NO LOITERING" sign is found between two of the window openings. The gable field is covered with aluminum siding, as are the eaves. A sunburst pattern vent is at the gable apex.

The north elevation is plain except for two openings. One has a window air conditioner and the other is blocked over. A one story shed roof extension of concrete block is visible at the west edge of this elevation.

The rear or west elevation reveals the one story concrete block extension, a single leaf wood door, three blocked over window openings, and a blocked over door. The gable field is faced with aluminum siding and has a sunburst pattern vent and an opening to the attic. Two small openings are located in the one story extension.

Similar to the west elevation, the east elevation has blocked over openings and no embellishments. There is a concrete stoop with a single leaf door below a metal canopy serves as a service entrance. There are no openings on the one story extension.

Inside, John's Place has a concrete floor, acoustical tile ceiling, and concrete walls covered with Masonite paneling. The dominant feature of the building is the large semi-circular bar. Constructed with a vertical board wood base and capped with a Formica table surface, the bar takes up nearly half of the room. Behind the bar, numerous shelves, drawers, and cubbyholes have been built. The center area contains a cooler and storage areas. Until 1963, when the semi-circular bar was put in the building, the bar and restaurant were separated by a partition wall. The ceiling is slightly lower in the bar area and the bar and restaurant are separated at the ceiling level by the HVAC vent. Utilitarian vertical poles are located on the bar and they help support the ceiling. At the southeast corner there is a large padded seating area with a square Formica-topped table. Painted wood-like paneling is on the walls and there is a wood shelf to hold a small television. A small kitchen has been carved out of the southwest corner. Drywall, wood-like paneling, shelves, and cooking and cleaning spaces are in this room.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

North of the bar, the restaurant area has a stand up counter of wood and Formica. Three wood support poles are located near the counter. Two pool tables are in the middle of the room and the north side has bench seating and square wood tables along the wall. Above the tables is a large glass front wood display cabinet that holds memorabilia from Cookeville. Similar tables and seating are located on the south wall of the restaurant area. This wall also contains a faucet that once served alcohol.

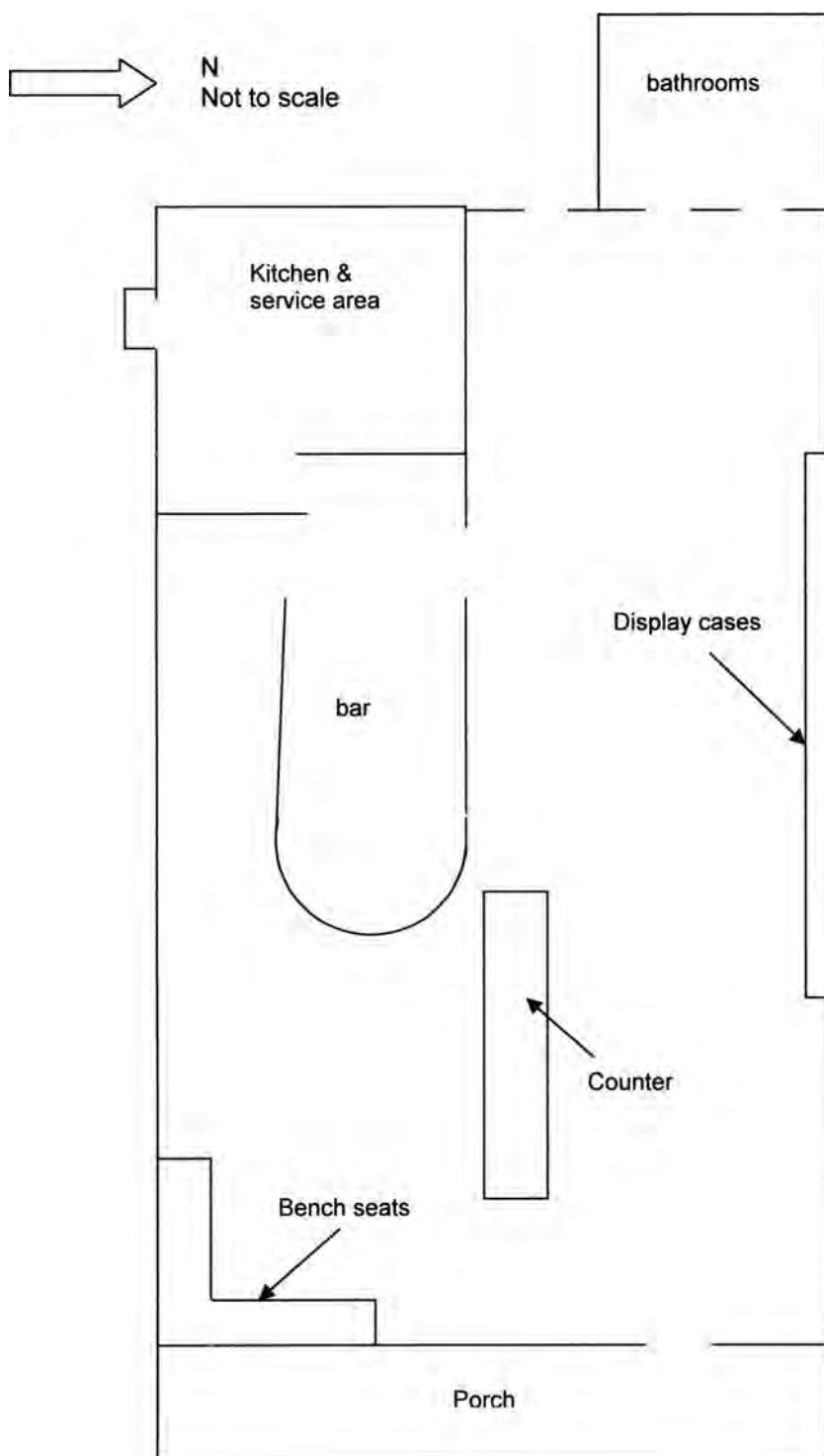
The west wall has three single leaf doors. Two lead to no-frills bathrooms and the third is an exit to the outside.

A circa 1955 photo of the building, when it was known as Ed's Place or McClellan's Café, shows a stepped parapet façade, the same awning and lights on the building, and multi-light windows (now covered). There was a hanging sign with McClellan's Café and a Coca-Cola logo, and a neon Ed's Place sign on the building. Part of the café was more formal, with wood chair rails and built in seating and tables. Window air conditioning units and the bar were in the building. (See figures 1-3.)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee



John's Place
Name of Property

Putnam County, Tennessee
County and State

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

(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** a birthplace or grave
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☒ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: black
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

Circa 1949-1973

Significant Dates

NA

Significant Person

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

McClellan, Ed

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 # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

John's Place is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for its local significance under criterion A due to its African American ethnic heritage in the areas of recreation/culture and social history in the Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee. The Cookeville business was founded by Ed McClellan in 1949 and later owned and operated by his brother John Lee McClellan, who became a prominent businessman in the black community of West Cookeville, and the first African American elected to public office in Putnam County. From its inception, John's Place catered to an integrated clientele in spite of the fact that Cookeville and Putnam County were segregated. John Lee McClellan played a significant role in the integration of Putnam County and the surrounding region, earning the respect of the larger white community while advancing the cause of Civil Rights. His work in that regard elevated him to a place of prominence among Putnam County's small African American community, making him the liaison along the region's racial divide. Though John's Place seemed little more than a honky-tonk or beer joint to the uninformed, it played a significant role in the history of post-World War II Cookeville, Putnam County, and Tennessee Technological University (TTU, Tennessee Tech) in Cookeville. At John Lee McClellan's death in 1973, Ed McClellan's son Shakey operated the business. John's Place continued to be a recreational and cultural center for the Cookeville community after John Lee's death; however, the unique and groundbreaking use of the facility as a meeting place for blacks and whites was now accepted, as other facilities in the city became integrated. Thus, the period of significance ends in 1973. The property meets criteria consideration G for properties gaining significance less than fifty years old.

Due to his inclusive attitudes John's Place became a popular integrated hang-out, attracting a number of Tennessee Tech students and faculty from the mid-1960s until the 1990s when competition from chain restaurants and other establishments caused a sharp decline in its clientele. John "Shakey" McClellan, took over the business and often boasted: "John's Place did more for integration and the Civil Rights movement here [Cookeville and the surrounding region] than the politicians. Lots of people around here, you know Crossville or Jamestown, never saw a black man or woman till they came to John's. This place integrated the Upper Cumberland! Lots of people met their future wives or husbands here. Lots of friendships that remain began here. We put a lot of people, black and white, through Tennessee Tech."¹

¹ Shakey McClellan interviewed by Michael E. Birdwell (Cookeville, Tennessee, June 21, 2008).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

Background

In the antebellum period, the Upper Cumberland region consisted mainly of small subsistence farms tended by individual families with minimal outside help. Planters were a rarity in the Upper Cumberland due to the irregular terrain and poor soil. Most slave holders in the region owned fewer than ten slaves. As a result of this, the African American population of the Upper Cumberland was relatively small, especially when compared to the labor-intensive areas of the Central Basin, located to the immediate west of the Eastern Highland Rim. There were a few self-sustaining African American communities established by freed blacks in the area, such as Free Hills in Clay County and Free State in Jackson County. The African American population of the Upper Cumberland has remained small, and relatively stable, though serious racial incidents occurred during Reconstruction. Governor William G. "Parson" Brownlow declared martial law in Overton and Jackson counties due to Ku Klux Klan activities. Jim Crow legislation prompted a number of African Americans to leave the region, and several counties in the area have not a single African American living within their borders.

Local folklore incorrectly dates the creation of John's Place as concurrent with the Tennessee Maneuvers, supposedly providing an R&R facility for African American troops.² During the Tennessee Maneuvers (1941-1944) the City Commission "suspended a number of local Blue Laws, bending the rules in a spirit of both patriotism and self-preservation."³ Cookeville was designated one of the R&R locations for the maneuvers, and each weekend thousands of soldiers disembarked from trains at the depot and flooded the West Side of town. Menzies Shoe Factory doubled as a USO for the duration, causing distress for many residents. While they supported the war effort, they feared their daughters would go "khaki wacky," and wanted the soldiers kept on a tight leash. Cookeville movie theatres opened on Sunday for the first time in their history and "beer gardens opened and establishments such as Poppy's Billiards and the Fox Café on the

² John's Place was established in the heart of the black community. Directly across the street on the south side was the "Colored Ball Fields." The fields provided a place for African Americans to play baseball, softball, and football. The "Colored Fair Grounds" sat on the other side of Highway 70. Those areas were where black troops were entertained during the maneuvers, thus the fiction that John's Place came into being during the maneuvers is understandable.

³ G. Frank Burns, Kelly Sergio, and Rex Bennett, "Somewhere in Tennessee: The Cumberland in Wartime, 1940-1947," *Rural Life and Culture of the Upper Cumberland*, Michael E. Birdwell and W. Calvin Dickinson, eds. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004): 240-241.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

West Side advertised: 'Cold Beer, 5 cents.' According to the rules only men in uniform could purchase alcohol, and soon a black market emerged with soldiers 'renting their uniforms to locals.'"⁴

In 1950, during the post-World War II years, the African American population of the fourteen county Upper Cumberland region only numbered 4,269. According to the 2000 census the black population dwindled to 3,858 out of a total population of 304,998.⁵ Though a historically small population, the African American community in the Upper Cumberland has made significant contributions to the region's history and culture. By encouraging blacks and whites to congregate at his business, John Lee McClellan pioneered modern race relations in the region, setting an example that has been emulated by his successors.

John's Place

Originally known as Ed's Place, the business belonged to John Lee's brother Ed McClellan. Constructed in 1949 by local builders in the community, it originally served as the second grocery store for the African American community on the outskirts of Cookeville's West Side.⁶ In 1950 Ed applied for a license to sell packaged beer and had the building partitioned with the grocery store on the north side while adding a restaurant to the south side of the building. At that point beer could not be consumed on the premises due to stipulations in the beer permit. On April 13, 1953, the Putnam County Beer Board revoked McClellan's license because of his building's proximity to

⁴ G. Frank Burns, Kelly Sergio and Rex Bennett, "Somewhere in Tennessee: The Cumberland in Wartime, 1940-1947," *Rural Life and Culture of the Upper Cumberland*, Michael E. Birdwell and W. Calvin Dickinson, eds. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004): 239-241. See also William and Marilyn Brinker, "Not Exactly the Hollywood Canteen," (Cookeville, Tennessee: Tennessee Technological University, 1998) and Woody McMillin, *In the Presence of Soldiers: The 2nd Army Maneuvers and Other World War II Activity in Tennessee* (Nashville: Horton Heights Press, 2010).

⁵ Wali R. Kharif, "Slavery, Freedom and Citizenship: African American Contributions to the Upper Cumberland," *Rural Life and Culture of the Upper Cumberland*, Michael E. Birdwell and W. Calvin Dickinson, eds. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004): 105-121; Randal Williams, "West End Church of Christ, National Register Nomination," (Cookeville, Tennessee: Upper Cumberland Development District, 2007): 8:3.

⁶ Farley Interview.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

Wright's Chapel Methodist Church less than 1,000 feet away.⁷ Wright's Chapel had been Ed's Place's next door neighbor since the building was constructed. To charge Ed McClellan with violation of the county ordinance after three years of operation smelled of conspiracy. According to local lore Sheriff Ernest Webster spearheaded the movement to revoke the license, arguing that selling beer to African Americans created a "public menace."⁸

During this time (1949-1953) Ed's Place continued to operate as a restaurant and grocery store. Due to its location near Highway 70, the restaurant flourished. Though Putnam County was segregated, Ed's Place served meals to an integrated clientele from the beginning. Known for its down-home southern cooking, Ed's Place featured traditional fare such as: fried chicken, fried cat fish, meat loaf, pig's feet, chili, beef stew, turnip and collard greens, pinto beans, mashed potatoes, corn bread, biscuits, sandwiches, a variety of pies, and sweet iced tea or fountain drinks.⁹ Ed McClellan's son Charles Edward worked in the restaurant, busing tables and sweeping the floors. His wife Mary Lou, his daughter Elizabeth, as well as Bea McClellan, Lilly B. Bohannon and Naomi Hale shared duties in the kitchen preparing the meals from scratch each day.¹⁰

As Robert Farley noted

From the beginning this was a place where black and white folk were welcome. Ed did that. We had workers, mill hands, coming here to eat. Lots of traffic came through here on Highway 70. We didn't have an Interstate. Lots of people stopped in here on their way from one place to another. Word got around about this place,

⁷ Ed McClellan, "State of Tennessee, County of Putnam: To the Beer Committee of Putnam County," (Cookeville, Tennessee, August 23, 1957): 1.

⁸ Farley Interview.

⁹ Mary Alice McClellan, Interviewed by Michael E. Birdwell (Cookeville, Tennessee, March 17, 2010); hereafter Mary Alice McClellan interview. Mary Alice McClellan recently began serving similar meals on Wednesday evenings. She allows her customers to choose the menu each preceding Wednesday, and prepares everything herself. John Dogs continue to be served daily, as do fried catfish, chicken wings, and hot pickled eggs.

¹⁰ Farley Interview.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

you know. This place had a steady clientele for years. I've seen it packed wall to wall with people. . . It's had an impact, in a good way, for a lot of life.¹¹

Local residents urged Ed McClellan to secure a new license to sell packaged beer in his grocery store. In 1957 McClellan circulated a petition among his friends and neighbors, which he submitted to the Putnam County Beer Board. He asked them to restore his beer license, stating

I am the owner of the premises and will conduct the operation of the business personally. I have not been convicted of any violation of the liquor law or of any crime involving moral turpitude during my entire life, and if granted this limited permit, I would rigidly enforce the law. . . I do not operate a dance hall in connection with or adjacent to the building, neither do I rent cabins in connection with or adjacent to the said business. I will not permit drunks, loose women or lawless characters to congregate at my place of business. . . [If granted a license I] will operate my business so as not to interfere with the public health, safety or morals."¹²

At the same time members of the black community wrote and circulated a petition of their own, which was also submitted to the Beer Board. Their complaint was more pointed. They urged the Beer Board to grant a new license to Ed McClellan and his brother John, allowing them to sell beer "in packaging only, none to be consumed on the premises."¹³ They attested to the upstanding character of Ed and John who were honest businessmen and community leaders. The signatories argued

We have our own churches and our own schools and so far as we know none of the colored race lives within the corporate limits of Cookeville, and due to this fact there is no public place in Putnam County where the colored race can procure their requirements and we feel that it is practically a matter of spite that their permits were

¹¹ Farley Interview

¹² Ed McClellan, "State of Tennessee, County of Putnam: To the Beer Committee of Putnam County," (Cookeville, Tennessee, August 23, 1957): 1.

¹³ "The Hon. Beer Board, Cookeville, Tennessee," (Cookeville, Tennessee, 1957): 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

revoked and they being the only colored people in Putnam County who handle beer, we deeply feel this is an injustice in being thus restricted, and that all the colored people in the whole immediate vicinity feel like they should have a right to this privilege and not be discriminated against because they are colored folks. . . we deeply feel the colored people should have in their immediate section the same rights and privileges as is granted to other citizens.¹⁴

Significantly, one of the signers of the petition was Reverend Jesse P. Miller the pastor of Wright's Chapel Methodist Church across the parking lot from Ed's Place. The McClellan brothers received a new license to sell packaged beer in the store adjacent to the restaurant as a result of the aforementioned efforts and the support of certain individuals from the white community who worked behind the scenes, including Clarence Newman, Bethel Newport, and T.C. Huddleston. The McClellan brothers agreed to rename their business "John's Place," upon the receipt of the new license.¹⁵ Ed's name continued to be associated with a business across the street, Ed's Dairy Mart. In the days before a McDonald's franchise was established near Interstate 40, Ed's Dairy Mart represented Cookeville's version of fast food. Like Ed's Place, Ed's Dairy Mart began its operation as an integrated establishment, serving hamburgers, French fries, and milk shakes to people of all ages and races.¹⁶ Ed's Dairy Mart went out of business in the late 1980s and is now known as Maddie's Place.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* The following people signed the petition: Herbert A. Verble, Billie Bohannon, Bobbie M. Hill, Isaac Carver, Betty L. McClellan, Radford Beasley, Jesse P. Miller, Nina Carver, William A. Howard, America Gipson, Butler Click, Robert Western, McHenry Myers, Bill Sadler, Louise Lancaster, Gerald Rawson, William Butler, Scott Hill, Charles Prigmore, Maron Prigmore, William Cartwright, Tom Pointer, Walter C. Buck, Evelyn Buck, Etta Robinson, Harry Burgess, Will Morford, Jim Bohannon, Leon Hale, Lee Allen Beaty, A. B. Carr, Naomi Carr, Bee Maddux, Morris Irby, William Lamberson, Connie L. Click, James A. Hayes, Alvin Montgomery, William Peake, Robert Farley, Tamella Hill, James A. Gist, James B. Goolsby, H. L. Goolsby, Ernest S. Cartwright, L.D. Western, Jerry Myers, Viola Bohannon, Mable Lancaster, Mary P. Roberts, Melvin Hardy, Alvin Hardy, Frank Peake, Agnes Stevens, and Melvin Carver.

¹⁵ Mary Alice McClellan Interview.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* Diane Birdwell Ragland remembered Ed's Dairy Mart fondly. She said that "as a child it was always a treat to go to Ed's Dairy Mart. The only other place like it, but not nearly as good, was Dairy Queen. All of the hamburgers at Ed's were hand made from local beef they bought from Foutch's. They made the fries fresh daily; they weren't frozen. And you know, as a kid, I don't think it even dawned on me that it was a black-owned business. Everybody went there." Diane Birdwell Ragland, Interviewed by Michael E. Birdwell (Disputanta, Virginia, May 4, 2010).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

The beer license granted in 1957 was later renewed, and granted broader privileges. John received permission to open a bar on the premises in the early 1960s. Determined to change the nature of the business, John and friends renovated the building shortly after receiving the new license. The partition between the restaurant and the store was removed and a horseshoe bar, designed by John, was installed in 1963. The bar's configuration made it easier for employees to serve their customers, and for customers to interact with each other. Several people commented that when John began selling beer that could be consumed on site, "he was strict."¹⁷ He instituted a policy demanding that people act appropriately. If someone got drunk or started to cause trouble, John Lee had them removed from the premises; once ejected, they could not come back. On the few occasions he deemed necessary, John Lee called the police for assistance.

After the McClellans earned the County Beer Board's permission to sell beer again, John Lee began to cultivate a working relationship with the new sheriff, Bill Bilyeau. They became good friends, and if the sheriff had a problem with anyone in the black community, he let John Lee know. John Lee addressed the situation and took care of whatever the problem was. He was, in essence, the de facto law enforcement official for West Cookeville. While he never used physical force, John Lee could be intimidating due to his size and his demeanor.¹⁸

Well-respected in the African American community, John Lee McClellan earned a reputation as an astute businessman and local civic leader. He worked tirelessly with both the black and white populations to bring integration peacefully to Cookeville. After the historic African American Darwin School burned down in 1963, McClellan acted as the point man for the black community, and Cookeville public schools desegregated without any serious racial incidents.¹⁹ John Lee McClellan made Putnam County history when he became the first African American elected to the

¹⁷ Farley Interview, Shakey McClellan Interview, Mary Alice McClellan Interview. John Edward Roberts Interview with Michael E. Birdwell (Cookeville, Tennessee, August 12, 2008).

¹⁸ Russell Clarkson, Interviewed by Michael E. Birdwell (Jackson, Tennessee, November 23, 2010); hereafter Clarkson Interview.

¹⁹ Wali R. Kharif, "Darwin School and Black Public Education: Cookeville in the Decade of the Brown Decision." *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* LVI (Spring 1997): 20-33; Kharif, Wali R. "School Desegregation in Clinton and Cookeville, Tennessee." *Tennessee State of the Nation*. 2nd Ed. W. Calvin Dickinson and Larry H. Whiteaker, eds. (New York: American Heritage, 1995): 233-242. The Darwin School taught African American children from several counties near Putnam and provided the only access to education for hundreds of children of color. The Darwin School was located approximately three blocks from where John's Place stands.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

Putnam County Court as a Justice of the Peace in 1968. As Robert Farley, a close friend of his said, "Everybody knew John McClellan."²⁰

Though John's Place continued to provide southern cooking, John Lee McClellan wanted to create a signature food item for his establishment in 1964. With family members he devised a special recipe and took it to a local meat packing company, Foutch's Meats.²¹ James Foutch worked with John Lee to produce the "John Dog." Though no longer made locally, the signature short, fat, deep-red hot dog remains the staple dish of the business. Split lengthwise and steamed in beer, the dog is dressed with John's homemade relish that remains a family secret. The dogs come in mild, hot or hot-hot varieties and have been a local favorite for nearly fifty years. They appeal to people across the spectrum, and for those who loved a John Dog but did not want to be seen emerging from an establishment that sold beer, John installed a drive-in window on the south side of the building beside the kitchen to satisfy their needs. John Dogs are literally world famous. Every time the Tennessee Tech Rugby team travels abroad, John Dogs go with them, and they have been eaten throughout the British Isles and New Zealand. John Dogs continue to satisfy people's hunger and were recently featured at a fundraiser for Cookeville's PBS affiliate WCTE.²² Shakey McClellan added his own signature dish to the John's menu when he created his own hot pickled egg recipe. Like the John Dog, it remains a closely guarded family secret.

Robert Farley agreed with Shakey McClellan that many students who came to Tennessee Tech from the Cumberland Plateau had little, if any, interaction with African Americans before moving to Cookeville. He argued, however, that "they might have seen their first black person in the cafeteria at Tech. All of the cooks at Tech were black until recently. The Gist family, the Gardenhires, the Woodses, they all fed Tech students for years."²³ But he continued, saying "Yes, it's true. John's Place sure did allow blacks and whites to mingle and there never was a bit of trouble. . . . Everybody was welcome here. We didn't care what color you were as long as your

²⁰ Robert Farley, Interviewed by Michael E. Birdwell, (Cookeville, Tennessee, October 12, 2009); hereafter Farley Interview. The Putnam County Court was the precursor of the County Commission

²¹ Foutch's Meats was established in 1910. They butchered and processed locally raised animals at their stockyard until the 1980s.

²² Mary Alice McClellan Interview; Farley Interview; WCTE "Blues and Brews" fundraiser, October 1, 2010; Dr. David Narrie, Interviewed by Michael E. Birdwell (Cookeville, Tennessee, November 16, 2010), hereafter Dr. Narrie Interview.

²³ Farley Interview

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 13 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

money was green . . . People could mix here and just be themselves. I can't recall a single episode of racial tension here, not one."²⁴

Until 1967 the black community, derogatorily referred to as "Bushtown," lay just west of Cookeville's corporate limits. Annexation of the African American community by Cookeville proved to be beneficial to both the black and white communities. Bobby Davis, a Cookeville pharmacist, was mayor at the time and saw an opportunity to improve living conditions for the African American community and update the local hospital's facilities. Thanks to Lyndon Baines Johnson's "Great Society," federal funds were available through his "War on Poverty" and other grant-in-aid programs. Roads in the black community were abysmal, and many unpaved. The black community had no sewer system, and most people got their water from wells, many of which were contaminated. "What was unusual about West Cookeville was that most of those people owned their own property," Davis said, so that War on Poverty funds offered a real opportunity to improve their quality of life.²⁵ John Lee McClellan assisted Davis immensely as they moved forward. The city applied for a grant through the Model Cities Program and received the "Hospital-West Cookeville Urban Renewal Grant," which made it possible to improve existing roads in West Cookeville, build new ones and add sidewalks in that section of town for the first time. The grant connected the black community to the city's sewer system and provided fluoridated water through new water lines, replacing their dependence upon uncertain well water. Because most people owned their own property in West Cookeville, they lived in their homes while the improvements took place. Many took advantage of other new federal programs, which provided an opportunity to renovate their homes or even build a new house on the same property. The overall result was a general improvement in the basic quality of life for the black community, whose health suffered for years due to the harsh conditions in which they lived. The program added to John Lee McClellan's visibility in both the black and white communities as a public-minded civic leader.²⁶

²⁴ *Ibid.* Until TTU outsourced its Food Services to Chartwells, African Americans "ran the cafeteria. Margaret McClellan was a great pastry cook. Gladys Crawford was their boss. Thomas and Barbara Martin cooked for Tech students and faculty for over thirty years in addition to the families Mr. Farley mentioned." Mary Alice McClellan Interview

²⁵ Bobby Davis, Interviewed by Michael E. Birdwell (Cookeville, Tennessee, November 17, 2010). Hereafter Davis Interview.

²⁶ Davis Interview. The grant also made it possible to improve and enlarge Cookeville General Hospital. It provided more parking and called for the demolition of substandard housing near the hospital that threatened public health. Bobby Davis said that as far as he could recall no houses in West Cookeville faced demolition, because the citizens took pride in their homes in spite of the conditions they lived in. See also Laura E. Clemons, *The People's Hospital: A*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 14 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

When West Cookeville was annexed in 1967 John's Place became the first business that could legally sell beer within the city limits since World War II.²⁷ John Lee and Shakey McClellan took a personal interest in Tennessee Tech. Shakey was the first African American who enrolled at TTU in 1964 who did not play collegiate sports.²⁸ Though he did not attend Tennessee Tech on an athletic scholarship, Shakey was an ardent supporter of Golden Eagles athletic teams and in 2009 he was posthumously inducted into Tennessee Tech's Sports Hall of Fame.²⁹ Russell Clarkson, who enrolled at TTU in 1964, said that Shakey was the first black student he encountered in his life, and they had several classes together. Clarkson and Shakey became life-long friends. In 1972 Clarkson went to work for Rooster Williams, the owner of the local Budweiser Distributor and later married Williams's daughter. "We made deliveries to John's Place six days a week. It was the only place we stocked every day, because they sold more beer than any other business we serviced."³⁰

In those days, Clarkson said, John's had a variety of distinct clientele. The business opened at 7:00 a.m. and older black couples began filing into the place. They ordered breakfast, which consisted mainly of egg dishes and coffee. Some of the men ordered a quart of beer which they nursed for three hours. During that time they caught up on local gossip, talked about the world's problems, and simply enjoyed each other's company. From ten on the clientele were integrated. There was generally a lull from ten to eleven. The time from eleven to one was generally a hectic

History of Cookeville Regional Medical Center, 1950-2010 (Cookeville, Tennessee: The Foundation of the Cookeville Regional Medical Center, 2010).

²⁷ Bobby Davis Interview; Mary Alice McClellan Interview. Davis said that when John's Place was annexed and became the first establishment allowed to sell beer inside the city limits, the Holiday Inn applied for a license and was denied. This led to a lawsuit which the city lost, and the Holiday Inn became the second business that could legally sell beer in the city limits.

²⁸ Harvey G. Neufeldt and W. Calvin Dickinson. *The Search for Identity: A History of Tennessee Technological University, 1915-1985* (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1991): 129. Shakey originally attended Austin Peay on a basketball scholarship, but transferred to TTU when the opportunity arose.

²⁹ Shakey died in October, 2009 of complications associated with diabetes, just weeks before he was inducted into the TTU Sports Hall of Fame.

³⁰ Clarkson Interview. Russell Clarkson noted that, "there are still two places in most of Tennessee that remain segregated—churches and funeral homes; but not so in Cookeville. There are no black funeral homes and black and white alike use the same undertakers. It's not unusual to see blacks and whites in churches or at funeral homes in Cookeville. That was new to me, and certainly is not the case in Jackson (where he resides)."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 15 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

time full of activity. The lunch crowd showed up inside and outside the building. Cars lined up to order sacks of John Dogs and chips at the drive-in window, while workers of various stripes gathered inside to eat lunch and visit. Then the second lull of the day transpired between one and 3:00 p.m. Blue collar workers, both black and white, began showing up between three and five to have a beer and a snack before going home to supper. As the blue collar workers filed out the "suits started showing up," and professionals—doctors, lawyers, ministers, professors—took their places at the bar or booths, remaining until 6:30 or 7:00 p.m. After 7:00 p.m. and until closing time at midnight a different crowd, primarily Tech students and staff, took over. John's Place was popular with people from all walks of life and bridged the gap between the races and the social classes.³¹

A fearless competitor, Shakey earned a reputation as an excellent racquet ball player, winning numerous local championships. Shakey also played tennis exceptionally well and encouraged local black youths to pick up a sport then primarily played by white people. Prior to the creation of the Cookeville Community Center in the late 1960s, there were no public tennis courts in Cookeville. He supported TTU athletes in a number of ways and took a special interest in the tennis team, and often volunteered his time, assisting the coaches. The McClellans financially supported numerous Tennessee Tech students through employment, loans, and outright monetary gifts. Anne Klein recalled that Shakey not only lent money to students at no interest, but also hired tutors for students struggling to pass their classes.³²

The relationship between John's Place and Tennessee Tech is significant. Thousands of students and faculty visited John's over the years, including numerous TTU athletes who left Tennessee Tech for professional careers, including Lonnie Warwick of the famed Minnesota Vikings' "Purple People Eaters," Larry Schreiber of the San Francisco 49ers, Jim Youngblood of the Los Angeles Rams, and Elois Grooms who played for the New Orleans Saints. Alumni of a certain age who visit Cookeville generally go to two places out of nostalgia: Ralph's Donuts and John's Place. Both establishments catered to the general population and TTU. When John's had to close at midnight prior to 1993, patrons often left John's and went directly to Ralph's. Each year at Homecoming John's Place acts as the rendezvous point for hundreds of alumni. Mary Alice McClellan, the current owner, extends the size of the building by erecting a large tent for the overflow crowd, and serves barbecued ribs, pulled pork, pinto beans, and baked beans in addition to the usual John Dog and fried catfish. Ralph's continues to produce some of the best doughnuts in the area with a variety of specialties, and they recently began serving complete breakfasts.

Over the years numerous students and faculty convened at John's Place and engaged in serious discussions about a variety of academic topics. Others went there to simply enjoy a cold beer and a John Dog. Students advised each other about what classes to take or avoid, while professors talked about current research or university politics. "God only knows how many ideas for Master's

³¹ Clarkson Interview.³² Ann Klein, Interviewed by Michael E. Birdwell (Cookeville, Tennessee, November 13, 2010).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 16 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

Thesis or Grant Proposals were hatched at John's Place. Some were great ideas, and others were justifiably skewered, never to be mentioned again. John's provided a relaxed atmosphere where people could bounce ideas off each other and really hash them out."³³

The Tennessee Tech Rugby Club was started by TTU student Rick Knowles in the spring of 1976. John's Place acted as their club house from the beginning. Dr. David Narrie acted as the club's faculty sponsor. When TTU hosted rugby matches, the post game celebrations took place at John's Place. Narrie commented that when he first moved to Cookeville there were only two places for students to gather off campus, John's Place and Bud's. He fondly remembered students interacting with the local black population and there being no racial tension. Because Shakey ran a tight ship, and tolerated no nonsense, John's Place provided a safe venue for students and townspeople to mingle. John's Place continues to act as the official sponsor of the Tech Rugby Club.³⁴

John's Place brought people of all types together, providing a venue for them to interact freely. Town and gown, black and white, rich and poor, found common ground at John's. For a region largely lacking in racial diversity, John's Place initiated many individuals first interaction with a person of color. Stereotypes were confronted head on, and John's Place helped folks see persons for who they were, not the color of their skin. It is an Upper Cumberland landmark that deserves to be acknowledged and preserved.

Acknowledgments

The information in this nomination would not have been possible without the cooperation of numerous individuals. Mary Alice McClellan, Shakey McClellan, Robert Farley, and John Edward Roberts provided invaluable information, and corrected a number of mistakes in various drafts of the nomination. Steve Farley supplied the historic photographs. Becky Magura and Mark Dudney of WCTE provided assistance and featured John's Place during Black History Month in 2008, and are working on a thirty minute documentary about John's Place that will air in February 2011. Don Dickerson, an attorney and close friend of Shakey McClellan read through the nomination and corrected errors before it was submitted to the Tennessee Historical Commission staff. Dr. Wali Kharif and Dr. Calvin Dickinson provided assistance and insight concerning the research. Karla Clark arranged the interview with Charles Hand. Laura Clemons suggested interviewing former mayor Bobby Davis, who provided important contextual and factual information. Hal Harder made helpful suggestions that improved the narrative. Randy Williams of the Upper Cumberland Development District provided guidance and editorial suggestions in composing the nomination

³³ Dr. Homer Kemp, Interviewed by Michael E. Birdwell (Cookeville, Tennessee, August 14, 2009). In the 1980s Reverend Jesse B. Garner, assistant pastor at First Presbyterian Church often went to John's for lunch. He referred to John's Place as the "West Side Theological Office."

³⁴ Dr. Narrie Interview.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 17 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

form, and placing John's Place in its proper context. Claudette Stager and Brian Beadles of the Tennessee Historical Commission made two trips to John's Place and added their much appreciated expertise in preparing the nomination.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 18 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 19 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

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John's Place
Name of Property

Putnam County, Tennessee
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre Cookeville West 326 NE

UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 633160 4003527
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.)

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael Birdwell/ Professor and Claudette Stager/Historic Preservation Specialist
organization TN Technological University/TN Historical Commission date _____
street & number Department of History/2941 Lebanon Road telephone _____
city or town Cookeville/Nashville state TN zip code _____

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 Mary Alice McClellan
street & number 625 Carver Street telephone 931/526-5255
city or town Cookeville state TN zip code 38501

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.

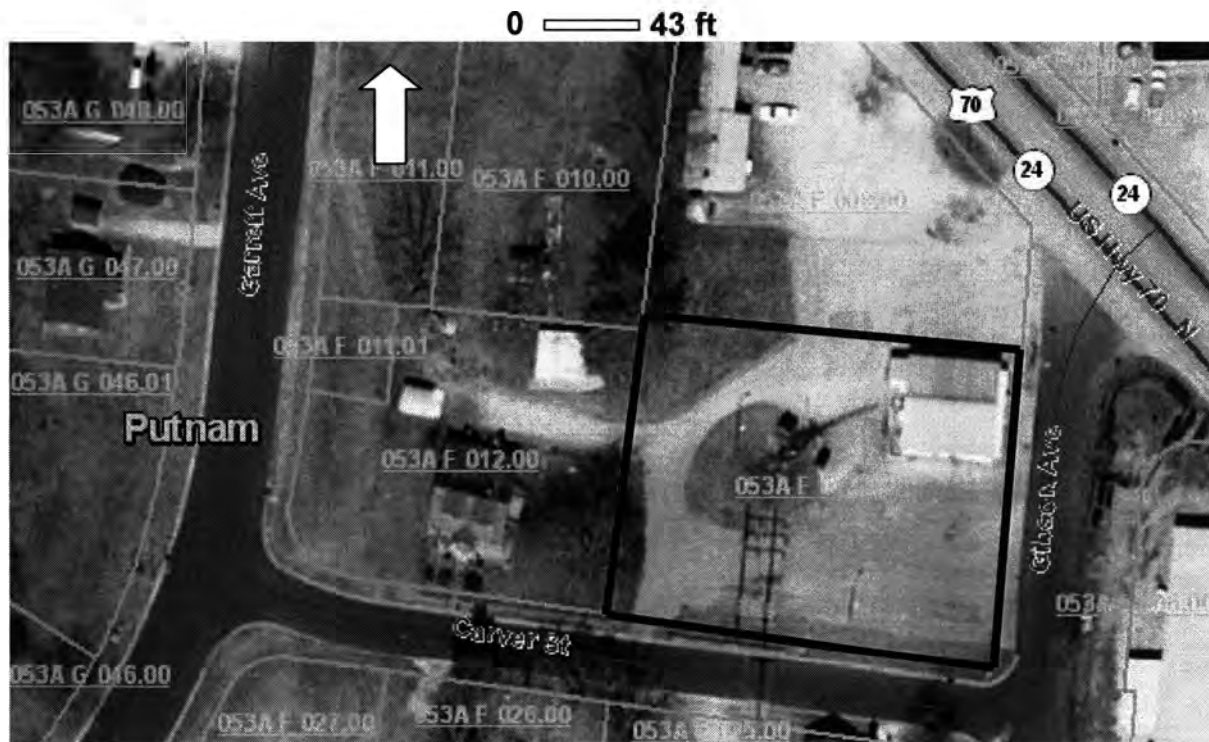
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 20 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes all of parcel 053AF013.00. This is all the land associated with the property.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number photos Page 21 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo by: Brian Beadles
Date: March 2010
Digital copy: Tennessee Historical Commission

East façade, facing west
1 of 10

East façade and south elevation, facing northwest
2 of 10

South and west elevations, facing northeast
3 of 10

North and west elevations, facing southeast
4 of 10

East façade and north elevation, facing southwest
5 of 10

Interior showing bar, facing west
6 of 10

Interior, bar, facing west
7 of 10

Interior, facing northwest from bar
8 of 10

Interior, facing southeast
9 of 10

Interior, facing east towards entry
10 of 10

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number figures Page 22 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee



Figure 1. Circa 1955 photo



Figures 2 and 3. 1950s. In Figure 2, Ed McClellan is in front with suit and mustache.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number figures Page 23 John's Place
Putnam County, Tennessee



Figure 4.



Figure 5. Shakey McClellan, Ed McClellan's son who ran the business beginning in 1973.

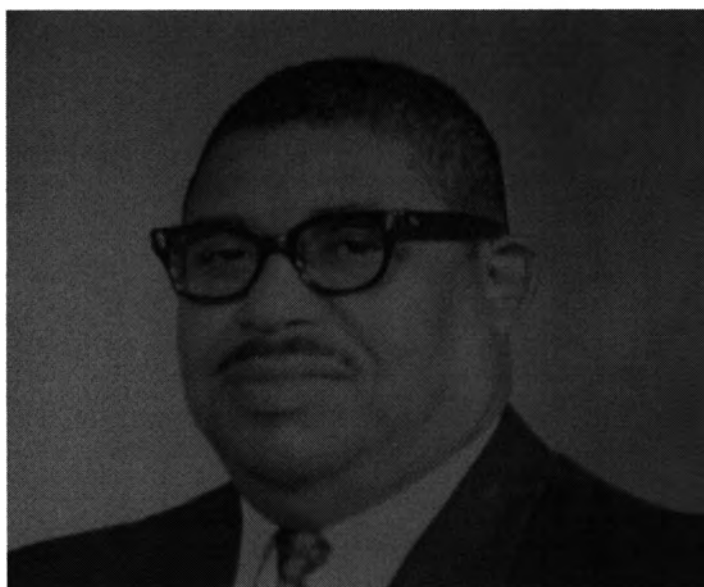


Figure 6. John McClellan

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY John's Place
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TENNESSEE, Putnam

DATE RECEIVED: 1/28/11 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/02/11
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 3/17/11 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/15/11
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 11000085

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: Y
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT ☐ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Automatic Listing

*Locally important business serving an integrated clientele in an officially
segregated town. Strong local support and acknowledgement of importance*

RECOM./CRITERIA *Accept*

REVIEWER *J. Shy*

TELEPHONE

DISCIPLINE

DATE *3/14/2011*

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the
nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



JOHN'S

PLACE

OITEPING



JOHN'S

PLACE

OPENING

















3856 1 SE
(DODDSON BRANCH)

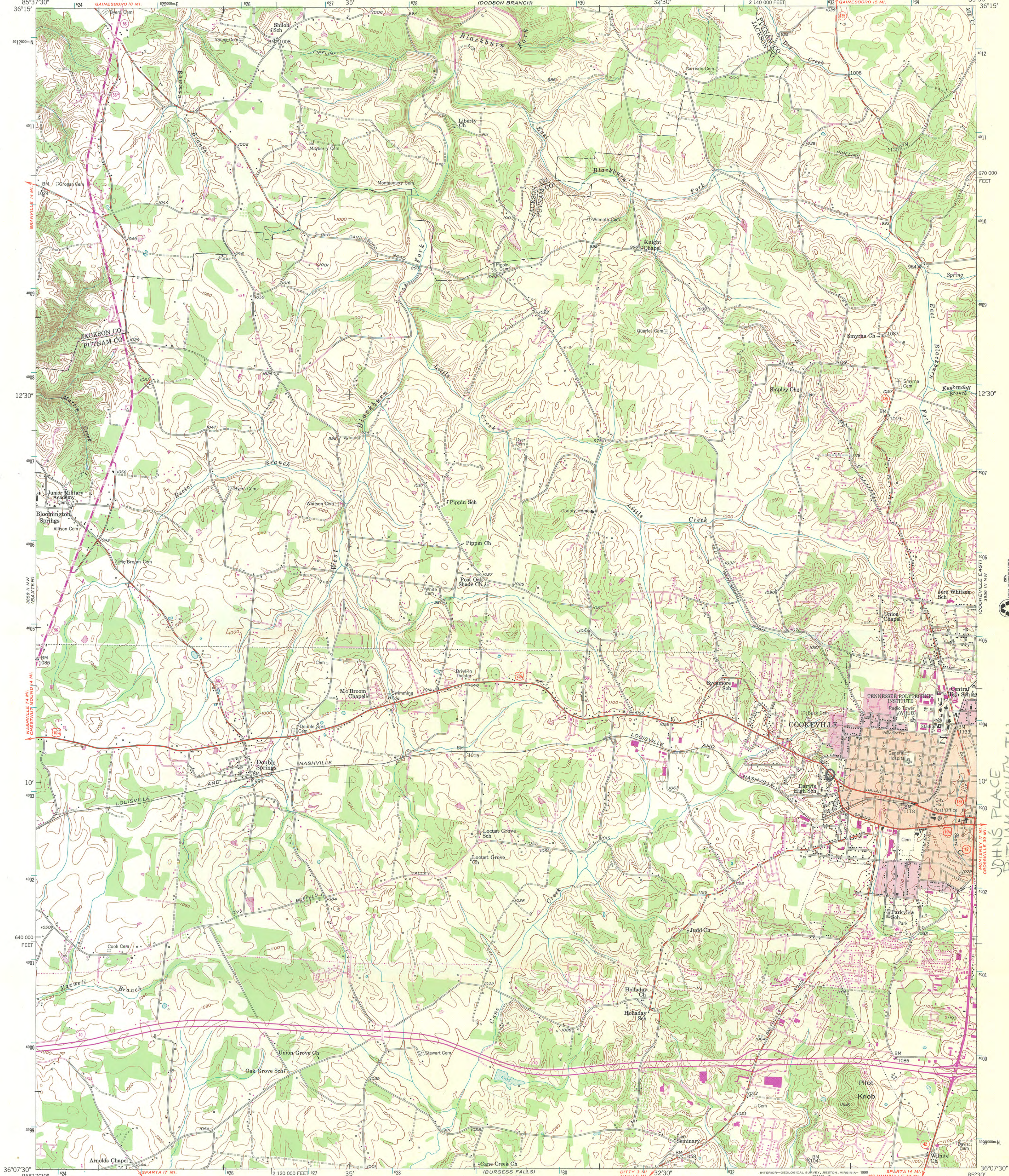


U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
DIVISION OF GEOLOGY

COOKEVILLE WEST QUADRANGLE
TENNESSEE
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

3856 1 SE
(DODDSON BRANCH)



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography from aerial photographs by multiplex methods

Aerial photographs taken 1950. Field check 1953

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum

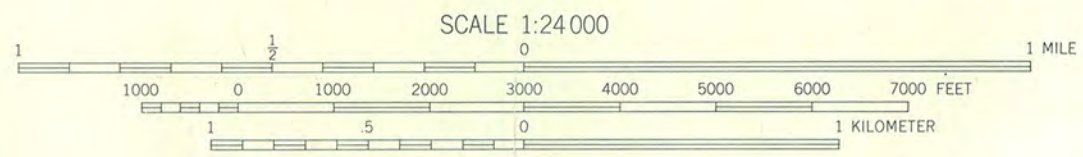
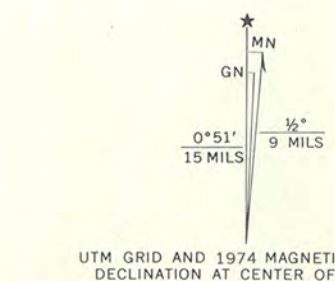
10,000-foot grid based on Tennessee coordinate system

Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown

1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 16, shown in blue

Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with State of Tennessee agencies from aerial photographs taken 1974. This information not field checked

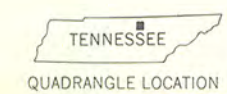
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225
AND TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION, DIVISION OF GEOLOGY,
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty 4 LANE 16 LANE Light-duty
Medium-duty 4 LANE 16 LANE Unimproved dirt
U.S. Route State Route
Interstate Route



COOKEVILLE WEST, TENN.

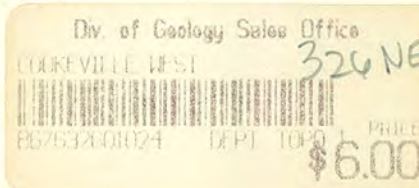
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PHOTOINSPECTED 1981

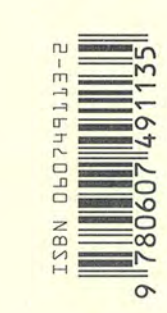
1953

PHOTOREVISED 1974

AMS 3856 11 NE-SERIES V841



JOHN'S PLACE
PUTNAM COUNTY TN
16/633160/4003527





CENTRAL DISTRIBUTORS, INC.

Russell Clarkson
361 Hwy 45 Bypass
Jackson, TN 38305
January 17, 2011

E. Patrick McIntyre, Jr.
Executive Director
Tennessee Historical Commission
2941 Lebanon Road
Nashville, TN 37243-0442

Ref: John's Place

Dear Mr. McIntyre,

This letter is to encourage you and the Tennessee Historical Commission to look kindly at John's Place and to place it in a prominent place in Tennessee history. In my opinion this place should be protected and preserved for future generations.

On a personal note; I was a student at Tennessee Tech from September 1964 through December 1968 graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree. I met Shakey the first day of class, fall 1964; and we remained close friends until his death in 2008.

I think Shakey, John Lee, Mary Alice, and John's Place did more positive things for race relations and integration in and for the Upper Cumberland area during the 60's, 70's, and 80's than any other person or entity I know.

John Lee, Mary Alice, and Shakey did many things for TTU students and the Cookeville residents to bring all demographics together.

I am fortunate to have met scores of people at John's Place and have remained friends with many of them for over 40 years.

If I can be of any help, answer any questions or otherwise assist in your process please feel free to contact me. My cell phone is 731-234-0225, my e-mail is RTCLARKSON@MSN.COM and my office is 731-423-3676

Best Regards,

Russell T. Clarkson



TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION
2941 LEBANON ROAD
NASHVILLE, TN 37243-0442
(615) 532-1550

JAN 28 2011

January 21, 2011

Carol Shull
Keeper of the National Register
National Park Service
National Register Branch
1201 Eye Street NW
8th floor
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find the documentation to nominate *John's Place* to the National Register of Historic Places.

If you have any questions or if more information is needed, contact Claudette Stager at 615/532-1550, extension 105 or Claudette.stager@tn.gov.

Sincerely,

E. Patrick McIntyre, Jr.
State Historic Preservation Officer

EPM:cs

Enclosures