

Nancy Belle Holley House
About 1 mi. N of the Old Natchez
Trace, 0.6 mi. E of the Prentiss-
Tishomingo County line, 6.5 mi.
SW of the intersection of State
Rte. 25 and 30
Tishomingo Vicinity
Tishomingo County
Mississippi

HABS No. MS-178

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. MS-178

NANCY BELLE HOLLEY HOUSE

Location: About 1 mile north of the Old Natchez Trace, .6 mile east of the Prentiss-Tishomingo County line. 6.5 miles southwest of the intersection of State Routes 25 and 30, Tishomingo Vicinity, Tishomingo County, Mississippi.

USGS Paden SE 7 1/2' Quadrangle, UTM Coordinates:
16.379085.3830810.

Present Owner: United States of America (August 1978).

Present Use: Vacant.

Significance: The Nancy Belle Holley House is a good example of the expansion of a farm house by attaching a duplicate of the original house alongside. It is also a good example of a house built, at both stages of construction, by neighbors assisting the owner.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The house was built during the late summer of 1904. Archie Van Buren Holley, the present occupant, remembers that the beginning of construction coincided with the birth of his younger brother, Willie Franklin Holley, on August 11, 1904.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The house is located in the southeast quarter of Section 26, Township 5 South, Range 9 East, Tishomingo County, Mississippi. Reference to the title can be found in the Office of the Clerk of the Chancery Court, Tishomingo County Courthouse, Iuka, Mississippi.

1905 The land on which the house stands was purchased by Nancy Belle Holley from her farther, Will H. Shackelford. The transfer of land did not occur until November 1905--about a year later than the construction date remembered by Archie V. Holley.

Nancy Holley purchased about 71 acres in the southeast and southwest quarters of Section 26, for the sum of \$350. The warranty deed dated November 16, 1905 describes the land as follows:

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"Beginning at the Southwest corner of the South East fourth of Section (26) Township (5) Range (9) Running East 60 Rods [990 feet], thence North 60 Rods [990 feet], Thence west (20 Rods [330 feet], Thence North 30 Rods [495 feet], Thence East 20 Rods [330 feet], Thence North 30 Rods [495 feet], Thence East 20 Rods [330 feet], Thence North 30 Rods [495 feet], Thence West 60 Rods [990 feet], Thence South 120 Rods [1980 feet] to beginning corner containing 41 acres more or less. Also 30 acres, more or less, beginning at the South East corner of the South West fourth of said Section, Township and Range, running North 100 Rods [1650 feet], Thence south with the meanderings of said creek to South boundary line of said fourth, thence East to the beginning corner." (Tishomingo Co. Deed Book P-8, page 43)

1978 The land remained in the Holley family until acquired by the United States of America for the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Project, through a warranty deed dated July 25, 1978 (Tishomingo Co. Deed Book B-92, pages 725-729).

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Nancy Holley had recently been widowed, so the house was built by men from neighboring farms. The lumber for the house was cut and sawed on the land of J. A. J. Smith, lying along Riddle Creek about 1 mile to the west of the Holley House.
5. Original construction: This structure began as a one-room house with rear kitchen and front porch, half of which was enclosed as a 'side room' or 'junk room.' The original (1904) part of the house was the east half of the house as found in 1978. (See floor plan, included with Part II., Architectural Information.) The main room measured approximately 16 feet square, the kitchen 16' by 9' and the porch 16' by 7' (with 8' by 7' side room occupying the west half of the porch). There was a 'cat-tail' [mud and grass] chimney on the east side of the main room. (See Supplemental Material.) The front door has always been in the same position on the south elevation. The only window in the 1904 house was a window with horizontally sliding sash just south of the chimney (similar to the present kitchen window on the north elevation).

The original house was constructed on hewn sills resting on stone blocks. Framing consisted of 4"-square corner posts joined at the top by 2" by 4" plates and girts, and braced with diagonal 2" by 4" members. The house was sheathed with vertical planks nailed to the horizontal structural timbers. The roof was covered with wood shingles. (Interview with Archie Holley)

6. Alterations and additions: In the mid-1920s the house was doubled in size, when the west half was added. Like the original main room, the main added room measured about 16 feet square, with a smaller room extending to the rear in line with the rear of the original kitchen. The old 'side room' on the front porch was removed, and a porch 7' deep was built across the entire 32' front of the house. The kitchen of the original house (northeast room) was enlarged by removing the west wall and erecting a partition 5' farther to the west, creating an unequal division of the rear portion of the house. With the exception of some newly sawn structural timbers, the 1920s addition was built of lumber salvaged from a late nineteenth century Shackelford-Holley house that stood about one half mile to the east of this house. The mantel in the east room was installed at this time and was also salvaged from the abandoned house. New sash was installed in both the east (original) and west (new) rooms. This is the sash that could be seen in 1978.

During the 1930s a 9'-square storage cellar for fruits and vegetables and dairy products was dug in the northeast corner of the house. It was reached from the outside by steps just north of the chimney.

In the late 1940s the cat-tail chimney was replaced by a brick chimney; the wood shingle roof was replaced with standing-seam metal; and the exterior walls were sheathed with asphalt shingles stamped with a brick pattern. At this time, electric power was brought to the house. The 1920s porch was replaced, and the partial cellar was filled with dirt, about 1970.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Structure:

Nancy Belle Holley was born January 18, 1871, the daughter of Will H. and Mary A. Shackelford, who lived in a house that stood until the 1930s about 200 feet southwest of the house here described. She was married in the early 1890s to James Franklin Holley, who was raised about 6 miles to the west in Prentiss County.

Two daughters, Lennie Mae and Ida Mae Holley, were born in the mid-1890s; Archie VanBuren Holley was born December 31, 1901, and Willie Franklin Holley was born August 11, 1904. James and Nancy Belle Holley were at that time living in a house located about half a mile to the east of this one.

James died early in the year 1904, leaving a thirty-three year old widow, three small children, and one yet to be born. Nancy Belle Holley's father suggested that she leave the bottomland farmhouse and build a new house closer to his own, alongside the road to Mackeys Creek Church. Archie Holley, her son, states that the house was built with the help of men from nearby farms and that his mother moved into the new house in the fall of 1904, even before the chimney was finished or the doors were hung.

Before the end of 1905, Will Shackelford sold his daughter about 71 acres of land, extending from Riddle Creek on the west to just east of the road, excluding the several acres on which his own house stood.

When Nancy Belle Holley's two sons were in their early twenties, the house was doubled in size. The mother and daughters stayed in the older east half of the house, with the chimney and access to the kitchen; the sons moved into the newer west half of the house. As before, the house was constructed with the help of the people nearby. Nancy Belle Holley made them the offer, "When you men get this house done, I'll give you a dance." (Interview with Archie Holley)

Nancy Holley gave the house to her two sons during the 1930s, and at some point, Archie Holley acquired his younger brother's interest in the house. (Legal documents relating to these transactions have not been found.) Nancy Belle Holley died May 28, 1971, at the age of 92, and was buried in Mackeys Creek Cemetery, a little over half a mile to the west of the home where she raised her family.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed Records, Office of Chancery Clerk, Tishomingo County Courthouse, Iuka, Mississippi.

Interviews:

Archie VanBuren Holley, Route 2, Tishomingo, Miss. 38873. August 10, 1978 and August 23-24, 1978. A.V. Holley (born 1901) is the elder son of Nancy Belle Holley and has recollection of the house over the almost entire seventy-four years he has lived in it.

Dalton Ward, Route 6, Booneville, Mississippi, August 24, 1978. Ward (born 1902) provided information on the construction of 'cat-tail' chimneys. His account is included with Supplemental Material.

Cemeteries:

Mackeys Creek Cemetery, Southwest Quarter of Section 26, Township 5 South, Range 9 East. No grave has been found for James Franklin Holley (husband of Nancy Belle Holley), said to be buried in Little Brown Cemetery, Prentiss County.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Mary Floyd Summers, "Tishomingo County, 1836-1860." M. A. thesis. University of Mississippi, 1957.

D. Supplemental Material: (Dalton Ward on cat-tail chimneys)

Prepared by J. A. Chewning
Inventory Project Supervisor
Historic American Buildings
Survey
August 1978

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is a good example of a house that began with a one-room core (with smaller rear room and front porch) and was later expanded into a house with two main rooms (with associated rear rooms and continuous front porch).
2. Condition of fabric: Well-maintained.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: This one-story house is approximately 32'-0" (four-bay front) by 32'-0". There are two rooms 16'-square; two rear rooms, 9' deep by 11'-6" wide (northwest room) and 9' by 20'-6" wide (northeast room); and a 7' porch extending across the entire front of the house. (See floor plan.)

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2. Foundations: The house is raised approximately 18" above grade, and the sills rest variously on stones, vertical logs, and concrete blocks.
3. Wall construction, finish, and color: The entire exterior is sheathed with horizontal strips of asphalt siding stamped with a pattern that simulates brick. This material is buff to light brown in color. Beneath the asphalt siding (applied about 1946) are the original vertical plank walls, with batten strips over the gaps between the boards. Planks in the original (1904) east half of the house are 12" wide, circular sawn. Those in the added (1920s) west half of the house are 10" wide, circular sawn.
4. Structural system, framing: The house is constructed of wood framing, nailed together, and sheathed with vertical boards. In the original east half of the house, the sills are hewn from 6" to 8" logs (flattened on top and bottom only). In the added west half of the house, the sills are sawn 6" by 8" timbers. The east half of the house has 6"-diameter pine logs, running from front to back, for floor joists. The west half of the house has 2 x 6 joists running from front to back. Both parts of the house have 4"-square corner posts, with diagonal braces falling from posts to sills, but no studs, except at doors and windows. The east half of the house has 2 x 4 plates and girts joining the corner posts, the west half of the house has 2 x 6 plates and girts.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: There is a porch 7' deep across the entire 32' front of the house, with posts spaced every 8'. This porch rests on concrete blocks and was built about 1970 to replace one of similar appearance built when the house was enlarged in the 1920s. Concrete block steps are placed on line with the front door, near the east end of the porch. There is also a stone stepping block at the kitchen door on the east elevation, but no stoop by the unused door to the northwest rear room.
6. Chimneys: An exterior chimney abuts the east wall at the ridge line of the roof. It is constructed of red brick, laid in running bond, with shoulders about 6' from the ground. The brick chimney was built about 1946 to replace a larger 'cat-tail' [mud and grass] chimney, 6' wide and 4' deep and 18" thick at the hearth.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The main door into the east room measures 32" by 75" and consists of three vertical boards joined by two chamfered rails. The other front door, from the front porch into the west room, measures 36" by 76" and consists of six-and-a-half vertical boards joined by three plain rails. The door on the east side of the house, leading to the kitchen, measures 25" by 72" and consists of five vertical boards joined by two chamfered rails. The unused door on the north side of the house, into the northwest rear room, measures 32" by 69" and consists of four vertical boards joined by three chamfered rails. All doors open inward and are hung on recessed hinges. The front and kitchen doors have screen doors that open outward.
- b. Windows: There are only four windows in the present house. Each of the two front windows is positioned between the doors and the corner of the house. The east front window measures 27" by 64", with double hung, four-over-four sash, glazed with 12" by 14" lights. The west front window measures 24" by 64" with double hung, four-over-four, sash, glazed with 10" by 14" lights. The window just north of the chimney on the east elevation has dimensions identical to the window in the west room. The window on the north wall of the kitchen measures 48" by 28" and has a pair of four-light sash that slide in horizontal channels. Lights are 10" by 12". There are no windows in the 32' expanse of the west elevation and no windows in the northwest rear room. In the original (1904) house, there was only one window in the house: one horizontal sliding window on the east elevation, just south of the chimney. This window was removed in the 1920s, and the planks were replaced in this section of wall.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The house has a broken-pitch gable roof with ridge running east-west. The break to a shallower pitch for the porch and rear rooms occurs about 1' short of the front and rear plate. Since 1946 the roof has been covered with standing-seam galvanized metal. In both the original house and the 1920s enlargement, the roof had been covered by 'rived boards' (or wood shingles, 30" long and 6" to 8" wide).

- b. Cornice, eaves: Along the front elevation (over the porch), rafter measuring 3" by 4" and spaced about 2' on center are cut off at their ends, parallel to the verticals in the house. These rafters were installed either in 1946, when the metal roof was laid on, or in 1970, when the front porch was replaced. The metal roofing projects about 6" to 8" beyond the containing front and rear surfaces of the house. Along the side (east and west) elevations, the metal roofing projects about 4", and a 1 x 4 fascia board has been nailed under the eaves, on top of the asphalt siding.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: Each of the two square rooms has an entrance from the front porch. These two rooms are connected by a doorway centered in the wall. A rear doorway in each of the main rooms leads to a rear room, the northeast room (kitchen) being twice as wide as the northwest room (store room). There is no connection between the two rear rooms. The east main room (original room) has a fireplace centered on the east (end) wall. The end wall of the west main room (added room) has no openings or fireplace.
2. Flooring: All rooms have 6"-wide soft wood floor boards, laid parallel to the ridge of the house and butted edge to edge. The floor level in the added west half of the house is about 2" higher than the floor level in the original east half of the house.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls are unfinished on the inside, allowing a clear view of the structural timbers and exterior planking. In the original east room, 4"-diameter pine poles spaced 4' on-center are laid between the front and rear plates and serve as ceiling joists. In the added west room, 2 x 6 ceiling joists spaced 2' on center are laid between the front and rear plates. In both rooms, the attic boards are simply rested (not nailed) on the ceiling joists. None of the interior woodwork has ever been painted.
4. Doorways and doors: The opening between the two front rooms measures 29" by 72" and has a door consisting of five vertical boards joined by three chamfered rails. The door from the east main room into the kitchen measures 36" by 76" and consists of six-and-a-half vertical boards joined by three plain rails. Both of these doors open into the east main room. The door from the west main room into the northwest rear room measures 38" by 82" and consists of seven vertical boards joined by three chamfered rails. This door opens into the west main room.

5. Decorative features and trim: The door and window openings are unfinished, consisting only of 2 x 4 studs with 2 x 4 cross members. The mantel in the east room was salvaged during the 1920s a nearby house occupied by Nancy Belle Holley before the construction of this house. Above each corner pilaster, in the frieze area of the mantel, there is the ornamental feature of three superimposed blocks, applied flat to the vertical surface and butted against the mantel shelf. The mantel is painted a glossy nut brown.
6. Mechanical equipment: There is no provision for heating except for the wood-burning fireplace and kitchen stove. The house was connected to the rural electric system in 1948. Water is drawn from a well about 15 feet southeast of the corner of the house. There is no interior bath or water closet, and no privy was found on the site.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces slightly west of south and looks upon a shaded dirt area that gradually slopes to the gravel road running by the house on the west. The ground slopes steeply behind the house on the north and east into about 35 acres of woods. At the eastern edge of the tract, about a quarter mile from the house, is a 9-acre parcel of cropland.
2. Outbuildings:
 - a. Log barn and shed: About 100 feet northwest of the house is a log barn, with an open shed attached to the south. The barn itself measures 6' by 12', with ridge line running slightly north of east-west. (The west end of the barn was placed at the parallel to the edge of a short slope that drops to the road below.) The attached shed measures about 10' by 12'. The barn roof is covered with wood shingles and the shed roof with corrugated metal. The barn walls are constructed of saddle-notched logs, 4" to 6" in diameter. The gable ends are enclosed by rough-cut horizontal planks. The roughly cased doorway at the south corner of the east elevation is the only opening in the structure. This barn was built during the late 1920s and is similar in construction to the M. V. Riddle Barn (HABS No. MS-180) that stood half a mile to the south.

- d. Storage house and shed: About 40 feet southeast of the house is a storage house that measures 18'-6" by 10'-6" in overall dimension. The main gable-roofed unit is 10'-6" square, and the shed attached to the south is 8' by 10'-6". The building is of frame construction, with vertical planks extending up to 6'-6" and horizontal planks inserted in the gable ends. The shed addition is sheathed with horizontal planks, and the roof of the entire structure is covered with corrugated metal. There are two doors in the west elevation: one at the north corner of the main structure; the other at the north corner of the shed addition.

- e. Storm shelter: Directly across the gravel road from the log barn is a storm shelter, dug into the bank that rises to the west. Roughly cut and loosely secured boards help to retain the walls and ceiling.

Prepared by: J. A. Chewning
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Historic American Buildings
Survey
August 1978

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the documentation done during the 1978 Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Project, undertaken by HABS in cooperation with the Interagency Archeological Services, Atlanta, and cosponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile and Nashville Districts, in compliance with Executive Order 11593, as a mitigative effort in the construction of the waterway. Records were made of eighteen historic sites and structures in the region between Gainesville, Alabama, and Iuka, Mississippi.

The project was executed under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief, and Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect, of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Project Supervisor was James Murray Howard of the University of Illinois. Project Historian was Betty K. Bird of the University of Virginia. The Assistant Historian was Michael Ann Williams (University of Pennsylvania). Foreman was Ruthie D. Wiley of the University of Florida. Student Architects who prepared measured drawings for the project were Carol J. Crandall (Carnegie-Mellon University), Richard J. Cronenberger (University of Miami), Peter G. Darlow (McGill University), Daniel M. Gaines (University of Tennessee), and R. Bradley Mellor (Rice University). The inventory of sites within the project area was carried out by Inventory Supervisor J. A. Chewing of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Assistant Historian for the inventory was Pamela J. Wolf (George Washington University). One structure was recorded during the winter of 1979 by project supervisor Peter G. Darlow (McGill University), Sally K. Tompkins, Project Historian, and Staff Architects Bethanie C. Grashof, Rudy Massengill, and Janet Hochuli (The Cooper Union). Drawings for this structure were completed during the spring of 1979 by staff Architects Peter G. Darlow, Janet Hochuli, James F. Speake and Reginald A. Berry (Howard University). Photographs were taken by David Kaminisky in the summer of 1978 and by Gil Ford in the spring of 1979.