

Blair's Ferry Storehouse (Chas. W. Arp Grocery)
800 Main Street (corner of Church Street)
Loudon
Loudon County
Tennessee

HABS No. TN-41

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C.

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BLAIR'S FERRY STOREHOUSE

HABS No. TN-41

Location: 800 Main Street, at the southeast corner of Main and Church,
Loudon, Loudon County, Tennessee.

Present Owner: Mr. George Arp.

Present Use: Vacant except for bottom floor.

Significance: The Blair's Ferry Storehouse was erected ca. 1835. It is an excellent example of the type of structures that grew up with the river towns - the first major trading centers of the mid-south. Built to support a large riverboat trade, it has continued to operated as a retail store until recent years. It is one of the earliest extant examples of a storehouse built as such, rather than converted, in the region. It is a prominent local landmark and has been a center of much of the past economic activity of the surrounding countryside.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Ca. 1835.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The legal description of the property is as follows: Lot #19 bounded on the north by Main Street, on the west by Church Street, on the south by an alley, and on the east by Webb's property and fronting 50 feet on Main running back 100 feet to an alley "and is known as old John J. West Brick Store house and lot..." The following is an abstract of the incomplete chain of title contained in the Loudon and Roane County Records:

Roane County Chancery Court Minutes 1833-1841. Part I. pp. 136-142. Wiley and John Blair vs. Pathkiller, (a Cherokee Indian) and George and William Garenhire filed 7/24/1837.

From, text of complaint - 11/1820 State of Tennessee. To Charles McClung the southeast quarter section #13, township 1, range 2 east, Hiwassee District. 80 acres.

12/7/1820 Charles McClung to James Blair.

12/12/1820 State of Tennessee to Charles McClung northwest quarter section township 1, range 2 east, Hiwassee District. 159 1/2 acres.

12/12/1820 Charles McClung to James Blair.

1821 James Blair put in possession of land by Judge Charles F. Keith.

11/5/1826 Will of James Blair - "My sons Allen, Hugh, and Wiley are to have the property of the ferry on the north side of the river equally and all the land on the north side after the death of my wife and brother Hugh are to be equally divided between them, and Wiley to have the old place. But if the land on the south side should be gained or recovered by law or by any means then I allow my son Wiley to have all the land I hold on the south side of the river."

1931- Executors of James Blair (deceased) turned out of possession of the property on the south side of the river. Ejected by action of Pathkiller.

"In 1834, Pathkiller, George and William Gardenhire moved to Hamilton County. They have been in possession of land for nearly seven years and I, Wiley Blair, will soon be barred of recovery by the statute of limitations."

Pathkiller had claimed the property as a reservation but had sold interest to the Gardenhires. According to judgments of the Tennessee State Supreme Court this makes a reservation null and void. I should recover land and be paid \$100 per annum for the use of the land."

Roane County Deed Book L-1. 9/25/1837. Recorded 6/25/1850.

Articles of compromise between Pathkiller, James T. Gardenhire, et al, in a lawsuit involving Pathkiller, J.T. Gardenhire, George W. Gardenhire, William Gardenhire, his agents vs. Jane and Wiley Blair, John Blair, James Johnston and William Tunnell. Pathkiller, et al, to Wiley Blair, et al. All lands south of the Tennessee River and agreed that they will "remove and give up all of the said 640 acres with the ferry, and to remove any tenants that may be in possession of any part of the said tract on or before the 1st day of December, 1837" for \$300 (costs). For a more detailed information on this dispute, See Historical Context, page , paragraph 3.

Roane County Deed Book L-1, p. 232. Recorded 6/24/1851.

James T. Gardenhire of Hamilton County to Thomas H. Calloway of Bradley County, Samuel Johnston of Monroe County, James Johnston and John Blair, Wiley Blair, and Rebecca Tunnell of Roane County for \$3,000. 640 acres. His interest in the Pathkiller reservation "being the tract on which John Blair, Rebecca Tunnell, William Brown and others now live."

Roane County Deed Book L-1, p. 439. Recorded 7/5/1852.

Power of attorney from S.H. Johnston, T.H. Calloway, and Wiley Blair to J.H. Johnston.

"On May 3, 1851, Wiley Blair of Roane County sold to Samuel M. Johnston and Thomas H. Calloway four-fifths of that tract of land upon which Loudon is now situated together with the ferry or four-fifths of it, etc. and executed his bond to make deed to same... Whereas the said Samuel M. Johnston and Thomas H. Calloway have laid off a town on said land and executed bounds for title to the different lots." Recorded 9/16/1852.

Deed Bk M-1, p. 269. Recorded 9/22/1854

J. Rufus Smith of Roane County to P.H. Hardin of Roane County and J. Lafayette Johnston of Monroe County for \$1200 Loudon town lot #19. Recorded 1/26/1859

John J. West to Jane West, widow of John J. West. Source - Loudon County.

Will Bk A, p. 116. Recorded, March 5, 1883.
Description: "all my property" and to son John T. West at her death.

Albert W. Ward administrator de bonis vs. John T. West, et al. May 19, 1891. Loudon County Chancery Court Record Bk. 3, cast #304, p. 68. Court ruled sale of all West property, including lots 19 and 20, property presently in hands of Jane West, widow of J.J. West and guardian of J.T. West.

Joe H. Kollock clerk and Master to J.E. Cassady and A.S. Hernderson. Recorded 7/31/1909. Date of sale 9/19/1891. Consideration \$586.00 - Loudon County Deed Bk 17, p. 52.

A.S. Henderson, et al, to T.J. Robinson (1/2 interest). 8/9/1907 for \$100. Deed Bk 17, p. 53.

T.J. Robinson and J.E. Cassady to A.W. Ward. 7/31/1909 for \$275.
Deed Bk. 17, p. 63.

A.W. Ward to Alma H. Ward, widow of A.W. Ward. Recorded
3/18/1936. Loudon County Deed Bk. 39, p. 84 - Will of A.W. Ward.

Alma H. Ward of Loudon County to W.B. Arp and wife Mintie of
Loudon County 8/23/1941 for 1,000.00 Loudon County Deed Bk 42, p.
176.

4. Alterations and additions: Although a few details may have been altered in the ante-bellum years for the storehouse, its two major periods of change occurred about the turn of the century and in the mid-1930's.

After the death of John J. West in the 1880's the building gradually changed to uses other than that of a retail store. Legend has it that it served among other things as a church, a dance hall, and a packing house.

About the turn of the century many changes were made. The building was partitioned into apartments. On the first floor new flooring and a front mantel piece were added, and fireplaces converted to coal. The basement was partitioned, as was the second floor. The brick was repointed, and an extra flue was added to the rear chimney.

In the 1930's W.B. Arp opened the building again as a store although he continued to rent apartments upstairs. Much concrete was used in this renovation. The first floor sills were replaced by concrete ones, and a concrete sidewalk and steps were added. A two story brick addition was built and a basement which housed a bathroom was dug in the rear. The rear first floor and second floor porches were added as were the side porch and stairs. The interior stairs - in the left rear of the front storeroom and on the left inside wall of the rear apartment - were removed. Electric lights and water were introduced to the building. Interior brick walls were covered with cement plaster, and a few partitions were added. Basement vents were opened as small bathrooms and windows on each floor were added. A new tin roof replaced the old one and gutters were added. A door was put in where formerly there had been a window. A front corner flue was added with iron tension rods. The present side stairs were added c. 1971 and the window sash has recently been changed to six over six sash.

- B. Historical Context: Before the coming of the railroad Loudon was known as Blair's Ferry. Only a few steamboat landings, a store and a few houses constituted the town. The Blair's Ferry Storehouse was

built to handle the shipping trade. The first steamboat to reach this point was the "Atlas" in 1828. Regular service, however, did not develop until 1835. With this event Blair's Ferry became a shipping point for many miles around and the brick storehouse built there served as a collection and distribution center.

As time passed, especially after 1851 when the new town of Loudon was laid off, growth of the trading center became more rapid. Large quantities of produce were brought by the railroad and picked up by the steamboats heading to various points on the river.

All the land on the south side of the Tennessee River was not opened to white settlement until 1820 when the Hiwassee purchase was made and the land became available. Yet the land on which Loudon now sits was claimed by an entrepreneuring Cherokee by the name of Pathkiller. Pathkiller claimed the land a reservation, but he intended to use this legal device to keep control of the property and then sell it to himself. Long enduring court battles ensued, and it finally fell into the hands of Wiley Blair. Just who built and first operated the storehouse is still unknown, although one source credits James Johnston. The settlement was not listed on Rhea's 1832 map or on Morris' 1834 directory. Yet after it became part of the Blair property, the store was purchased by J.H. Johnston and J. Rufus Smith who operated the business.

After the laying out of the town and selling of lots, it began to boom. Several stores were built, a hotel was opened, an extensive foundry and rolling mill were constructed, a flour and saw mill erected, a newspaper began, and a post office established. By 1860 it contained four Protestant churches, a seminary, a Masonic lodge, a carding machine, a fanning mill manufacturer, and a population of 500. In 1876 its continued success as a shipping center was described by Polk's Gazetteer. It is "on the south bank of the Tennessee river at the head of steamboat navigation, and at the point of crossing of the East Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia Railroad 28 miles from Knoxville, 84 by rail from Chattanooga...As a shipping point Loudon has the advantage of both railroad and river and is consequently the outlet for the products of a large section of country- wheat, corn, hogs, cattle, horses, mules and sheep, with dairy products and poultry, finding their way to the southern or eastern markets through this channel." By then the town had added a high school, daily mail service, and had increased its population to 1,000.

Steamboat traffic had often found it difficult to reach as far up the Tennessee River as Knoxville, and much of Knoxville's southern markets were reached through this point. In addition, the fertile lands of this section of East Tennessee produced more than agricultural products. The timber and mineral production especially of fine marble were major aspects of the regional economy.

In 1859 Rufus Smith sold his one half interest to P.H. Hardin and for much of the Civil War the business was operated by Hardin and Johnson, general merchants. Even at the early date of 1860 the storehouse was recognized as an old landmark. When the Loudon Masonic Lodge bought the southern half of Lot #16 in that year, it described the house and lots as "fronting on the street next to the river by the old brick warehouse."

Just how the storehouse got into the hands of John J. West is uncertain, but by 1869 he was paying taxes on it. The 1870 Census reveals that West was born in 1811 and had a dry goods business. His wife was Jane West, age 52, and daughter of Jesse Eldridge, early settler in the area. Living with West was a domestic servant, Sarah Teter and her son Thomas, as well as Charley A. Ward, age 21, who worked as a clerk in the store. Ward was from Canada, and in 1872 he was listed in a directory as a partner in the business. West died in 1883.

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Blair's Ferry Storehouse, a brick two story Federal style structure, is one of the earliest extant commercial buildings in the region. Its simple stepped gable brick facade and molded brick side cornices undoubtedly marked it with some distinction among the more humble frame structures which faced the Tennessee River at this crossing.
2. Condition of fabric: The house is in fair condition. The building has suffered some neglect, having been abandoned.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The original block of the storehouse is two stories high, three bays (25 feet) across its front (east) and four bays (58 1/2 feet) along its sides (including the 8 foot wide rear porch). A two story brick addition added c. 1930 to the left (south) side of the original block, on its south-western corner, extends the plan to an "L". This addition is a single bay (approximately 10 feet) wide and two bays (16 feet) deep. It encloses one side of the porch.
2. Foundations: As far as was determinable, the foundations are of brick, laid in common bond, in both the original block and its addition. The concrete pad floor which has been poured in the basement undoubtedly aids the buildings's stability, unlike the brick piers which support the columns and beams of the side and rear porches.

3. Wall construction, finish, color: The walls of the original storehouse are of hand-made red brick, laid in common bond with a single binding course of headers between every seventh course of stretchers. The walls of the addition are of a darker red "Roman" pressed brick, laid somewhat haphazardly in common bond.
4. Structural system, framing: The brick bearing walls of the storehouse carry the load of the sawn (chiefly 2" x 8") floor joists and roof members (most of which are replacements). Iron wall ties have been inserted at the second story floor and ceiling levels, running longitudinally (from front to rear) through the building. Somewhat lighter (2" x 6") wooden joists were used in the addition.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: Four concrete steps steeply pyramid up to the front doorsill, the largest being about 5 1/2' x 2 1/2'. The rear of the building has been supplemented by a two story shed-roofed porch, stretching the entire width of the original block. This has been constructed of paired 2" x 4" columns with 2" x 6" floor and roof joists and narrow tongue-and-groove wood flooring. Beneath the handrails, and beneath the floor joists of the second story, four inch to six inch boards have been shiplapped vertically and enframed to limit the openings in the otherwise very tall porch. A wooden, single flight, straight run, closed string stairway, formerly used on the inside of the building, has been built into the porch against the rear brick wall of the original block, connecting the first and second floors. The wood stairs in the center of the porch lead from the ground to first story level. Near the northwest corner of the building there are several concrete stairs, approximately four feet wide, which provide access to the basement, below the rear porch. Along the left (south) side wall of the original block a single flight of stairs, built 2" x 6" plant treads on 2" x 10" stringers, begins at the front of the building and rises to a small second story frame porch constructed in the manner of the rear porch, on 4" x 4" wooden piers. The area below this porch has been semi-enclosed with various pieces of corrugated metal and pieces of wood, and is used for storage. Access to the basement is provided by means of concrete steps similar to those used in the rear, beneath the head of the stairs.
6. Chimneys: Two large brick chimneys rise above the ridge of the roof: one midway along the ridge, near the center of the original buildings, and the other rising from just inside its rear exterior wall. Two small brick chimneys may also be seen, one behind the left side of the stepped gable facade, near the corner, and the other midway up the rear slope of the brick addition, near the northwest corner of the building.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The solid front double doors each have but a single vertical panel, and are set in a simple but deep enframingent, with a horizontal top light of eight rectangular panes. The doorsill is a single limestone slab, about four inches thick. The doors, enframingent and sill are all painted white. The right (north) side door, in the bay closest to the facade on the first floor level, is placed in an enlarged window opening. The door has six lights over three horizontal panels, and a simple enframingent painted red. There are five rear doors, one to the basement, and two on each story of the porch. The basement door, at the bottom of the stairs near the northwest corner of the building, has a storm door with three columns of five panes set in a simple enframingent, painted white. Of the two door openings on the first story level, that on the right, at the bottom of the stairs, is original, whereas that on the left, beneath the head of the stairs, is not.

A two panel screen door painted white and five horizontal panel door painted white are set in the simple white enframingent on the right, while on the left, a short steel I-beam section provides the lintel for a five horizontal panel door painted brown, again in simple enframingent. Over the first described first story rear door is another on the second story, just like it, sans screen door. To the right of this, providing access to the second story of the addition, is a two over two panel door in simple frame, with both being painted white. The left (south) side doorways remain to be described: that to the basement is nearly identical to the rear basement entrance, with the addition of a two panel screen door. Of the doors protected by the second story side porch, a six pane over three horizontal panel door leads to the original block, and a five horizontal panel door, with two panel screen door, leads to the second story of the addition. Both are simply enframed and all wood is painted white.

- b. Windows and shutters: There are no shutters remaining. On the original block, the windows of both the first and second story are double hung wooden sash, with six over six lights each. The basement windows are double hung wooden, three vertical-over-single pane replacements. The windows in the addition are four vertical-over-single pane double hung wooden sash. The sills are of wood on the sides and rear and on the second story of the front are limestone on the first story and basement of the front. All the windows and trim have been painted white. In the center of the front facade in the peak of the gable is a large wooden louver vent for the attic, of the proportions of a window, also painted white.

8. Roof

- a. Shape, covering: The gable roof behind the front facade of the original block, the gable roof of the addition, and the shed roofs of the two story side and rear porches have all recently been covered with standing seam galvanized sheet metal roofing and painted "Rustoleum" silver.
- b. Cornice, eaves: A molded brick cornice corbels out on the side walls of the original block. The eaves of the porches are merely the exposed rafter ends.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. The first floor: The front entrance in the center bay of the facade opens directly into the storeroom, behind which were originally the parlor and, in the rear, the kitchen. In the addition to the left is the "new kitchen," and behind that the bathroom alongside the rear porch. (The storeroom most recently has been used as a Sunday meeting room for a small non-sectarian congregation, and the parlor and kitchen have been used as bedrooms.)
 - b. The second floor: By climbing the stairs along the left hand side of the original building to the second story side porch, the principal access is gained to the second story apartment through a door to the original block. This opens into a hallway from which access may be gained to the front bedrooms, the parlor (in the middle) and the dining-living room in the rear. The kitchen, as before, is in the addition, and is accessible on the interior from the dining room, and from the exterior from the side and rear porches.
 - c. Basement: Entering from the rear, near the northwest corner of the building, one must descend under the porch to enter the kitchen. Adjacent to the kitchen is a bedroom, while ahead is the living room and the two front bedrooms. The bathroom is midway along the southern side of the building, next to the side door entrance.
2. Stairways: There are no interior stairways. Access to all floors is by means of exterior stairways; access to the attic is by means of a square hole in the ceiling of the second floor parlor.
 3. Flooring: The first and second story floors of the original block are of well-worn six to nine inch wide wooden planks. The basement has a poured concrete floor throughout. The addition has linoleum block flooring over a narrow tongue-and-groove strip

floor, on both stories.

4. Walls and ceilings: All the ceilings of the original block (on the first and second floors) are of wooden tongue-and-groove novelty boarding, painted white. The basement ceilings and those in the brick addition are of plasterboard, painted various colors. The partition walls in the basement, in the addition and on the second floor of the original block with the exception of that between the parlor and the dining room, are all of painted plasterboard on 2" x 4" stud framing. In addition there are two closets, one in each of the second story front bedrooms, which are built of tongue-and-groove floor planks. The partition wall noted as an exception above, and the partition walls of the first floor of the original block are of original stud construction with painted plaster and sawn lath finish.
5. Doorways and doors: All the interior doorways have simple enframing; many of the interior doors are missing. Of the doors which remain on the first floor; between the storeroom and the parlor there is a five horizontal panel type, and a narrow two over two panel type to the bathroom. On the second floor: between the hall and living room there is a exterior door with one large panel over three horizontal panels, and the two closet doors in the front bedrooms, of half-inch thick vertical plank construction. In the basement the bedroom doors remain; they are five horizontal panel doors, left unpainted.
6. Hardware: An early boxlock may be seen on the rear of the front doors.
7. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: With the exception of the large fireplaces, there is no heating system evident. Holes in the flues of the fireplaces and in the ceilings beneath the chimneys noted indicated that heating stoves were probably once employed.
 - b. Lighting: An exposed two wire electrical system was evident, making use of incandescent bulb fixtures.
 - c. Plumbing: With the exception of a sink in each of the kitchens, and a single, unused commode in the basement bathroom, no plumbing fixtures remain; those that remain are not uncommon.
- D. Site: The building is on the extreme northwest of a narrow, corner city lot with sidewalks along both its front and exposed flank. The backyard is equal in area to the building, and features a single large shade tree. Across the street in front of the building is a lumber yard, with the river beyond,

while to either side and to the rear of the building are small Colonial-Revival Bungalows.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Roane County Deed Books, Chancery Court Minutes, and Tax Lists, County Courthouse, Kingston, Tennessee.

Loudon County Deed Books, County Courthouse, Loudon, Tennessee.

2. Secondary and published sources

Morris' Gazetteer for 1834. McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, Tennessee

Polk's Gazetteer for 1876. McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, Tennessee.

Roane and Loudon County Census for 1840-1880. McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, Tennessee.

Goodspeed's History of Tennessee.
1887, McClung Collection,, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, Tennessee.

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Part IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This 1974 project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the Tennessee Historical Commission and the East Tennessee Historical Society. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed by the two HABS project leaders, Joseph L. Herndon (history) and Michael A. Tomlan (architecture).

The paper was reviewed and edited in Spring 1986 for transmittal to the Library of Congress, by Susan McCown, HABS Architectural Historian. The photographs of the old storehouse were taken February 1983 by Jack E. Boucher, HABS Staff Photographer.