

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name McElroy, John Wesley, House

other names/alt number _____

2. Location

street & number 11 Academy Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Burnsville

N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NCcounty Yanceycode 199zip code 28714

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/ANumber of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

October 23, 1990

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Work in Progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: vernacular Federal/Greek
Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls weatherboard

roof metal

other wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The John Wesley McElroy House stands on one of the highest points in the city of Burnsville, North Carolina, overlooking the town and facing south toward Chalk Mountain and Celo Knob. The base of the hill on which the house is sited has been cut away on the Main Street boundary, so that in viewing the house from Main Street one must look over a vacant filling station and unkempt hill. Large trees and shrubs crowd around the Main Street facade of the house, but the remainder of the large lot on which it stands is open and grassy.

The two-story, gable-roofed McElroy House was constructed about 1845 (1) on a single-pile plan with a two-story wing forming a T to the rear. The main block of the house is three-bay, the central bay containing the wide front door which has four flat panels of pegged construction. The doorway has a transom and sidelights and is surrounded by flush siding which extends the width of the one-bay porch and stops at a vertical molded trim which extends to the top of the first story. The small, two-story, flat-roofed entry porch is supported by plain, box posts. The entire porch is a mid-twentieth century reconstruction. Handrail and balusters on the first floor of the porch are plain, and early photographs indicate that the railing of the second floor porch is sawn work rescued from a previous Victorian-style porch built after the Civil War. In the bays on either side of the front door are replacement vertical two-over-two windows, with contemporary shutters.

The entire house is sided in plain lapped weatherboarding painted white, except for the flush siding around the front door. On each gable end of the main block is a brick single step-shouldered chimney. The east one rests on a stone foundation. The chimneys are freestanding above the shoulders to clear the siding and the rake. The chimneys have been painted white; however, documentary photographs show the brick unpainted. On each flush gable end are two six-over-six windows, added in the early twentieth century. In the west gable, the windows flank the chimney; on the east end, one window is on each story south of the chimney. To the rear of the main block a small, one-story, early-twentieth century shed addition houses a bathroom.

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Windows on the west, north and east elevations are six-over-six sash and are twentieth-century replacements as are all of the windows. On the rear of the main block, west of the rear ell, is a paneled door with transom, apparently original and of pegged construction.

A weatherboarded two-story, three-bay ell which is original to the main block extends to the north from the center of the main block. It contains two rooms on each floor. The first floor room has opposing doorways with transoms and replacement multi-paned doors, flanked by six-over-six windows. On the east elevation, there is an early-twentieth century asphalt-shingled pent above the first floor windows and a gable-roofed entrance porch, supported by brick piers. A small brick twentieth-century flue has been added at the juncture of the ell and the main block on the northwest elevation. The gable end contains a single step-shouldered chimney with freestanding stack. Unlike the other two chimneys, this one has lower shoulders and a heavier corbelled stack which served two back-to-back fireplaces.

A one-story kitchen wing, original to the house, extends from the gable end of the ell. It is gable-roofed and displays simple detailing identical to the rest of the house. Each elevation has six-over-six window and there is a single board and batten door on the west.

Most of the roof of the house is today of galvanized 5-vee-crimp steel, although on the northwest section of the main block, some of the nineteenth-century standing seam tin roofing remains. Nail evidence in the attic sheathing suggests that the original roof was wood shingle. The foundation, now primarily brick with some stone infill, appears to have originally been solid stone, later replaced and infilled with brick. A small section of stone to the east of the front porch appears to be the only remaining original section.

On the interior of the house, a central hall runs from front door to the first floor room of the rear ell, and contains on the west wall a straight run stairway to the second floor hall. A symmetrical beaded crown molding exhibits Greek Revival influence and graces the stairhall. On the stairway itself, a beaded stringer ties into the dropped newel post which penetrates the floor to split into an unusual wishbone-shaped double newel. The

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bottom newel is turned with spool beading at the bottom. An overscaled round handrail supports rectangular balusters.

All interior walls and ceilings of the two-story portions of the house exhibit original sheathing of hand-planed, flush, tongue-and-groove, horizontal, yellow pine planks. A few planks have been replaced. Original interior door and window trim is flat boards with beaded inside edge and stop. Downstairs floors were re-floored with strip oak while the upstairs rooms exhibit the original wide yellow pine flooring. Several rooms were re-paneled during the twentieth century to accommodate later bathroom or kitchen additions. All vestiges of later paneling and ceiling tile have been removed to expose original finishes.

Off the first floor central hall are two identical rooms, the west room opening off the bottom of the stairway and the east room having a centered door. Each room has a large fireplace with identical Greek Revival mantels. On each, the broad, unadorned entablature rests on well-proportioned Doric style pilasters with a beaded astragal. The edges of the boards that meet the paneling and brick are beaded. The west room has a four-paneled door with transom in the north wall. The east room was partitioned when a bathroom and closet were added along its north wall in the early 1900s.

At the end of the entrance hall a wide doorway (door has been removed) opens to a large first floor room in the two-story wing, which may have been a dining room. In the early years of the twentieth century this room was divided to provide for a modern kitchen. The original mantel has since been removed. The one-story original kitchen wing, now a storage room, opens from the main room of the rear ell. It has an added partition at the north end. A large cooking fireplace, with a very tall fire opening, retains the iron pins from which the pot boom swung. The late-nineteenth or early-twentieth-century mantel is austere, with plain pilasters topped by molded blocks supporting a plain shelf. Wall and ceiling sheathing in the kitchen appears to have been replaced in the early twentieth century along with the mantel. Windows have an interesting tapered apron below the sill. The floor consists of rough, wooden planks set almost on the dirt. The original floor beams have long since rotted away.

Upstairs, the stair hall opens into two bedrooms identical to the rooms below, and into a third bedroom in the rear wing of the

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house. This bedroom has been partitioned to provide space for a twentieth-century kitchen. All three bedrooms have vernacular mantels like those in the front rooms downstairs.

All original interior doors of the house are of pegged construction and have four flat panels which are raised on the secondary side and are identical to the front door. The doors originally had box locks, but during Victorian-era renovations mortise locksets were added which feature an egg and dart border on the knob and escutcheon plate. Hinges appear to be original and are secured with flat-tipped screws.

In 1989, archaeological investigations conducted on the grounds of the McElroy House identified several historic features associated with the original and later occupations at the site. (2) The foundation of a two-story Victorian-era style front porch, possibly added in the 1880s, was delineated, and at the northwest side of the house foundations for an L-shaped porch were discovered. A well was uncovered at the north end of the house and evidence of a structure was found in the lawn extending between the McElroy House and Academy Street, which runs along the east boundary of the site.

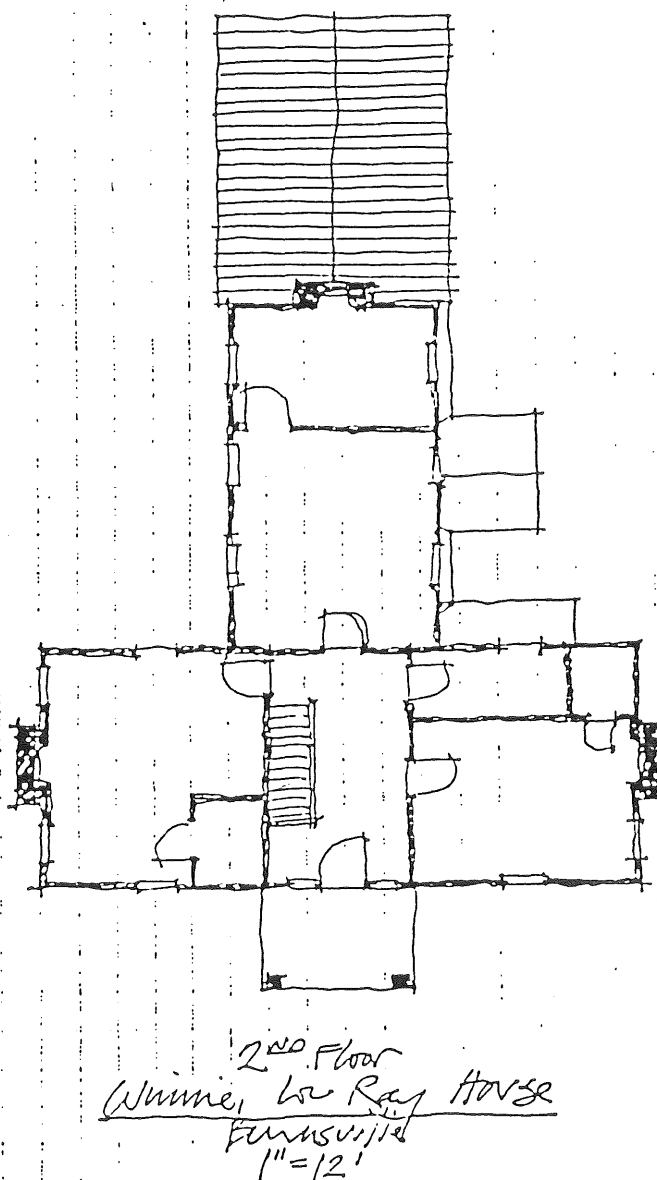
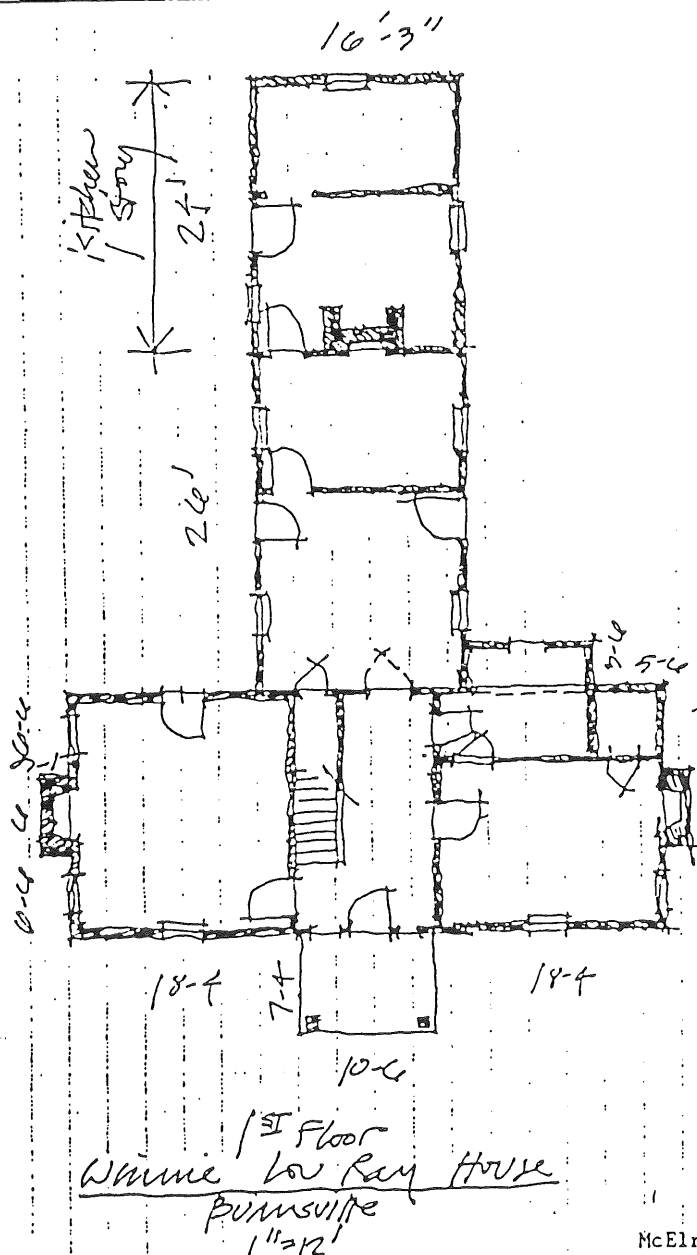
Despite twentieth-century renovations and partitions, the McElroy House retains its integrity as a substantial, mid-nineteenth century dwelling which exhibits Greek Revival-influenced vernacular detailing. Recent architectural investigation has revealed the configuration of the original front porch. The evidence -- paint lines, nail patterns, flashing remnants, and profiles cut in original weatherboards -- all previously hidden under the present weatherboard sheathing reveals a one-story, one-bay porch with a gabled roof and pilaster responds. Currently, the house is undergoing an academic restoration and will be used as a house museum.

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McElroy House sketch by John Horton, 1988

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

c. 1845

Significant Dates

c. 1845

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Clayton, Ephraim, attributed builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The John Wesley McElroy House in Burnsville is eligible for listing in the National Register under criterion C for architecture. Built c. 1845, it is a rare, intact example of antebellum architecture in Yancey County. Also, because of the isolation of this area and its dense virgin forests, most houses of this era were constructed of log thus making this frame example rare. Strong oral tradition holds that the house was built for John Wesley McElroy by his brother-in-law, Ephraim Clayton, who was a western North Carolina contractor rather well-versed in high-style architecture. At the time the house was built, McElroy was a prominent merchant, farmer, and civic leader. He later became the brigadier general for western North Carolina's home guard. Although McElroy sold his house and moved to the county prior to the Civil War, local tradition holds that he returned to Burnsville during the war and used his former residence as the headquarters for the home guard. This local tradition is strong; however, until it can be substantiated with historical records, the house will be nominated solely for its architectural merits.

Architecture Context:

In the mid nineteenth century, Yancey County was rugged, isolated, and densely forested. By far, the most prominent building type was the log house. (3) Usually one-bay and two-stories of various sizes, they were constructed without porches, brick chimneys, or considerable detailing of the interior. Where log construction and stone chimneys prevailed, the McElroy

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House was unique in a county in which geographic isolation and hard-scrabble living made stylish architecture a frill few could afford. The two-story frame constructed house with its handsome brick chimneys, flushboard-sheathed porch wall, and vernacular woodwork influenced by the academic Federal and Greek Revival styles make it a truly significant antebellum house in Yancey County. There are no antebellum brick houses recorded in the Yancey County and only one other frame-constructed house, the Abernathy-Anglin-Gouge House, an early nineteenth century vernacular dwelling. (4)

Perhaps the anomaly of the stylish, frame McElroy House is explained by the local tradition that the house was designed and constructed by, or under the direction of, Ephraim Clayton (1805-1892). He was a builder of note who was born in Transylvania County and married John Wesley McElroy's sister, Nancy. In early life, Clayton became a contractor for building houses, and "... in that business built probably more structures in North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia than any other two men." (5) He was associated with E.C. Jones, a Charleston, SC, architect, and is credited with the original Wofford College building in Spartanburg, SC, (NR 1974); the Buncombe County Courthouse which burned in 1865; the Newton Academy building in Asheville; the first Episcopal church in Asheville; several large homes on the French Broad River in Transylvania County; and the Polk County Courthouse, constructed in Columbus in 1857 (NR 1979). He was also responsible for the enlargement and remodeling of the church of St. John in the Wilderness in Flat Rock (NR 1973). Minutes of the Yancey County Commission note that Clayton worked on the office of the Clerk of Court in Burnsville in 1836 and constructed a new county jail in 1858. (6) It is likely that he constructed the fashionable house for his brother-in-law, John Wesley McElroy, between those dates.

Historical Background

The McElroy House is believed to have been built for John Wesley McElroy in the late 1840s, possibly by Ephraim Clayton, an Asheville contractor who was McElroy's brother-in-law. John Wesley McElroy was born April 7, 1808, the ninth child of John J. and Elizabeth Jamison McElroy. In the period prior to the Civil

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War he became a prominent Yancey County merchant, farmer, and civic leader. He operated a store with Bacchus Smith and James Greenlee, and was a partner with Smith in the production of ginseng. McElroy served as clerk of the Superior Court of Yancey County from 1834 until 1846 and was an active member of the Methodist church. He served as a trustee of the Burnsville Academy and housed female students of the school in the early 1850s. McElroy and his wife Catherine Poteet McElroy (1810-1855) had eleven children. Their son John Smith McElroy served as a state senator in 1874-75, while their daughter Harriett married Robert Vance, the older brother of future North Carolina governor and United States senator Zebulon Vance, in 1851. (7)

McElroy initially opposed secession but rallied behind the Confederacy after the initiation of hostilities at Fort Sumter. He was a colonel in the North Carolina militia during the early part of the Civil War. In July of 1863 the North Carolina General Assembly established the home guard, which superseded the militia. A home guard brigade was established in the northwest portion of the state and McElroy was appointed general of that brigade on September 26 by Governor Vance. He was North Carolina's only home guard brigadier general until February of 1865, when an eastern North Carolinian was so designated. McElroy's troops attempted to maintain order in the North Carolina mountains, arresting deserters, guarding bridges, and protecting against bandits. One of the largest engagements involving the home guard took place in Burnsville in April, 1864, when a group of 75 unionists and Confederate deserters terrorized the town before being driven off. According to local tradition, the McElroy House was used as a hospital after this skirmish. (8)

Existing records do not indicate when or to whom McElroy sold the house. However, this was evidently done prior to 1860, as the census for that year shows him living in the countryside, where he was farming just over 300 acres. Some deeds which do survive indicate that in the late 1850s McElroy was forced to sell property in order to pay off debts. It is not known how these debts were acquired. Nonetheless, local tradition maintains that the McElroy House was used by its builder as the home guard headquarters during the Civil War. Correspondence between

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McElroy and Governor Zebulon Vance indicates that McElroy apparently moved back to Burnsville during the Civil War and established his brigade headquarters in that town. However, this correspondence does not identify any particular house or building and no evidence has been uncovered that definitively establishes the McElroy House as that site. (9)

The McElroy House was apparently owned by several Yancey County residents during the Civil War, including Burnsville merchant George Chapman and Isaac Pearson, and was occupied, but apparently not owned, for part of that period by Dr. O.M. Lewis. In 1867 Pearson sold the house to brothers Joshua and Edmond Williams for \$800. The Williams brothers were listed as modest farmers in the 1870 and 1880 censuses. They also operated the Burnsville post office out of their home for several years in the late 1860s, while Joshua Williams was listed as a tanner in the late 1860s. (10)

The Williams brothers sold the house to William Milton Moore for \$1,200 in 1889. Moore (1834-1899) was born in Blount County, Tennessee and moved to Burnsville in the late 1850s, where he became a tailor. An ardent Unionist, Moore made his way to the Union lines in east Tennessee in the spring of 1864 and joined the Union army as a recruiting officer. The next February he became a captain in Company G., 3rd Regiment United States Army and served until discharged in August. Moore became a lawyer after the war and also continued working as a tailor. He served two terms as a Republican in the state senate, 1868-69 and 1869-70. After leaving the legislature he returned to Burnsville where he resumed his law practice and became one of the county's leading citizens. He was an active Mason, a leader in the local Presbyterian church, and the town postmaster. (11)

William Moore died in 1899. His widow Mary Allison Moore continued to occupy the house until 1917 when she sold it to Thomas Byrd. The house was acquired by Troy and Winnie Ray in 1945. In 1988 the Ray heirs transferred the property to the Yancey History Association for use as a local history museum. (12)

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ENDNOTES

1. Horton, John H., AIA, "McElroy-Ray House, Burnsville, Yancey County: Recommendations for Restoration." Physical basis for attribution of circa date of construction as well as descriptive terminology were found in this document.

2. Baker, C. Michael, Ph.D, "Archaeological Investigations on the Grounds of the Historic McElroy House, Burnsville, North Carolina."

3. Presnell, Mitzi, "The Historic and Architectural Resources of Yancey County, North Carolina," p. 16.

4. Presnell, op. cit., p. 26.

5. Sondley, Dr. F. A., A History of Buncombe County, North Carolina, p. 755-756.

6. Bailey, Lloyd, "Yancey County 1833-1983, Yancey Journal, March 15, 1984, p. 1.

7. Lloyd Bailey, Sr., "The McElroy Family of Yancey County," Unpublished typescript, 1988, copy in McElroy National Register file, 4-5, hereinafter cited as "The McElroy family;" Lloyd Bailey, Sr. (edited by Reverend Donald Lee Shuman), A History of the Methodist Church in the Toe River Valley (Burnsville, N.C.: n.p., 1986), 328; John C. Inscoe, Mountain Masters, Slavery, and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 39, 279; McElroy acquired the lot on which he built the house in 1842 from James Greenlee. Yancey County Deed Book 2, pp. 153-154.

8. The McElroy family, 6; The Yancey Journal, August 4, 1988; John G. Barrett, The Civil War in North Carolina (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 232-243; W. Buck Yearns and John G. Barrett, North Carolina Civil War Documentary (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 106-107, 200; Frontis Johnston (ed.), The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance, 1843-1862 (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1963), 445; Walter Clark (ed.), Histories of the

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Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War 1861-1865 (Goldsboro: Nash Brothers, 5 volumes, 1901), IV, 649-654. The house's use as a hospital may be problematical. According to the official report filed by General McElroy, only a single Burnsville man was wounded. This report is reprinted in The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington: United States War Department, 128 volumes, 1890-1901), I, 53:326-327, and partially reprinted in Yearns and Barrett (eds.), North Carolina Civil War Documentary, 106-107.

9. Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Yancey County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule, Population Schedule; Yancey County Deed Book 3, p. 295. The McElroy-Vance correspondence is in The Papers of Zebulon Vance, Microfilm Edition, numbers 353, 988, 6339, 6461, 7118, 8059, 8638, 8995, 9025, 9186, 9472, and 11179. There are several logical reasons why McElroy would have moved back into Burnsville during the war, including superior communication and better security.

10. Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Yancey County, North Carolina, agricultural schedule, population schedule; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880 Yancey County, North Carolina, agricultural schedule, population schedule; Levi Branson (ed.), North Carolina Business Directory (Raleigh, Levi Branson, published irregularly under varying titles from 1865 to 1896), 1867-68, p. 118; 1869, pp. 172, 191, hereinafter cited as Branson (ed.), North Carolina Business Directory, with appropriate year; Yancey County Deed Book 6, p. 219.

11. Yancey County Deed Book 15, p. 433; "In Memory of W.M. Moore," unpublished 1899 typescript, author unknown, copy in McElroy House National Register file; Asheville Daily Gazette, May 4, 1899; Branson (ed.), North Carolina Business Directory, 1877-78, p. 328; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Yancey County, North Carolina, Population Schedule; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Yancey County, North Carolina, Population Schedule; John L. Cheney, Jr. (ed.), North Carolina Government, 1585-1979: A Narrative History (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Secretary of State, 1981), 447, 449.

12. Yancey County Deed Books 94, p. 146; 216, p. 159; The Yancey Journal, August 4, 1988.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ 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 # _____

☒ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 0.688 acres

UTM References

A

1	7	3	8	2	5	6	0	3	9	7	5	3	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

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

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

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

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

☒ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the John Wesley McElroy House and lot, described as town lot #49, Yancey County Register of Deeds Book 5, page 139, as purchased by McElroy on May 24, 1854, which is all of the land historically associated with the house.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carolyn A. Humphries/consultant and Jim Sumner and other staff, SHPO

organization _____ date _____

street & number Route 2, Box 175 telephone 704-526-9462

city or town Highlands state NC zip code 28741

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Section number 10 Page 1 John Wesley McElroy House, Burnsville,
Yancey County, North Carolina

Yancey County Register of Deeds Book 216, page 159: BEGINNING on a spike or nail in the southern margin of Walnut Street, said point being located S 4-28-21 W 51 feet from the corner of the back porch of the residence of Dover R. Fouts and Madge Fouts referred to in instrument recorded in Yancey County Deed Book 94, page 146, and running with the line of Ruby Ray Hensley, S 4-28-21 W 32.32 feet (passing an iron pin at 3.5 feet): thence continuing with the Hensley line, S 85-06-09 E 90 feet to a point in the western margin of Academy Street; thence with the western margin of Academy Street, S 5-21-59 W 100.81 feet (passing an iron pin at 16.91 feet) to an iron pin at the northeast corner of the Mack B. Ray property described in Yancey County Deed Book 143, page 57; thence with the Ray line N 84-23-56 W 60 feet to an iron pin; thence continuing with the Ray line S 5-36-04 W 47.72 feet to an iron pin set in the line of the Clyde Hollifield Estate; thence with the line of the Hollifield Estate, S 85-46 W 124.72 feet to a nail set in the eastern margin of a concrete walk, said nail being located N 17-53-41 E 18.25 feet from a concrete monument; thence N 2 E 101 feet to an iron pin; thence due west 5 feet to an iron pin; thence N 2 E 96.41 feet to a pike or nail set in the southern margin of Walnut Street; thence with the southern margin of Walnut Street S 86-45-41 E 109.31 feet to the BEGINNING, containing 0.688 acre.

N
John Wesley McElroy
House

Bearsville, NC
Yancey County

Scale 1" = 100'

N 805,500

N 805,000





John W.
McElroy
House
BURNSVILLE, NC
BURNSVILLE QUAD
ZONE 17
N 3975380
E 382560
(Micaville 209-NW)
4555' NW

