



# **The History of the Hyde-Stephens Home**

**3111 Hydes Ferry Road**

**Nashville, Tennessee**

**by**

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The history of the Hyde-Stephens Home located at 3111 Hydes Ferry Road in Nashville, Tennessee is a fascinating one - with the most interesting fact being how to date the construction of the home. In order to do so, we looked at how the home was constructed, some of the materials used and tried to date the home that way. We then looked at the owners of the home, what was happening in their lives - and found that many architectural changes in the home could be attributed to things that were happening in the lives of the current owners.

One of our first clues to the age of the home is it's construction style - the home is built as a one-story, I-house with Greek Revival embellishments. These are characterized as primarily frame, with gable roofs, stone or brick foundations and two gable end chimneys. The interior has a central hall, with single rooms of equal measurement on each side. This type of home was constructed in Middle Tennessee in the early nineteenth century, but continued to be built until the 1900s.<sup>1</sup>

The first reference that we have of the property located at 3111 Hydes Ferry Road is in the division of the estate of Richard Hyde (1785-1858) in 1859<sup>2</sup>. Richard had a vast estate - much of it inherited from his father Henry Hyde (1753-1812) and other that he himself amassed during his lifetime. Henry Hyde was one of the first settlers in Davidson County and his estate was divided amongst his heirs - Richard being one of them. In the 1859 division, the original homeplace of Richard Hyde of 330 acres was divided between Hooper Hyde and his brother Thomas Jefferson (Jeff)

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<sup>1</sup> Article: Tennessee Encyclopedia of History & Culture online, Vernacular Domestic Architecture by Claudette Stager

<sup>2</sup> Davidson County Court Minute Book H, Pages 118-119

Hyde. An acre of their section was reserved for the ferry. We're not going to touch much upon the history of the ferry – other than to say that the Hyde family owned and maintained it for many years as a river crossing and eventually formed a turnpike that was used to travel into the city of Nashville.

The court case that registers the division of Richard Hyde's estate shows drawn out surveys of the lands distributed. Hooper received Homeplace Tract Number 1 which included approximately 164 acres and the home place of Richard Hyde and Jeff received Homeplace Tract Number 2 approximately 165 acres. The survey shows the location of the original Richard Hyde Homeplace but does not show any dwelling on the Number 2 section. The case also notes that in order to facilitate the division of the estate, Jeff had to move from the Zion tract where he was already settled so we know that he was already living somewhere else. Upon seeing this survey for the first time - we were hopeful that the home on the survey was in fact 3111 Hydes Ferry Road but with further research AND using the scale provided by the surveyor - we determined that the home on the survey could not be our subject property.

The absence of a dwelling in 1859 is further collaborated by testimony during the settlement of the estate of Hooper Hyde by his other brother Richard Hyde(1825-1912)<sup>3</sup> that Jeff's settlement from their father's estate was some "165 acres with no improvements". Jeff himself talks about living one quarter mile from his brother Hooper - and based upon the original survey - this equals to the home still standing today. He also goes on to say that he lived there some 14 years - his testimony being in 1873 would give us a construction start date around the time of his ac-

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<sup>3</sup> TSLA, Tennessee Supreme Court Case files. Hyde vs. Hyde, Range: 20, Section: E, Shelf: 2, Box Number: 20 Page 107.

quisition of the property in March 1859. In the 1860 census, we show Hooper & Jeff listed next to one another at the same dwelling (most likely the homeplace) in Census District 23.

In order to establish a timeline for construction - we know from the witness testimony that the property was unimproved when Jeff inherited the land in March 1859. In the June 1860 Agricultural census for Davidson County - Jeff's farm is listed as improved. These written facts lead us to estimate that the home was constructed sometime between March 1859 and June 1860. In August of 1860, The census taker did list Jeff & Hooper under the same household - however, this could lead us to believe the the home was perhaps still under construction at the time of both the agricultural schedule AND the census in 1860. Or it could be that they simply lived next door to one another. The census taker wasn't 100% accurate in this census as he listed the next family as Hyde - when in fact their last name was James so the accuracy of detail is a bit questionable. Because of these factors - we've determined that the home is mostly likely circa 1859.

In 1862, Jeff married Elizabeth "Lizzy" Drake (1844-Unknown). It is believed that they resided in the home located at 3111 Hydes Ferry Pike after their marriage and that Hooper was still residing in the Richard Hyde Homeplace. In the testimony by several witnesses in the aforementioned court case, Hooper had a problem with squatters or people living with him in his home "sponging off him" and on September 5, 1866<sup>4</sup> he sought to auction his farm and personal effects in an attempt to rid himself of the the inhabitants too. He emptied his home of all furnishings (including beds

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<sup>4</sup>Advertisement in The Tennessean, September 2, 1866. Page 2

& linens) but was prevented from selling the actual land & dwelling by friends that intervened.<sup>5</sup> So from this evidence we know for a fact that Jeff and his wife were not living with Hooper in 1866.

It's important to note here that the construction style of the home is indicative of this time period. When the walls were open during the renovation, it was noted that sawmill lumbar and machined nails were both used in the construction of the home. At one point during the rehabilitation, we thought that back part of the home may have been an addition added after the front part home was initially constructed. However, we ruled this out due to 1-the lack of a transom above the doorway leading into the front bedroom and 2-the fact that the exterior of the foundation appears to be continuous. Also, the root cellar/kitchen area is at the back of the "ell" section - with no indication that there was one somewhere else prior. These factors lead us to believe that the home was fully constructed all at the same time.

In 1871, Hooper died. Hooper was an eccentric character (best described in the court case mentioned) and he left a will that was contested for some time by his relatives. Hooper had signed a will, a mere months before his death, and in it - he named his brother Jeff as the executor and bequeathed the bulk of his estate to Jeff & his heirs. The court case gives much insight into the descendants of Richard Hyde and tried to vilify Jeff. Perhaps this is why Jeff deeded the interests in his own estate to his wife & children in 1868 (before any of this happened).<sup>6</sup> The last mention of the case is when it was appealed to the Tennessee Supreme Court in 1873.

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<sup>5</sup> TSLA, Tennessee Supreme Court Case files. Hyde vs. Hyde, Range: 20, Section: E, Shelf: 2, Box Number: 20 Numerous

<sup>6</sup> Davidson County Deed Book 38, Page 751

We can surmise that some time after Hooper's death, Jeff & his family probably moved into the Richard Hyde homestead. It is described in Hooper's advertisement from 1866 as being "a two-story brick with four large rooms and all necessary out-buildings". It probably didn't hurt since he (Jeff) was being sued by his siblings that he felt it necessary to take physical possession of his property. Since it was adjoining his own land - it would not have been a stretch to oversee both. It is interesting to note that after the land transfer to his heirs in 1868 - there are no further deed recordings (purchase or sale) made by Thomas J. (Jeff) Hyde in Davidson County, Tennessee. We do know that he did maintain his inheritance from Hooper - as the land divided by his heirs included part of Hooper's original inheritance.

By 1880, we know that the subject home was not being used by the Jeff Hyde family. They were probably still living in the Richard Hyde home place (formerly Hooper's home) as they are listed in the 1880 Census District 23 Page 1, but not at their original location and were in fact renting the home out. Two of the most famous residents of the home - Frank & Jesse James resided at the property for a brief time. Frank James, in two separate interviews published in local papers (Nashville Daily American, Oct. 9, 1882 and the Nashville Banner, May 31, 1903) spoke of his time living on the "Jeff Hyde" place and how he did an honest turn of work there. In the interviews, he also spoke of his brother Jesse and how he spent a brief time residing with him as well. In fact, their departure from one another in Nashville was their last time Frank saw Jesse alive. In an article published in the Nashville Banner in 1930, along with an accompanying photo) an eyewitness, John Hyde, pointed out the home at 3111 Olde Hydes Ferry Pike (then owned by Arther & Sadie Hyde Stephens) and said

that it was where the James families had lived. On the 1880 Census for District 23 Page 2, Frank & Jesse are listed under their alias' (Ben Woodson & George Howard).

Thomas Jefferson Hyde died in 1887. His children were twins Walter (1863-1904) and Thomas J (1863-1939), James D. (1864-1924), Effie (1868-1942), Sadie (1878-1953) and Goldie (1884-1961). In 1892, Effie married Boyd Drake and moved to Meridian Street in East Nashville. In 1896, Thomas J. married Elizabeth Stephens and James married Nannie Jordan. In 1900, James D. is shown as the head of household with his unmarried siblings still residing with him (and also Thomas J. a widower with a small child). In 1903, Sadie married Arthur W. Stephens and in 1904 they are shown on the Nashville city directory living on Hydes Ferry Road. We're guessing they moved into 3111 shortly after getting married as they are listed in subsequent city directories and census records at that address until their deaths. Many of the improvements on the home can probably date from this time period - including the addition of the Victorian style trim. In 1905 - after the death of Walter in 1904 - the siblings divided the estate of their father and each assumed ownership of a section of the land - with Sadie & Arthur being given the section where the Hyde-Stephens home resides.

There are numerous society articles from the 1920s & 30s that speak of the daughters, daughters-in-law and granddaughters of Jeff Hyde. There was lots of entertaining that happened on Hydes Ferry and in the Bordeaux area. In the James article from 1930,<sup>7</sup> the home is identified as the Arthur Stephens home. It is believed that Sadie and Arthur lived in this home longer than anyone - approximately 54 years. At

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<sup>7</sup> Nashville Banner, March 1930

some point during that time, the home itself was divided into 2 sections - as Sadie's will dated 1952 was signed by a Cecelia Cole who lists her address as 3111 Old Hydes Ferry Road. It may have been when the back porch was enclosed and knob & tube wiring was added - which was estimated at sometime in the 1920s. Perhaps it was around the time that their daughter Evalyn married James Clark in 1926 as in the 1930 census, the Clarks are shown living next door to the Stephens on Old Hyde's Ferry Road.

After Sadie's death, there were rooms advertised several times for rent in area newspapers. After the death of Arthur in 1960, the Stephens children (Evalyn Stephens Clark and Arthur Brower Stephens) sold the property to H.H. Chitwood. It was said that the two large concrete urns that are still in front of the home were installed at some point by Chitwood. Chitwood subdivided the property into the Hyde Park subdivision<sup>8</sup> in 1961. At some point, the Wayman family rented the home - finally purchasing it in 1972 from H.H. Chitwood.

James Edward Wayman Sr. (d. October 1990 ) and Lovie Gertrude Wayman (d. February 1991) resided at the Hyde-Stephens home until their deaths. According to their former daughter-in-law Barbara Wayman, James Sr. was a painter. Their son James Edward Junior shared the home and continued to reside in the home until his death in 2013. Kudzu Homes purchased the home from the Wayman heirs in July 2015.

For the past 10 years, Kudzu Homes has rehabilitated existing homes and built new, infill construction in Nashville. This particular project for Kudzu was a labor of

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<sup>8</sup> Davidson County, Tennessee, Plan of Hyde Park subdivision, Section 1, Plat Book 2900, Page 147.



love to the Bordeaux community and it's value to the community can not be underestimated. The owner of Kudzu Homes, Bob Potter, has heard through oral history - that one of his maternal ancestors rode with the James Gang at one time - so that connection helped gain his interest in the home. He hopes that the former residents of the home would be pleased with the work done to make it habitable again.

It is though the efforts of the Hyde, Stephens, Chitwood & Wayman families that the Hyde-Stephens home was able to be rehabilitated into the showpiece it is today. These families maintained the home in such a way that the basic structure of Jeff Hyde's farm house remains and serves as the backbone of the home that stands there today. Kudzu Homes hopes that through their efforts, the Hyde-Stephens home will continue to survive for another 158 years and will become a new "homeplace" for future generations.