

Thomas Clay McCreery (1816-1890)

By Jerry Long



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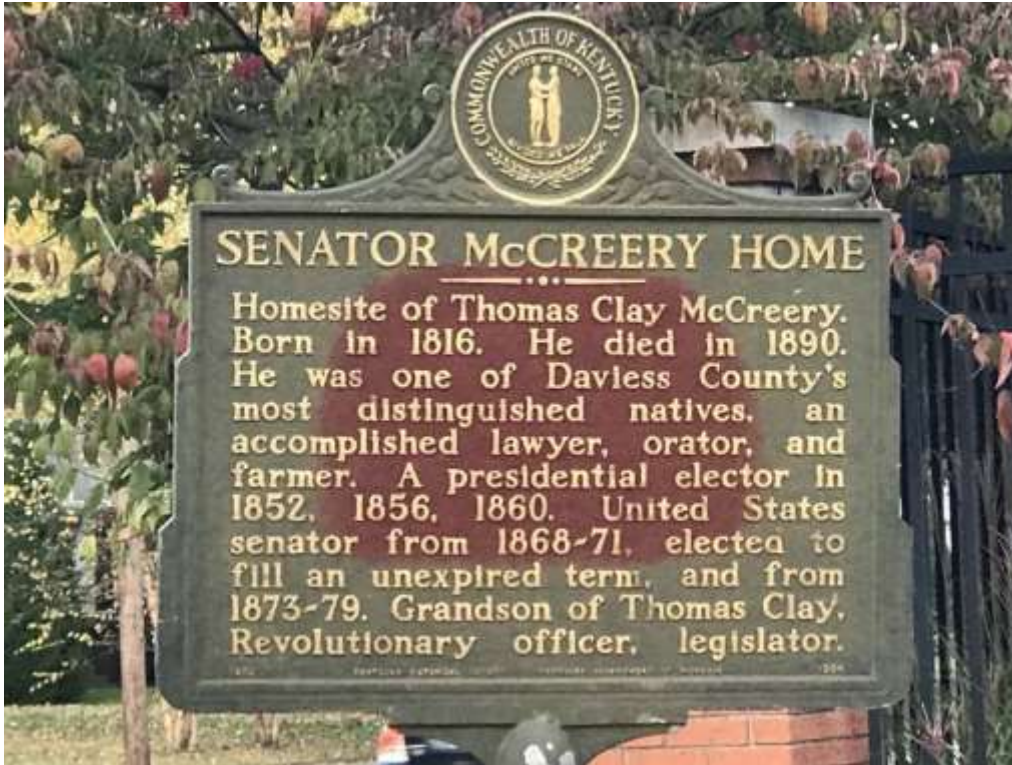


Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky: History of Kentucky

Lewis Collins, revised and enlarged by Richard H. Collins, Collins & Co., Covington, Ky, 1874, Volume II, p154 (Daviness County section):

Thomas C. McCreery, of Owensboro, was born in Ky., 1817; was a student at Centre College, Danville, Ky.; studied law, but turned his attention to agricultural pursuits; was a candidate for presidential elector in 1852, and defeated; but in 1860, was elected, and voted for Breckinridge and Lane; was elected U. S. senator, Feb., 1868, as a Democrat, vice James Guthrie, resigned, and served until March 4, 1871 (see Collins' Annals, p. 186); and again elected, Dec. 19, 1871 (see same, p. 221), for six years from March 4, 1873 to 1879. He is an elegant, forcible, and popular speaker.





Historical highway marker erected in 1970 by Kentucky Historical Society and Kentucky Department of Highways. Marker is in Owensboro, KY at the intersection of Griffith Avenue and McCreary Avenue, on the right when traveling east on Griffith Avenue.



A Biographical Congressional Directory, 1774-1911

Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1913, page 828:

McCreery, Thomas Clay, a Senator from Kentucky; born in Daviess county, Ky., December 12, 1816; attended the common schools; studied law, and was admitted to the bar; presidential elector on the Democratic ticket in 1852; elected as a Democrat to the United States Senate, to fill vacancy caused by the resignation of James Guthrie, and served from February 19, 1868, to March 3, 1871; reelected to the United States Senate, and served from March 4, 1873, to March 3, 1879; died in Owensboro, Ky., July 10, 1890.



History of Daviess County, Kentucky

Inter-State Publishing Co., Chicago, IL, 1883

Chapter V – Sketches of Public Men – pages 133-134:

Hon. Thomas C. McCreery, formerly United States Senator, was born in Kentucky in 1817; attended Center College, at Danville; studied law, but turned his attention to agricultural pursuits; was a candidate for Presidential elector in 1852, and defeated; but in 1860 he was elected, and voted for Breckenridge and Lane; was elected United States Senator in February, 1868, as a Democrat, *vice* James Guthrie, resigned, and served until March 4, 1871. He was elected by 110 votes, against nine for Sidney M. Barnes, Union, and five for Aaron Harding, third party. In the caucus his chief competitors were Jesse D. Bright and Richard H. Stanton. Mr. McCreery was again elected United States Senator, Dec. 19, 1871, by 112 votes, against twenty for John M. Harlan, Republican, and served from March 4, 1873, to March 4, 1879. Mr. McCreery, before he suffered partial paralysis, was one of the most popular orators of the day; and he has the highest respect of all parties for the faithfulness with which he served the interests of his State. His very large and valuable library was entirely consumed by fire some years ago. Residence in the southern suburbs of Owensboro, on Frederica street.

Chapter XXVI – Upper Town Precinct – page 797:

Early Settlement – About 1807 or '8, Thomas Clay, grandfather of Senator T. C. McCreery, and brother of General Green Clay, who was the father of Cassius M. Clay, settled about seven miles above Owensboro, on a farm on the Yelvington road, now owned by Senator McCreery.



Lamb's Biographical Dictionary of The United States

Edited By John Howard Brown, James H. Lamb Company, Boston, 1899:

Thomas C. McCreery

He was candidate in 1852, on the Democratic ticket for elector for Pierce and King, and in 1860 for Breckinridge and Lane, but was defeated. With these exceptions he was never a candidate or held other office than that of U.S. senator. He was first elected U.S. senator in 1868. to fill the unexpired term of James Guthrie, taking his seat Feb. 27, 1868. and served until March 3, 1871. He was elected for a full term in 1872, serving 1873-79. During his service as senator he introduced a bill to restore the property at Arlington, Va. to the family of Robert E. Lee, which was defeated by a party vote. In his second term he was a member of the committees on foreign relations, Indian affairs, civil service and retrenchment.



Owensboro Weekly Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 17 July 1890, p1:

SENATOR M'CREERY DEAD

The Intellectual Giant of the Beech Woods Passes Away.
Stricken for Years With Paralysis,
Death at Last Relieves One of Kentucky's Great Men.
"The Silver-Tongued Sluggard of h Senate," Who Attracted More
Attention Than Any Other Man in That Body When He Spoke.

SKETCH OF HIS REMARKABLE LIFE.

Hon. Thomas C. McCreery died at 10:30 o'clock last night. His death was as quiet and as gradual as the flickering of a candle in the socket or a wave that breaks on the far off shore.

Mr. McCreery was in his 74th year. For five years he had been almost helpless with paralysis and for nearly three years confined to his bed. His mind in his latter days was greatly impaired; only at rare intervals was he conscious of his surroundings.

Three daughters, Mr. John W Matthews, Mrs. Cynthia Stuart and Mrs. Ann Herr, of this city, and one son, Mr. Hawes McCreery, of Washington, survive him. All save the latter, who was summoned two days ago, were with him at his death. On several occasions in the past three years Mr. McCreery was thought to be very near death, but his final decline commenced last Friday when he suffered a severe chill. From that time he sank rapidly until last night, when the vital spark at last left his body.

No arrangements for the funeral have yet been made.

Hon. Thomas C McCreery.

Mr. McCreery was born In Daviess county, Kentucky. December 12, 1816. His father, Robert McCreery, settled in Daviess county at a very early date in what is known as the "Beech Woods." He attended the common schools and afterward Centre College, at Danville, Ky., after which he graduated at St. Joseph's college, Bardstown, Ky., in 1837. He studied law with the Hon. James T. Morehead at Frankfort in 1838 and 1839, commencing the practice of law in Frankfort in the latter year. In the year 1840 he returned to Daviess county devoting himself to study and agricultural pursuits, and occasionally appearing in the courts.

In 1843 he was the Democratic candidate for Congress against Hon. Willis Green, Whig candidate. The district was overwhelmingly Whig, the majority in the district being about 3,600. Notwithstanding this immense majority, after a thorough canvas Mr. Green's majority over him was only 400. Although he was leading a forlorn hope, and making so far as immediate results were concerned, a hopeless fight, he entered into the canvas with all the ardor of one inspired with assured success.

In 1845 he ran again, his opponent being Hon. John H. McHenry, then of Ohio county, a man of high character and great ability, a lawyer of extensive acquaintance and practice. Mr. McHenry's majority was 233.

Having made these two canvasses in the interest of the Democratic party in the hope rather of educating the masses and instilling into the minds of the people what he regarded as sound political doctrine, rather than through any hope of immediate success, he waited some years patiently, and finally lived to see the bread thus cast upon the waters, returned many days thereafter.

He was candidate for Presidential Elector in 1852 on the ticket with Franklin Pierce, but it was in 1856 that his soul was aroused as perhaps it never was before. Upon the death of the old Whig party, the Know Nothing or Native American party made its appearance. Its proscription of Catholics and foreigners was particularly repugnant to Mr. McCreery. He regarded the citadel of the citizen's most sacred rights as invaded and like Achilles, threw off its lethargy and rushed to the rescue. He made speeches to large crowds through the counties of Southern Kentucky. In the year previous he met the Native American candidate for Governor, Hon. Chas. S. Morehead, at various points, and showed himself an equal in debate to that captivating orator. Morehead had a voice of great compass and power, with something of the Irish brogue, and was put forward for the eminent office of Governor because of his great eloquence and power as a popular orator. There was a genuine friendship between the two men, originating in their early manhood and cemented by years of familiar intercourse. The knightly courtesy exhibited by each of these men was very refreshing in those years of bitterness, of hatred and invective.

The fundamental maxim in Mr. McCreery's political creed was that those who are the least governed are the best governed. He did not carry his maxim to the extreme that

"The best government of all
Is that which governs not at all."

But he opposed consistently through his whole career the whole protective system, and he believed that man should be left to pursue happiness without obstruction or hinderance by another's.

The first office which Mr. McCreery ever held was United States Senator. In 1868 James Guthrie resigned his seat in the U.S. Senate being at the time president of the Louisville and Nashville railroad, and Mr. McCreery was elected to fill the vacancy and served as such until March, 1871. He received in the Kentucky Legislature 111 votes against 9 votes cast for Sidney M. Burnes and 3 votes cast for Mason Harding. In the Democratic caucus his chief competitors were Jesse D. Bright formerly U.S. Senator from Indiana, who had subsequently moved to Kentucky, and R. H. Stanton, of Maysville. McCreery was a candidate for re-election but was defeated by Hon. J. W. Stevenson. A long and bitter controversy ensued between these two men. Pending the election it was stated that Mr. McCreery had recommended General S. G. Burbridge for appointment as Commissioner of Internal Revenue. So odious had the military administration of General Burbridge been in Kentucky that the simple statement that McCreery had recommended him for appointment to a high and responsible office, worked his defeat. In the able and exhaustive communications which McCreery wrote on the subject, for the purpose of showing Governor Stevenson's connection therewith he evinced the marked ability which characterized his speeches and writings. It is safe to say that a very large majority of those who carefully read the discussion were convinced of Mr. McCreery's innocence of the charge, and perhaps nearly as many believed that the slander had been circulated by and for the benefit of Governor Stevenson.

At all events, at the expiration of Hon. Garrett Davis' term in 1871, Mr. McCreery was elected to succeed him. He received 112 votes against 20 for General John M. Harlan. His term commenced March 4, 1873, and terminated March 4, 1879.

Mr. McCreery was attentive to his duties as Senator, being found invariably at his post. He spoke but seldom, but when interested in the subject he always had an attentive audience, both on the floor of the Senate and in the galleries. He was called by some the "Silver-tongued Sluggard of the Senate."

Perhaps never in his career did he enlist such absorbing interest as when he offered a bill to restore Arlington to its owners. It called forth a scene of the wildest dramatic interest. Arlington was the burying place of thousands of Federal soldiers, it was the property of the Lee estate. The

wild passions of civil war had not cooled, and one by one the able Republican Senators arose to anathematize the resolution.

Sumner was then, as always, classic. He said the epitaph:

“Good friend for Jesus sake forbear

“To dig the dust enclosed here

“Blessed be he who guards these stones

“And cursed he be who steals my bones.”

Which for more than two hundred years had protected the grave of England’s greatest poet, he would write above the grave of every Union soldier.

Contending himself with the broad shield of the constitution, guaranteeing that private property not be taken for public use without just compensation. Mr. McCreery patiently awaited the return of the reign of law and lived to see the principle for which he contended, vindicated by the Supreme Court of the United States in the recognition of the rights of the Lee heirs.

Mr. McCreery delivered a very humorous speech in the Senate in 1867 on the subject of resumption of specie payment. He possessed a fine sense of the humorous, and distinguished the nicer shades with a discerning eye.

It is exceedingly unfortunate that in the destruction of his residence by fire some ten years ago his private papers and his library were destroyed.

At the close of his term in the Senate in 1879 he returned home perfectly contented. He had occupied the place of his choice His highest ambition had been realized. Peace and order and fraternity reigned throughout the land and he was contented to spend the remainder of his days under his own vine and fig tree.”

As an orator he was master of the passions. Like that of Mirabeau, his voice at once aroused sympathy, and before he had uttered an hundred word every feeling and presumption was on the side of the speaker.

He had read all English literature and possessed of a fine memory, had so absorbed the fine sayings and thoughts of the great poets that he could produce them at will. To these qualities add an imposing presence, and the source of his great strength as a popular orator will be at once seen. Personally he was a favorite in the Senate. His friends were selected without regard to party. Hon. John Sherman, Hon. Simon Cameron and Hon. J. D. Cameron were his familiar friends, along with Vest, of Missouri, Hamlin, of Maine.

He made an impression on the inhabitants of Washington that will long remain.

Among his early friends and co-laborers Elijah Hise commanded his admiration above all men. He regarded him as an intellectual athlete towering head and shoulders above al men of his day. His admiration of Hon, Jeremiah S. Black was very great.

Although not a very old man, Mr. McCreery had survived all the political actors of his early days. He had seen the companions of his youth pass away like the grass of the field, stretching out like a numerous caravan. The old Beech Woods had changed. The many faces which had greeted him in the days of manhood, had, one by one, each taken his place in the silent halls of death with only here and there some old survivor standing like a monument of the past.

If it be true that man is the archetype of society and individual development is the model of social progress , happy is that age, happy is that State, thrice happy is that community of which Thomas McCreery is the type – for to honesty of purpose he added courage of conviction, with perception to see the right and will to do it as God had given him to see it.





Elmwood Cemetery, Section D, Owensboro, KY



**Some Articles in the Owensboro, KY newspapers
about Thomas C. McCreery (1816-1890)**

(abstracted by Jerry Long)

- Owensboro Monitor – 1866: 2/28 p.3 (has moved from his country homestead into Owensboro)
- Owensboro Monitor – 1866: 2/21 p.1 ("William Smither or Bill Smothers: Early Reminiscences of Owensboro", article by him published in 10 parts, 2/28 p.1, 3/7 p.1, 3/14 p.1, 3/21 p.1, 3/28 p.1, 4/4 p.1, 4/11 p.1, 4/18 p.1, 4/25 p.1)

**EARLY REMINISCENCES OF
OWENSBORO.**

William Smither;

— OR —

BILL SMOTHERS.

- Owensboro Monitor – 1867: 5/22 p.3 (his article on 'Bill Smothers' to be reprinted as a booklet, cost is 50 cents each),
- Owensboro Monitor – 1874: 11/18 p.3 (article on "Bill Smothers" to be run in the "Monitor")
- Owensboro Monitor – 1875: 1/13 p.1 (his article on "Bill Smothers" reprinted, also on first page of the following eight issues)
- Owensboro Examiner – 1876: 10/20 p.5 (within past few months, son, Robert, daughter, Kitty, & nephew have died)
- Owensboro Examiner – 1877: 4/6 p.1 (text of speech delivered in US Senate on Feb 27)
- Owensboro Examiner – 1877: 4/6 p.5 (daughter, Bettie, married L. Lumpkin 3 April 1877 in Owensboro)
- Owensboro Examiner – 1877: 5/18 p.1 (letter advocating for his re-election)
- Owensboro Examiner – 1877: 10/26 p.1 (text of Congressional speech on the proposition to repeal the Bankrupt Law)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1877: 10/24 p.2 (introduces bill in the US Senate advocating for the repeal of the bankrupt law)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1877: 11/7 p.2 (speech in the US Senate on the Bankrupt law)
- Owensboro Examiner – 1878: 2/1 p.1 (glowing tribute to him in article published in the "Brooklyn Eagle")
- Owensboro Messenger – 1878: 1/30 p.2 (Brooklyn Eagle on Senator McCreery)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1879: 2/19 p.4 (final speech in US Senate)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1879: 3/5 p.2 (retires from US Senate, 2 items on page)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1879: 9/3 p.1 (some anecdotes about him)
- Owensboro Messenger and Examiner – 1880: 2/4 p.3 (home burns, located about ½ mile from the city limits; built in 1861 by Daniel M. Griffith, who recently sold it to Senator T. C. McCreery)
- Owensboro Messenger and Examiner – 1880: 8/11 p.3 (home on Frederica Street nearing completion)
- Owensboro Semi-Weekly Messenger and Examiner – 1880: 3/26 p.3 (“The new residence to be erected by ex-Senator McCreery this summer will be one of the handsomest in the Green River Country. It will be constructed on the Italian style of architecture. The building will be two and a half stories high with a massive tower running up to a moderate height in the front portion. It will be built on the foundation of the dwelling recently destroyed by fire, and will front on Frederica street. Mr. James M. Johnson is now diligently engaged making the plans and specifications.”)
- Owensboro Tri-Weekly Messenger – 1886: 2/27 p.4 (comments about him by Congressman James G. Baine)
- Owensboro Tri-Weekly Messenger – 1886: 3/13 p.4 (suffers a stroke of paralysis)

- Owensboro Messenger and Examiner – 1887: 4/21 p.3 (tribute by ex-Senator Joseph S. Fowler)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1890: 7/11 p.1 (died 10 July 1890 of paralysis; for nearly three years he had been confined to his bed with paralysis; son of Robert & Cynthia McCreery, early settler of Beech Woods in Daviess County, where he was born on 12 December 1816; lawyer, commenced the practice of law at Frankfort in 1839; returned to Daviess County in 1840; US Senator 1868 to 4 March 1871 and 4 March 1873 to 4 March 1879; residence 'Forest Grove' on South Frederica Street; son, Robert McCreery & daughter, Bettie Lumpkin, deceased; buried at Owensboro's Elmwood Cemetery), see also Owensboro Messenger – 1890: 7/12 p.1, 7/13 p.1, 7/16 p.2, 7/18 p.1, 7/22 p.1, 8/24 p.1, 9/28 p.1, 10/19 p.1
- Owensboro Weekly Messenger – 1890: 7/17 p.1 & 2 (estate estimated to be worth about \$100,000, his will named John W. Matthews executor of his estate)
- Owensboro Weekly Messenger – 1890: 7/24 p.2 (will recorded on Saturday), 8/28 p.1 (tribute to him by Senator Joseph S. Fowler)
- Owensboro Inquirer – 1890: 7/11 p.1, 7/21 p.1 (will probated today), 7/25 p.4, 8/10 p.4 (suit filed by heirs for a division of his estate)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1891: 6/23 p.1 (suit by his heirs)
- Courier-Journal, Louisville, KY – 1897: 8/15 ("Recollections and Reminiscences of Senator Thomas C. McCreery")
- Owensboro Messenger – 1904: 9/4 p.9 ("Elijah McCreary, the father of the Hon. Thos. C. McCreary, settled on what is now known as the John Hanning farm, where he owned one thousand acres, yet lived in a little log house, like all the other early settlers.")
- Owensboro Messenger – 1906: 11/4 p.5 (his old office being removed)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1908: 3/25 p.2 (former home on East 3rd Street just east of the Courthouse to be torn down by its owner, Mrs. Ann Herr; Phillip Triplett & James L. Johnson had previously resided there; for several years it has been rented out)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1909: 6/20 p.2A (formerly lived in house on Third Street)
- Owensboro Inquirer – 1910: 4/10 p.9 ("Beech Woods Of The Past – Section of Daviess County Was Once Very Famous ... Hon. T. C. McCreery's Home. A little beyond the Vairian place was the old home of Senator Thomas C. McCreery. It was an old fashioned two-story frame house with a study out in the yard, where he spent many hours in reading and preparing himself for the great position which he afterwards held in the United States senate. Like the old Roman Cincinnatus, he was called from the farm to the senate, and if I recollect correctly he was the only senator that was ever elected to the United States senate prior to the holding of another office, the usual route being through congress or the gubernatorial chair.")
- Owensboro Messenger – 1918: 10/13 p.5A (the two McCreery's – T. C. & James B.)
- Owensboro Messenger and Inquirer – 1931: 6/14 p.1B & 9B ("Old River Road of Long Ago Recalled", by C. W. Bransford – "Closer to the river and just beyond the Crutcher Farm was that of Thomas Clay who settled there in 1807 or 1808. He was the brother of Gen. Green Clay and uncle of Gen. Cassius M. Clay. A daughter of Thomas Clay married Robert McCreery, and they were the parents of Thomas Clay McCreery, Daviess county's most distinguished native citizen. Mr. McCreery was the first president of the National Deposit Bank, organized in 1860, and in the same year was nominated and elected a presidential elector on the Breckenridge and Lane ticket. He was elected United States

senator in February 1868, vice James Guthrie resigned, and served until March 4, 1871; and was elected December 1, 1871, for the full term from 1873 to 1879. He was considered one of the county's greatest orators. In 1866, while on a visit to Washington City, the writer had the courtesy of the floor of the senate for a week through the influence of Senator McCreery. One day in conversation with several senators, Senator Fowler, of Tennessee, remarked that senator McCreery was the greatest orator in the senate and this estimate of him was really assented to by the other senators present. A year or two later "Puck" had a full-sized picture of the senator __ front cover and dubbed him "the silver-tongue sluggard of the senate." Mr. McCreery married Clara Hawes, daughter of Sam Hawes, and their descendants are represented in the Stuart (2 branches), Boone, Herr, Keene and Ditto, famines. Robert W. McCreery, his eldest son, married Orlean Athy, daughter of Mortimer F. Athy, and their daughter, Mrs. Wynne Dixon, of Henderson, Ky., is still in possession of the Clay farm that Senator McCreery inherited from his mother over one hundred years ago.”)

- Owensboro Messenger – 1942: 12/20 p.1B (“Owensboro Has Long Boasted of Many Beautiful Residences... Another famous old home was located in the center of the block that is now embraced between Third and Fourth and Allen and Daviess streets. It was the home of Senator Thomas McCreery. The large, square, gray brick edifice, with landscaped lawn, faced Third street. Sen. McCreery later traded homes with Dan Griffith, the McCreerys moving into the Griffith home and the Griffiths into the McCreery home. The house was later torn down to make way for business houses, the corner on which the present Messenger-Inquirer building is located, going to the United States government for a postoffice building.”)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1953: 8/23 p.4D ("First Street In Owensboro Named For A Girl, But Which Frederica Was It?" ... Daviess County's only U. S. senator, the Hon. Thomas Clay McCreery, inspired the name for McCreery Avenue. The street runs in back of his home site, now Longfellow Hill. McCreery's most notable acts while in office were voting for acquittal during the impeachment of Andrew Johnson and his attempts to have Arlington restored to the family of Gen. Robert E. Lee after the Civil War. His years in office ran from 1868-1871 and from 1873-1879.”)
- Owensboro Messenger and Inquirer – 1965: 10/5 p.8C (“Two Daviess Countians Have Been U.S. Senators”, Owensboro's second United States senator was Thomas C. McCreery, who was born in the Yelvington section of Daviess County December 12, 1816. In 1868, McCreery was selected to fill the vacancy created when Senator and former cabinet member James Guthrie, of Louisville, resigned. McCreery served until 1871. He was reelected March 4, 1873, and served until March 3, 1879. Following his return to Owensboro, Senator McCreery made his home on Frederica Street where Longfellow School now stands. He died July 10, 1890. From 1869 to 1871, Owensboro for the only time in its history had a representative in both houses of the national Congress. William N. Sweeney, a prominent lawyer here for years, was elected to the 41st Congress and served one term.”)
- Owensboro Messenger and Inquirer – 1967: 11/19 p.9C (“Our thanks to Mrs. Kitty Robey of 1106 Frederica St., a granddaughter of Thomas Clay McCreery, deceased, who was a United States Senator from Kentucky, 1868 to 1879. She has enlightened us more in regard to her grandfather. Mrs. Robey and Mrs. S. J. Boone of 1520 Griffith Avenue, are granddaughters of the late senator. Mrs. Robey's mother and Mrs. Boone's mother were

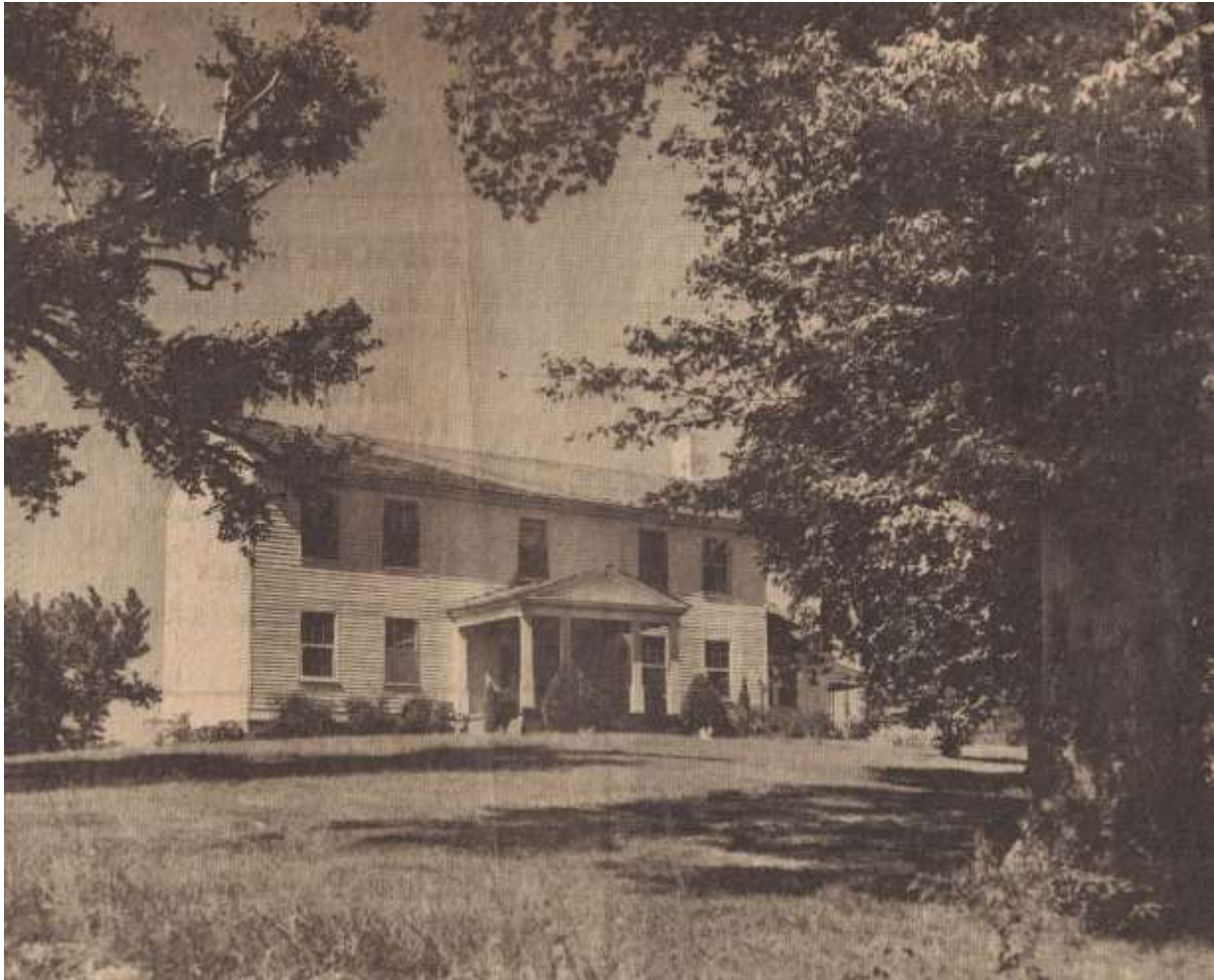
daughters of Sen. McCreery. During the War Between the States, McCreery lived at Thruston and after the slaves were freed he moved to Owensboro. He owned the entire block where the Messenger and Inquirer is located. His home was .in the middle of Third Street Sen. McCreery later bought 40 acres of land where Owensboro High School and Longfellow Schools now stand. Mrs. Robey was born in a house on the hill where the elementary school is presently located. Both Mrs. Robey and Mrs. Boone are the closest living relatives of Sen. McCreery, who died in 1890. Mrs. Robey still remembers her grandfather, but Mrs. Boone was not born until after his death.”)

- Owensboro Star – 1968: 9/18 p.1 (“Illustrious Kentuckian – Senator Thomas C. McCreery”)
- Owensboro Messenger and Inquirer – 1969: 1/22 p.10C (first president of the Owensboro Deposit Bank)
- Owensboro Messenger and Inquirer – 1970: 4/12 p.1C (“Heritage Commission To Cite 20 Buildings”, A. Y. Crow home on Carpenter Lake Road which was 'Beechwood' home of Sen. Thomas C. McCreery)
- Owensboro Messenger and Inquirer – 1970: 6/17 p.1B (caption to picture - “Historic House Razed - The 80-year-old house at 1612 Frederica St. is being torn down. The house is owned by Mrs. Clara Tune, who inherited the structure from her grandmother, Mrs. Annie Herr, daughter of U.S. Senator Thomas Clay McCreery. Mrs. Herr had the house built about 1890 on a 5 ½-acre lot, part of Sen. McCreery's 40-acre estate on Frederica Street. Plans for site development were not disclosed.”)
- Owensboro Messenger and Inquirer – 1975: 8/28 p.7E (“Historic Homes of Owensboro... Senator Thomas C. McCreery House or Beech Woods. Located high on a knoll on Kentucky 405, this historic home was built circa 1840. Senator Thomas Clay McCreery was an accomplished lawyer, orator, and farmer. Besides being a presidential elector in 1852, 1856 and 1860, he was United States senator from 1868-1871 and 1873-1879. He named this home Beech Woods because the house was surrounded by Beech trees. Senator McCreery also owned a home on Griffith Avenue, where the public library is located today. Beech Woods is built of yellow poplar and is owned by the children of A. Y. Buck Crowe.”)
- Owensboro Messenger and Inquirer – 1975: 10/5 (“Historic Homes of Owensboro... “Home of Thomas Clay on Highway 405, Thomas Clay, a soldier & captain in the Revolutionary War, came to Daviess County in 1812, cousin of John Clay, father of the well known statesman Henry Clay, an uncle of Cassius Marcellus Clay, famed Kentuckian of the Civil War, and grandfather of US Senator Thomas Clay McCreery, home is now owned by Mr. & Mrs. Jake Gerteisen.”)
- Owensboro Messenger and Inquirer – 1995: 2/14 p.3S (Community History by Glenn Hodges: “The countryside beyond Yellow Creek at Thruston was a panorama of pastoral splendor during antebellum days. It was in the section of Daviess County called the Beechwoods, known for its majestic beech trees and the fine plantations that lined the old river road from Owensboro to Hawesville... On another farm lived Thomas Clay, the first settler of the Thruston area and uncle of famous Kentucky abolitionist and orator Cassius Marcellus Clay. Two of the farms were homes for men who eventually became United States senators - Thomas Clay McCreery and Wendell Hampton Ford... The land of Thomas Clay McCreery, who served in the U.S. Senate from 1868-1871 and 1873-1879, bordered the Thruston farm on the west. McCreery's place adjoined the plantation of his grandfather Thomas Clay, who had settled there in 1806 or 1807. Clay was a second cousin

of Henry Clay, and brother of General Green Clay, father of Cassius. Both Thomas and Green Clay were members of the convention which drafted Kentucky's second constitution in 1799... Mrs. Gladys Gerteisen, widow of former Daviess County commissioner Jake Gerteisen, lives on the Thomas Clay farm. The old McCreery house known in the old days as Beechwoods was torn down in the 1980s and lawyer Kirby Gordon has a new home on the hilltop where the old house stood.)



Owensboro Star, Owensboro, KY, 18 September 1968, p1:



"BEECH WOODS," the 150 year-old home of Senator Thomas C. McCreery, is located high on a knoll on the Thruston Road. Senator McCreery was born in 1816 near the site. He served in the United States Senate from 1868 to 1879. The impressive, old house is built of poplar, and the small structure at the right of the photo, the kitchen, was added by Mrs. Kittie Robey, granddaughter of Senator McCreery. Mr. and Mrs. A. Y. Crowe are the present owners.

In March of 1868, when Andrew Johnson, President of the United States was summoned to appear before the Senate to be tried on eleven accusations of high crime and misdemeanors, Thomas C. McCreery, of Daviess County was serving his first term in the United States Senate.

By a narrow margin, the Senate failed to convict Johnson, and since, historians have dismissed the charges against the man as flimsy and false. Among those voting against Johnson's impeachment was the Senator from Daviess County.

Thomas C. McCreery was born in Daviess County on December 12, 1816, on a farm on the Thruston Road. He attended Centre College, at Danville, and St. Joseph's College in Bardstown, and graduated from that institution, in 1837. The Senator then studied law at Frankfort.

In 1840 he returned to Daviess County and "Beech Woods", his paternal home, where he pursued a farming career. During the forties, he made two vigorous races for Congress, carrying the banner of the Democratic party, but was defeated in each instance. In these defeats McCreery distinguished himself as an able politician.

Thomas McCreery was elected to the United States Senate in February of 1868, succeeding James Guthrie, who had resigned his seat, and at the end of two terms retired to private life.

Senator McCreery spelled his name with two e's, while his cousin, James, spelled the family name with an 'a'. The mix-up in spelling came about in an unusual way: James McCreery's father was a physician and when he started practice in Richmond, he hired a sign painter, who misspelled the name, and the doctor adopted it.

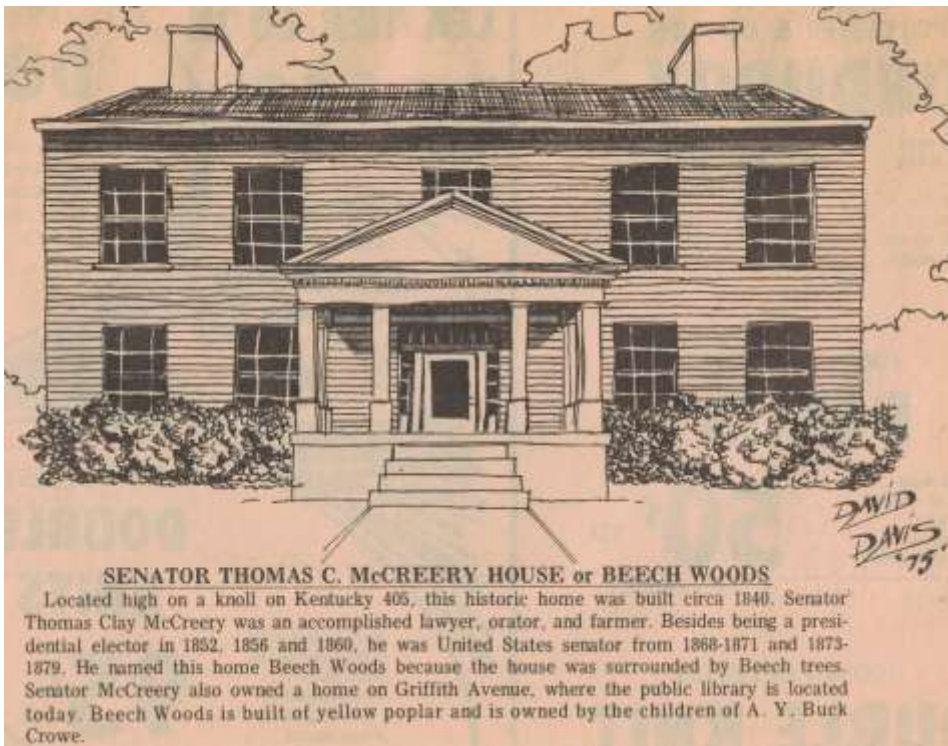
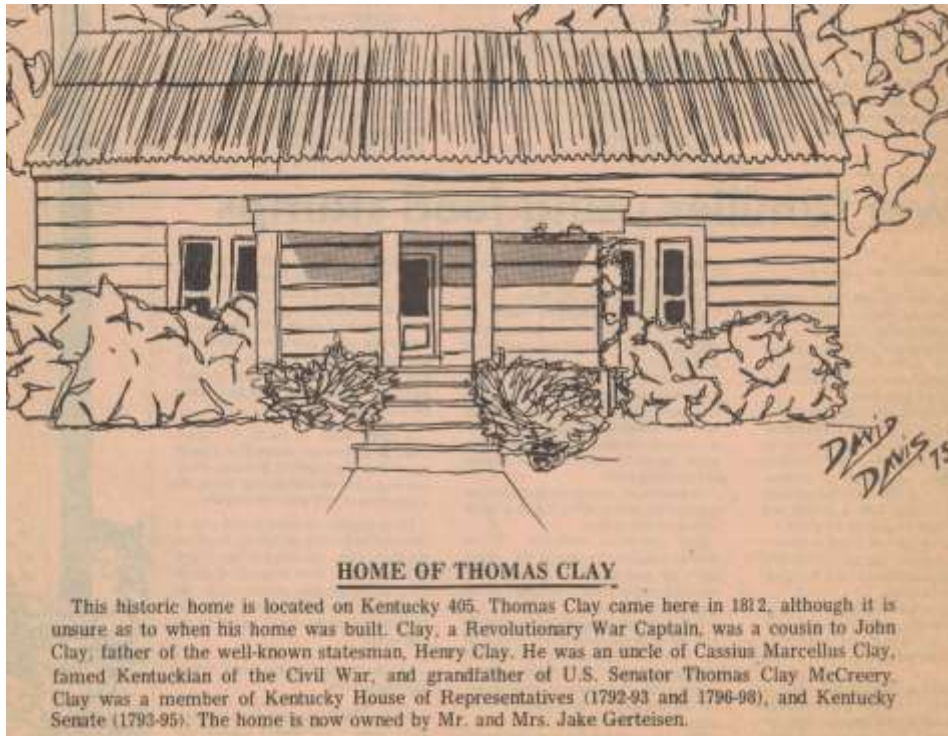
Mrs. Kittle Robey and Mrs. S. J. Boone, of Owensboro, are the only grandchildren of Senator McCreery alive today. Mrs. Robey, who lives at 1406 Frederica Street, inherited "Beech Woods" from her mother. Mrs. Robey was born in 1885 where Longfellow School now stands, and recalls the time when, after an argument with her mother, she decided to leave home and got lost in a ten-acre corn field "right where Owensboro Senior High School stands."

The yard of the Senator's town house swept down to Griffith Avenue in those days, where there was a stile placed to climb over. Griffith Avenue and Frederica Street were deep with mud in the winter and deep with dust in the summer. Plank walks were sidewalks of the times and stepping stones were used to cross both streets.

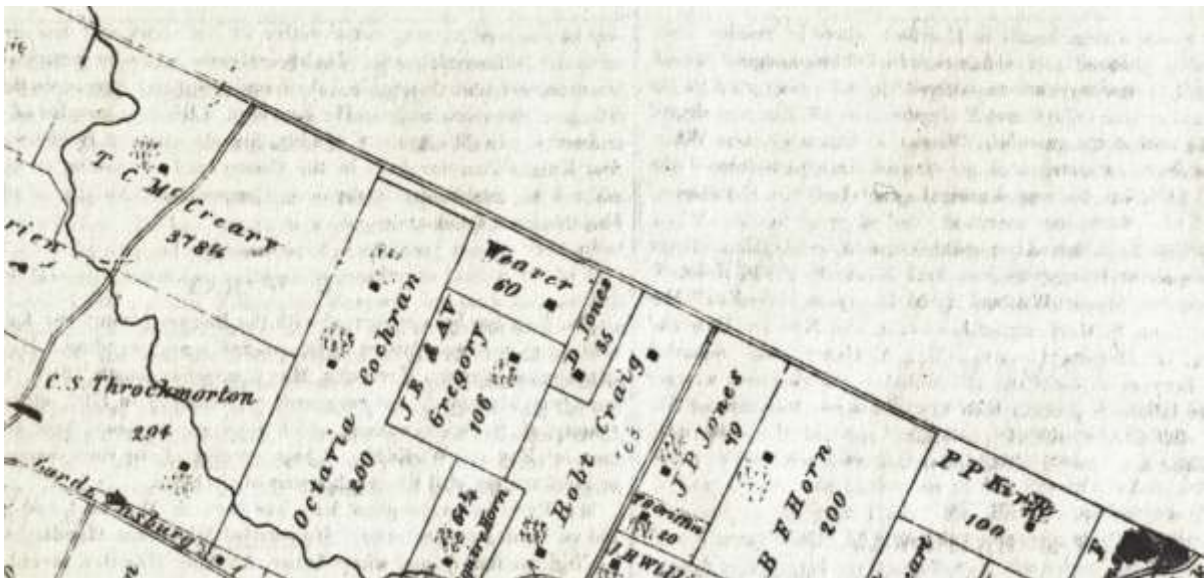
The new Owensboro-Daviess County Library will stand on the site of the old McCreery estate and someday, the city authorities might change the spelling of the street, from McCreery to McCreeery. Senator McCreery died in 1890, after a lingering illness. Funeral services were held in his home on Frederica Street. The illustrious and distinguished gentleman from Daviess County is buried in Elmwood cemetery.



Kentucky Historical Highway marker in Daviess County. Marker is on State Road 405, 0.4 miles north of Wrights Landing Road (State Road 1831), on the left when traveling north.

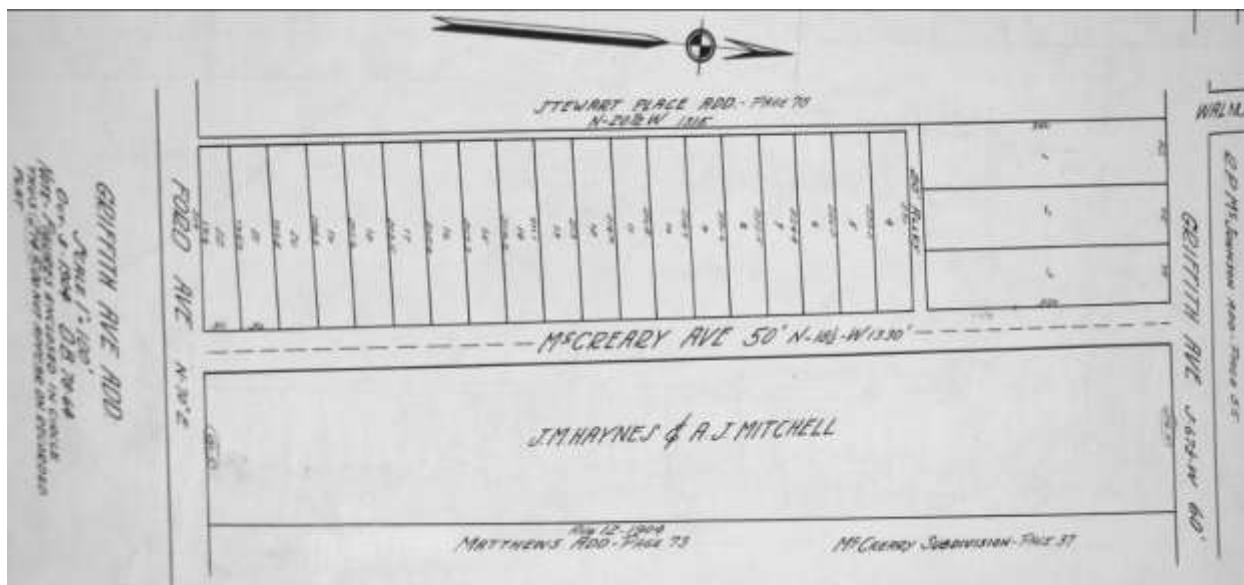


Pictures from the Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY – 5 October 1975, p11A (Thomas Clay home) and 28 September 1975, p7E (Thomas C. McCreery home).



These two plats are from the An Illustrated Historical Atlas Map of Daviess County, KY., Leo McDonough & Co., 1876. The top plat is part of the Yelvington Precinct (page 30) – the east section of the farm of Thomas C. McCreery (790 acres) is shown along the bottom of the frame; the double line at the bottom of his tract is the Wright’s Landing Road and the double line near the

south edge of his land is the Owensboro & Hawesville Road (now KY Highway 405). The adjoining second section of his farm (378 ¼ acres) is at the upper left edge of the bottom plat (part of the Uppertown Precinct, page 39). The McCreery farm was located in what was known at the Beech Woods neighborhood about a mile north of Thruston. Thomas C. McCreery was residing here at the time of the 1850 and 1860 censuses of Daviess County, KY. His occupation was then reported as farmer. His farm in 1860 was evaluated at \$20,000. The 1875 tax list of Daviess County records that he was taxed on a total of 1,981 acres, 3 lots in Yelvington and 1 lot in Owensboro. In 1866 he moved from his country home to the city of Owensboro (Owensboro Monitor, 28 February 1866, p3). He is listed as a resident of Owensboro in the 1870 and 1880 censuses. The 1870 census gives his occupation as US Senator and the 1880 census as ex-US Senator.



Thomas C. McCreery home property at the southwest corner of Frederica Street and Griffith Avenue is shown at lower right corner of this 1904 plat of the Griffith Avenue Addition to the city of Owensboro. An article in the 27 August 1904 issue of the Owensboro Messenger (p8) about the Griffith Avenue Addition to Owensboro refers to McCreery Avenue as a new street. Thomas C. McCreery owned 40 acres at the south west corner of Frederica Street and Griffith Avenue. The front of his house faced Frederica Street. It stood on the hill where the Longfellow School was located. After his death the residence was rented; in the Owensboro newspapers during 1891-1892 there are multiple advertisements for renting the residence. The house was razed prior to 1928 when the property was purchased for the construction of the school.



Family of Thomas Clay McCreery (1816-1890)

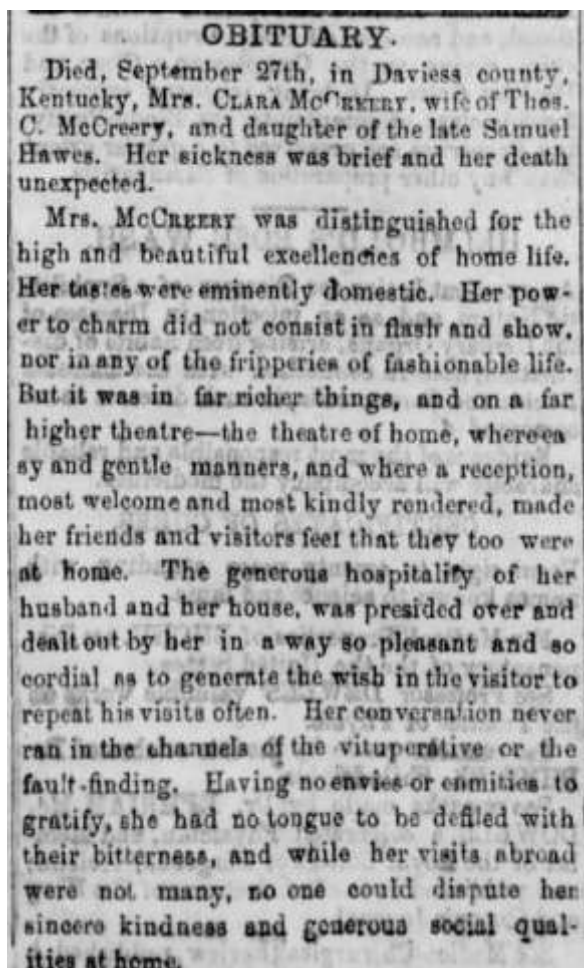
By Jerry Long

Thomas Clay McCreery was born 12 December 1816 Beech Woods, Daviess County, KY. He was the son of Robert McCreery & Cynthia Clay. His grandfather, Thomas Clay (1750-1824), a Revolutionary War soldier, was a first cousin of John Clay, the father of the acclaimed statesman,

Henry Clay (1777-1852). Thomas C. McCreery and Henry Clay were thus second cousins once removed. Thomas C. McCreery died of paralysis on 10 July 1890 at his residence on South Frederica Street in Owensboro, Daviess County, KY. He was buried in Owensboro's Elmwood Cemetery.

He married Clara Massie Hawes, 20 February 1845 Daviess County, KY (marriage book A, p149). She was the daughter of Samuel Hawes (1795-1861) & Sallie H. Massie (1790-1854) and granddaughter of Richard Hawes (1770-1829) & Clary Walker (1796-1848). Her grandfather, Richard Hawes, came to Daviess County, KY in 1820 and settled in the Yelvington Precinct. He bought large tracts of land in this and Hancock Counties and donated the land for the town site of Hawesville the county seat of Hancock County (History of Daviess County, Kentucky, 1883, p862). Clara Hawes McCreery was born 11 May 1826 Daviess County, KY and died 27 September 1863 Daviess County, KY. She was buried Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, KY.

Owensboro Monitor, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 14 October 1863, p3:



Thomas C. McCreery and Clara M. Hawes were the parents of twelve children:

- Samuel Hawes McCreery was born 5 December 1845 Daviess County, KY. He died 7 November 1851 and was buried Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, KY.
- Robert W. McCreery was born 11 October 1847 Daviess County, KY. He married Orlean Athy, 19 September 1872 Daviess County, KY. He died of consumption on 15 January

1876 in Owensboro, Daviess County, KY and was buried Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, KY.

- Decius McCreery was born 3 February 1850 Daviess County, KY. He died 21 April 1866 and was buried Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, KY.
- Sallie H. McCreery was born 26 October 1851 Daviess County, KY. She married John Wood Matthews (1836-1927), 13 November 1873 Daviess County, KY. She died of apoplexy on 12 July 1930 at her home at 121 East Fourth Street in Owensboro, Daviess County, KY. She was buried Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, KY.
- Clara Elizabeth McCreery, 'Bettie', was born 24 October 1853 Daviess County, KY. She married Lee Lumpkin (1833-1883), 3 April 1877 Daviess County, KY. She died of consumption 5 February 1881 at her residence on Fourth Street in Owensboro, Daviess County, KY and was buried Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, KY.
- Cynthia Green Clay McCreery was born 4 March 1855 Daviess County, KY. She married William Alexander Stuart (1847-1886), 28 December 1876 Daviess County, KY. She died of a gastric ulcer on 13 March 1923 at her home at 602 Griffith Avenue in Owensboro, Daviess County, KY and was buried Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, KY
- Kitty M. McCreery was born 10 September 1856 Daviess County, KY. She died of consumption on 13 October 1876 in Owensboro, Daviess County, KY and was buried Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, KY. She was not married.
- Hawes McCreery was born 2 March 1858 Daviess County, KY. He died of toxemia at the Beechurst Sanitarium in Louisville, Jefferson County, KY on 9 December 1916 and was buried Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, KY. The 1880 census reported he was an attorney. On 25 January 1896 he was declared of unsound mind and was committed to the Western Kentucky Asylum in Christian County, KY, where he was listed as a patient in the 1900 census (Owensboro Weekly Messenger, 29 January 1896, p4). His death certificate recorded he was a lawyer and was not married.
- son was born 1 August 1859 Daviess County, KY and died infancy
- Ann W. McCreery was 7 November 1860 Daviess County, KY. Her obituary stated she was born at the old McCreery homestead on the Hardinsburg Road east of Owensboro. She married James Frederick Herr (1860-1890), 26 July 1881 Daviess County, KY. She died of influenza on 26 February 1921 at her home, 1612 South Frederica Street, in Owensboro, Daviess County, KY and was buried Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, KY
- son was born 6 June 1862 Daviess County, KY and died infancy
- son was born 20 September 1863 Daviess County, KY and died infancy



Family Bible Records, Volume 2 (G-L), West Central Kentucky Family Research Association, Owensboro, KY, McDowell Publications, Utica, KY, 2002, pp.30-32:

HAWES - McCREERY BIBLE

Owned by Thomas Clay McCreery (1816-1890) U.S. Senator from Kentucky, now (1959) in the possession of his granddaughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Matthews Boone, Owensboro, Kentucky. Published by American Bible Society, New York, 1850. Copied October 1, 1959 by M. J. Edgeworth, Owensboro, Kentucky.

BIRTHS

Richard Hawes was born on the third day of February 1770
Clary Walker was born August 1st 1776
Ann Hawes was born January 27th 1793
Samuel Hawes was born on the 14th day of June 1795
Richard Hawes Jr. was born on the 6th day of February 1797
Hugh W. Hawes was born October 20th 1798
Kitty W. Hawes was born October 17th 1800
Aylett Hawes was born January 12th 1803
Albert G. Hawes was born April 1st 1805
Edwin Hawes was born October 24th 1807
Benjamin W. Hawes was born April 19th 1810
Clary M. Hawes was born 28th October 1811
Susan Hawes was born October 28th 1816
Sally H. Massie was born March 3rd 1790
Richard H. Hawes was born October 26th 1820
Elizabeth A. Hawes was born 1st January 1824
Clara M. Hawes was born May 11th 1826
Robert Massie Hawes was born December 1st 1828
Thomas C. McCreery was born on the 12th December 1816
Clara M. McCreery, his wife, was born May 11th 1826
Samuel H. McCreery was born on the 5th December 1845
Robert W. McCreery born on the 11th October 1846
Decius McCreery born February 3rd 1850. Died 1866
Sally H. McCreery born October 26th 1851
Clara E. McCreery born October 24th 1853
Cynthia G. C. McCreery born March 4th 1855
Kitty M. McCreery born September 10th 1856
Hawes McCreery born March 2nd 1858
Boy born on the 1st day of August 1859
Anna N. McCreery born on the 7th November 1860
Boy born June 6th 1862
Boy born September 20th 1863
James Gamble Stuart, Jr. born April 24th 1905
John M. Stuart born October 29th 1909
Sally McCreery Boone born December 26th 1924
John Matthews Boone born October 10th 1926

MARRIAGES

Sallie Massie and Samuel Hawes were married April 16th 1818
Thomas. C. McCreery and Clara M. Hawes, daughter of Samuel and Sally Hawes, were married
February 20th 1845
Thomas Clay and Mary Callahan (formerly Dawson)
Cynthia Clay and Robert McCreery were married 29th day of January 1815 by Benjamin Kelly,
Hartford, Ky.

Sallie McCreery and John W. Matthews were married November 13th 1873
Clara Matthews and J. Gamble Stuart were married September 15th 1902
Elizabeth Matthews and Sam Jones Boone were married October 20th 1923
Richard Hawes and Clary Walker were married December 1790

DEATHS

Richard Hawes departed this life on the 29th day of November 1829
Clary Hawes departed this life October 14th 1848
Albert G. Hawes died on the 14th March 1849
Sally H. Hawes died July 24th 1854
Richard H. Hawes died July 17th 1824
Elizabeth A. Smith died December 31st 1842
Robert Massie Hawes died 10th of October 1829
Samuel Hawes departed this life January 19th 1861
Samuel H. McCreery died November 7th 1851, aged six years
Clara, wife of T. C. McCreery and daughter of Samuel and Sally Hawes, departed this life
September 27th 1863. She bore twelve children, eight of whom survived her.
Decius McCreery departed this life April 21st 1866
Robert W. McCreery died January 15th 1876
Kittie McCreery died October 13th 1876
Thomas C. McCreery departed this life July 10th 1890
Clara E. Lumpkin died February 5th 1881
Hawes McCreery died December 9th 1916



Owensboro Weekly Messenger,
Owensboro, KY, 17 July 1890, p1:



Thomas C. McCreery