

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

— EXCELLENT
— GOOD
☒ FAIR

— DETERIORATED
— RUINS
— UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

— UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
— MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Home Infirmary stands on a hill at the southeast corner of Front Street (now Riverside Drive) and Current Street overlooking the Cumberland River. When Dr. Robert T. Burt purchased the four-and-one-half-acre lot from A. R. Gholson and G. B. Lyle in 1904, there was a seven-room Gothic Revival cottage on the property. An early (ca. 1906) photograph shows that the brick house, which may have been built by the Current family in ca. 1880, consisted of a story-and-a-half main section and a one story ell. The long (east-west) axis of the main portion of the house paralleled Current Street, and the ell projected north. A brick chimney still stands at the eastern end of the main section. The vergeboard on the western end of this section once had a profusion of Gothic scroll work, and the surround for the paired, six-over-six windows had a heavy molding. A one-story, square columned, L-shaped porch, replete with frieze and decorative scroll work trim was attached to the northside of the main section and west elevation of the ell; six-over-six windows are also found in the ell.

During the forty-eight years that the Clarksville Home Infirmary operated, the building underwent many changes and several additions were built. The size and location of these appendages were governed by necessity and utility with little concern for scale, symmetry, or aesthetic considerations. The result of these changes is a curious architectural hodge-podge. Shortly before Dr. Burt opened the hospital to patients, he had the roof of the ell raised to provide a full second floor. The northernmost room of the ell has a skylight, and this room served for many years as the operating theater; the original operating table still remains in the house. By 1922 the building contained thirty rooms, and three more were added before the institution closed in 1954. A large, rectangular, two-story frame wing was built in ca. 1908 on the east side of the ell, which contained additional living space for the Burt family, rooms for patients, and other hospital facilities. A two-story, screened gallery later replaced the original porch and a porte-cochere was added to the north end of the ell; the main entrance was also moved from the main section to the ell. To provide for a more commodious and well lighted operating room, the western gable of the main section was drastically deformed and a dormer added. The operating theater scrub room projects from the south wall and is supported by a single post. Another brick and frame wing was attached to the north wall to house both infirmary and residential spaces, and small closet-like appendages just out from the west wall of this wing and the adjacent main section elevation.

The Burt family occupied most of the downstairs rooms, and the entire second floor and part of the first was devoted to the infirmary. While the lower floor has a rambling, single level floor plan, the upper story, because of the numerous changes in the building has several different levels, which are connected by staircases; corridors join the various sections in this story.

Two small tracts on the north side of the property have been sold, and new houses have been built there. However, the expansive lawn and almost unobstructed view of the Cumberland River remains. Northeast of the infirmary stands a two-car, concrete block garage with a shed roof. A swimming pool, located a few yards east of the building, was removed many years ago.