

Judge John McNairy
March 30, 1762 – November 12, 1837

Section 28.2 # 280838

John McNairy was born on March 30, 1762, at Horsepen Creek in Guilford County, North Carolina, to Francis and Mary Boyd McNairy. John was the first of nine children. The McNairy home was used as a hospital following the Battle of Guilford Court House in the Revolution. John studied law with Alexander Martin in Guilford County and received a license to practice law in 1783. The next year he moved to Salisbury, Roane County, North Carolina, to study with Judge Spruce Macay. There he met Andrew Jackson who was also studying law with the Judge. In 1788 a Superior Court to serve the Cumberland frontier was established by North Carolina. John McNairy, 25 years old, was appointed its first judge. He arrived for his duties on the frontier, in the Town of Nashville, in the fall of 1788. One of his first actions was to appoint Andrew Jackson, 21 years old, as district attorney. Superior Court served Davidson and Sumner counties until 1809 when this court system was replaced.

McNairy would continue to serve as a judge in many courts, both State and Federal. His legal career covered 46 years. He retired from the bench in 1834. He was involved in important community endeavors such as serving on the welcoming committees for the visits of President James Monroe in 1819 and for the Marquis de Lafayette in 1825. The Marquis and his entourage were the guests in the home of John's brother Dr. Boyd McNairy. Andrew Jackson had the support of John McNairy for his first unsuccessful bid for the presidency in 1824 and again for his successful bid in 1828.

Judge McNairy married Mary Bell Hunt Robertson, twice a widow. Their home was located on their 477 acre farm called "Bellview," near McNairy Springs. They had no children but were very much involved in the lives of their nieces and nephews. By 1790, John McNairy's parents and his siblings, except for one brother, had all relocated from Guilford County to Nashville.

Mary McNairy's death occurred in 1832, five years before her husband's death. The local newspaper, on November 13, 1837, announced the Judge's funeral would be held at his residence. He was 75 years old. Divine services were conducted by the Rev. Mr. Wheat, Rector of Christ Church (Episcopal), "after which the last solemn rites were performed at the family-burying ground of the deceased." Dr. Boyd McNairy, brother of John, died in 1856. According to the Christ Church Parish Registers, his funeral was held at the church on November 22nd., with burial following at City Cemetery. The McNairy Mausoleum at City Cemetery, constructed following the Judge's death, became the burial vault to which remains were re-interred from the McNairy family graveyard and where his kin and friends would be interred in years to come.

Sources

Dictionary of North Carolina Biography. Article by Mary Katherine Hoskins. 1991
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Christ Church (Episcopal) Parish Registers. Funerals
Obituary. *National Banner & Nashville Daily Advertiser*, May 3, 1832. Mary McNairy
Obituary. *National Banner & Nashville Whig*, November 13, 1837. Judge John McNairy

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