

# Amis House, Built In 1783, Still Tourist Attraction Of East Tenn.

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Dusty travelers who rode on horseback up the hill to Amis House nearly 200 years ago found a small, thriving community.

The clang of iron on iron at the blacksmith shop and the twang of axe on grindstone greeted their ears. Inside the big stone house on the knoll they might refresh themselves with a glass of grog and eat food prepared in huge kettles over the open fireplace in the kitchen.

Here they could rest overnight, buy bacon and cheese to eat, and "overalls and mockersons" to wear on their journey.

They met other travelers making their way across the mountains, discussed the possibility of joining forces for safety against Indian attacks, and talked of the infant American government, now being formed in the east by men such as George Washington, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton.

Today, of course, the smithy, distillery, and tavern operated by Thomas Amis are gone, and with them the bustle of activity that made Amis House the stopping point for nearly every traveler passing through the area.

In Hawkins County

But the old brownstone house which was built in 1783 as the center of the community still stands not far from Rogersville in Hawkins County, 1½ miles south of Highway 11-W to Kingsport. The home, still in good repair, has served as a dwelling for five generations of the Amis family.

Sole occupant of the house is Miss Anne Amis, a spvy, white-haired lady of 63 who is custodian of the family treasures. Miss Amis who, like her great-great grandfather uses the French pronunciation of her home ("Amis"), acts as a gracious guide for visitors who come to inspect the house and its relics.

The original dwelling built in 1783, has five rooms, two downstairs and three upstairs. Its stone walls, 18 inches thick, were built as sturdy barriers against the elements (and probably against Indian attacks as well). The double doors still standing at the front entrance are constructed of two thicknesses of wood, one running horizontally and the other vertically. The frames are held up by wooden pegs, and heavy black wrought-iron bolts and hinges from the blacksmith shop are used as fastenings.

The kitchen Thomas Amis' family used was located several feet behind the rest of the house, as was the custom. Marked today only by a rockpile, the kitchen once held a huge chimney with



**AMIS HOUSE**, one of the historic landmarks of the Kingsport area, has probably changed little since it was constructed almost two centuries ago. It still contains some of the original furnishings which belonged to the first owner, Thomas Amis, great-great-grandfather of its present occupant. A highway marker erected by the Tennessee Historical Commission on Route 11-W between Kingsport and Rogersville marks the route to the stone house. (Times-News photos by Byland.)

Cap't Budd, "got overalls and mockersons made and that night was obliged to sleep in them both; he was afraid to pull them off for fear he could no more put them on again."

The tradition for hospitality to travelers continued in succeeding generations. "Drummers," the old time traveling salesmen who brought merchandise to country

stores in the area years later, still made Amis house their overnight headquarters, Miss Amis declares. She explains that the general stores might be located as far apart as Rogersville and Church Hill, too great a distance for a single day's journey on foot or on horseback.

The days of the old home as an

inn for travelers are probably through. But, each month, dozens of visitors still drive up the dusty path to get a look at the stone dwelling inside and out. Miss Amis, true to the tradition established by her great-great grandfather, says she "really enjoys" having company come to Amis House.