

The medallion door, said to be only one of two in Athens, is a special pride of the Looneys. It is composed of two thicknesses of glass with a medallion etched between them, and shows one color from the inside and another shade from the exterior. Much of the antique furniture in the house has been passed down through the Looney family.



Robert Looney was apparently the first representative of that family in America. He received a patent of 24 acres of land on the upper Potomac River (then called the Cohongotonta) on Nov. 12, 1735. Less than a decade later he relocated south of the James River, where he owned a ferry and built a water-powered mill on Looney's Mill Creek. Here he raised cattle and horses, and developed orchards and a nursery. Among the children of Robert and Elizabeth Looney was Absalom (1729-ca. 1796). Absalom moved deep into Indian land in western Virginia on the Bluestone branch of New River soon after his marriage to Margaret ? about 1750. He is said to have discovered Abb's Valley in that area, but was induced to return to his father's home soon after because of serious problems with the Indians in the New River area. Absalom was deeded land on Long Run near his father, but returned to Botetourt County at a later date, for his will was proved in that county in 1796.

Absalom Looney Jr. (1762-?) enlisted for Revolutionary service in Botetourt County in 1780. He served on a commission with Isaac Shelby and Anthony Bledsoe in 1783 to survey Cumberland District lands in North Carolina which were set apart for Revolutionary veterans. Absalom Jr. settled on the Clinch River in Hawkins County (now Tennessee) where he served as a Justice of the Peace in 1790.

He came to Madison County on horseback and purchased land in 1809, then brought his family down two years later by flatboat over the Clinch and Tennessee

Rivers to Ditto's Landing (Whitesburg), and settled some three miles southwest of Huntsville. Among the children of Absalom was John Warren Looney who added to the Madison County acreage left him by his father. John Warren built a mill at the spot where the waters from Huntsville Spring join with Indian Creek. He built a warehouse for the storing of cotton here; for boats could navigate to that point from Triana on the Tennessee River at high water to pick up the cotton. This property was purchased by Thomas and George Fearn, and Ethel Armes records the result. "Industrial events coincident with this first railroad (Decatur and Tuscumbia) were the opening in January, 1832, of the first canal of Alabama, connecting Huntsville with Looney's Landing....." Fearn's Canal was not a successful venture, however.

John and Nancy Looney sold the remainder of their Madison County property in 1848 and began the long journey to Texas, where they had purchased some 2000 acres of land around Goliad. The journey was later described by a granddaughter, Mary Ellen (Campbell) Capen. Nancy Looney and her mother rode all the way in a handsome carriage with silk lining, tassels, folding steps, and glass doors. A hack and several covered wagons housing furniture, children, and slaves, completed the westbound train. John Warren Looney died not far from Nagadaches after entreating his wife to proceed to Goliad. As the party came to the deserted adobe buildings of La Bahia, the members stopped at a little store nearby and asked how far it was to Goliad. When they were told that they were in Goliad their disappointment was so bitter that one of the family returned to Alabama. Nancy Looney stayed, however, and seems to have prospered although times were difficult and she was forced to sell much of the land. The 1860 census of Goliad County listed her real estate value as \$30,000 and personal value in the same amount. She died in Goliad in 1868.

A remnant of the Looney family remained in Limestone County. Turbeville Looney, oldest son of John and Nancy, married Martha H. Bailey in 1841, and lived in this county with their four sons: William (ca. 1843-?), James B. (1845-Aug. 3, 1930), John (ca. 1847-?), and Henry (ca. 1849-?). When Martha died soon after the birth of Henry Turbeville went to Texas, taking William with him. He left the other three children with Martha's family. They were reared by their grandmother, Sarah F. Bailey, and after her death they were taken into the home of David and Sarah (Bailey) Blackburn, who treated the boys as their own children. All the kind treatment in the world, however, could not have deterred James B. Looney from enlisting in Co. F, 9th Ala. Inf., C.S.A., at the age of 16. He was sent home when his true age was discovered, but in 1863 he enlisted with Co. C, 9th Ala. Cavalry, and remained with it for the duration of the war. On May 31, 1866, he married Sarah Ellen Sanderfer and they purchased this house about 1905.

James Bailey and Sarah Ellen (Sanderfer) Looney were parents of:

1. William Henry (June 21, 1867-June 7, 1937) md. Ora Lelia Abernathy, daughter of Jesse and Annie (Cartwright) Abernathy, on Dec. 22, 1897. They had (1) Frank Martinus (see