

**NATCHEZ NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI**

HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY

Prepared for:
National Park Service
Mississippi Department of Transportation
Natchez, Mississippi

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United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Memorandum

To: Technical Information Center, Information and Production Services, Denver Service Center

From: Chief, Design, Planning, Facility Management and Design, Southeast Region

Subject: Historic Resource Study, Historic Structure Report, and Cultural Landscape Report, Natchez National Historical Park

Enclosed is a Historic Resource Study, a Historic Structure Report, a Cultural Landscape Report for the Melrose Estate, and a Historic Structure Report for the William Johnson House in Natchez, Mississippi.

The above-mentioned reports consist of the history, studies, collections, evaluations, assessments, presentation, and primary guidelines for the treatment of our cultural resources in the Natchez National Historical Park.

These reports were prepared by Ann Beha Associates with the coordination of members of our office and the Natchez National Historical Park.

Stuart Johnson

FOR Richard Ramsden

cc:

Superintendent, Natchez National Historical Park

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1.0 INTRODUCTION



1.1 Location and Historical Overview of the Natchez National Historical Park

The Natchez National Historical Park became an established unit of the National Park Service (NPS) on October 7, 1988, when President Ronald Reagan signed Public Law 100-479 to preserve and interpret the history of Natchez, Mississippi. The park is located within the city limits of Natchez in southwestern Mississippi. Natchez is located in Adams County on the east bank of the Mississippi River. Jackson (the state capital) is 100 miles to the northeast; Vicksburg is 70 miles to the north; Baton Rouge (the state capital of Louisiana) is 90 miles to the south; and New Orleans, Louisiana, is 180 miles to the southeast. Natchez is accessed from both U. S. Highway 61 (from the north and south) and U. S. Highway 84 (from the east and west). Natchez is also at the southern end of the Natchez Trace Parkway, the scenic parkway that commemorates the Natchez Trace, the historic trail that linked Natchez, Mississippi, to Nashville, Tennessee, and crossed the northwestern corner of Alabama. The nearest major commercial airports are in Jackson, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans. Three steamboats, operating as modern-day cruise ships, annually bring thousands of tourists to Natchez and dock at Natchez Under-the-Hill, the historic river port beneath the Natchez bluffs.

Natchez was one of the principal commercial, cultural, and social centers in the cotton belt of the American South. The sale of cotton, produced by thousands of plantation-based slaves, generated a concentration of power and wealth in Natchez that was unparalleled in other Southern towns of comparable size. Nowhere was the slave economy more firmly established, and Natchez had the second-largest slave market in the nation. At the same time, almost half of Mississippi's entire free African-American population resided in Natchez during the antebellum period. The antebellum lifestyle is interpreted in more than two dozen historic houses in Natchez, including Melrose, owned by the NPS. The free black culture is represented by the William Johnson House, owned and interpreted by the NPS. Natchez is nationally significant both for the concentration and the survival of so many buildings, structures, and objects associated with this period of American history.

Although Natchez has primary importance for its role in the nation's antebellum cotton culture, its significance extends beyond this era. The area is nationally significant for its Native American culture. The Natchez Indians were the last surviving vestige of the great Mississippian Culture that built large ceremonial mounds and worshipped the sun, and they survived long enough to be observed and recorded by Europeans. The two largest surviving mounds of the Mississippian Culture are Monk's Mound at Cahokia, Illinois, and Emerald Mound near Natchez, today owned and interpreted by the NPS as part of the Natchez Trace Parkway. Natchez Indian culture is also interpreted in Natchez by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History at the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians, the chief village of the Natchez at the time of French settlement. Both Emerald Mound and the Grand Village are National Historic Landmark sites.

During the eighteenth century, Natchez played a pivotal role in the contest among European powers for control of the Lower Mississippi River Valley. The French established the first permanent settlement in 1716 when they built Fort Rosalie high on the Natchez bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River. The fort became the focus of hostilities between the French and the Natchez Indians that led to the destruction of the Natchez Indian culture in 1732. Fort Rosalie remained the center of government during successive regimes of the English and Spanish.

Natchez served as the capital of the Mississippi Territory (present states of Alabama and Mississippi) between 1798 and 1801, and was also the state of Mississippi's first capital between 1817 and 1821. Natchez became the social and cultural center of a society of cotton planters whose affluence increased up to the time of the Civil War. The failure of Natchez to achieve railroad connections prior to the Civil War caused the Confederate army to abandon Natchez and fortify Vicksburg. Consequently, Natchez had no strategic importance and was spared any major conflict during the war.

Natchez's post-Civil War history is also nationally significant. The town where America's richest cotton planters lived, and where the slave-based economy was most dominant, provides one of the nation's richest resources for understanding the changing dynamics of race relations in the postbellum South. After military rule, Natchez forged a biracial city government with three black and three white aldermen and Mississippi's only black mayor during Reconstruction. Hiram Revels, the first African American to sit in either house of the United States Congress, was a minister at Zion Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Natchez. Former Natchez slave John R. Lynch became a prominent post-Civil War Congressman, and the first African American to address a national political convention. For most African Americans, however, tenant farming and sharecropping replaced slavery, and the promises of Reconstruction were not realized.

Natchez again experienced prosperity, based largely on cotton and the railroad, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this period, the merchant class replaced the planter class in affluence and influence. New two- and three-story brick commercial buildings appeared on downtown streets, and grand Queen Anne and Colonial Revival houses were built throughout the city.

The newly prosperous merchant class included many second-generation Natchez Jews. Natchez was the cradle of Jewish culture in Mississippi, and Jews entered fully into the cultural, social, and economic life of the city during the post-Civil War period. Jewish citizens were among the organizing members of city social clubs and served in every political office in the city and county, including mayor. The second queen of the Natchez Pilgrimage was the daughter of a socially prominent Jewish family. Natchez Jews also organized one of the earliest reformed synagogues in the nation. Although always numbering less than ten percent of the population, the Jewish citizens of Natchez controlled almost fifty percent of the region's commerce by 1900. The Jewish history of Natchez is interpreted by the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience and Temple

B'Nai Israel. Other immigrant groups also made contributions to Natchez history, and Mississippi's grandest Catholic edifice, St. Mary's Cathedral (1842), testifies to the influence of Irish and Italian immigration on the heritage of Natchez.

The arrival of the boll weevil in Mississippi about 1908 caused an abrupt decline in the local economy that is reflected in the physical character of the town. Natchez has no grand houses in the Craftsman Bungalow, Prairie, or Mediterranean styles that were popular during the second and third decades of the twentieth century. The city of Natchez even suspended its traditional Mardi Gras celebrations in 1909, and older citizens have stated that the Great Depression was just a continuation of the malaise that began in 1908.

In the midst of the Great Depression, enterprising Natchez women emerged with a vision for the city's future. Their efforts made Natchez a national leader in historic preservation and heritage tourism. The Natchez Pilgrimage house tours, begun in 1932, are the second-oldest organized house tours in America, preceded only by the garden tours of Virginia that were first conducted in 1928. Natchez followed the lead of Charleston and the Vieux Carre in New Orleans, and enacted one of the nation's earliest historic preservation ordinances in 1952. Heritage tourism is today the cornerstone of the local economy.

1.2 Purposes and Description of the Natchez National Historical Park

Public Law 100-479 that created the Natchez National Historical Park directed the National Park Service to preserve and interpret: (1) the history of Natchez, Mississippi, as a significant city in the history of the American South; (2) the sites and structures associated with all the peoples of Natchez and the surrounding area, from earliest inhabitants to the modern era and including blacks, both slave and free; (3) the region's social, political, and economic development, with particular emphasis on the pre- and post-Civil War eras; and (4) the region's commercial and agricultural history, especially in relation to the Mississippi River and cotton.

Three separate, distinct, and culturally diverse historic properties compose the sites owned by the National Park Service as part of the Natchez National Historical Park. The Fort Rosalie site, established in 1716, reflects the colonial history of the nation when the fort on the bluff at Natchez was the seat of government for France, England, and Spain during the eighteenth century. The William Johnson House, built in 1841, is nationally significant for African-American history as the home of William Johnson, whose diary represents the most complete account of the life of a free African American in the antebellum South. Melrose, an antebellum suburban villa, is one of the most significant residential complexes in the nation and includes an architecturally significant Greek Revival mansion with many original furnishings, a significant number of dependency buildings, and a landscaped park of approximately 80 acres. The Fort Rosalie site, the William Johnson House, and Melrose are all located within the city limits of Natchez.

The National Park Service's first involvement in Natchez dates to 1934, when Congress and President Franklin D. Roosevelt approved a bill to create the Natchez Trace Parkway, a 460-mile scenic parkway through the states of Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi. This parkway commemorates the historic trail known as the Natchez Trace that linked Nashville to Natchez. The creation of the Natchez Trace Parkway spurred the later National Park Service acquisitions of the historic house Mount Locust in neighboring Jefferson County and the Emerald Mound site in Adams County. National Park Service activity closely paralleled the beginning of the city's heritage tourism industry.

National Park Service interest in the preservation of historic resources in the Natchez region increased dramatically after the enactment of the National Preservation Act in 1966, which created state historic preservation offices, the National Register of Historic Places, and the preservation review process (Section 106) for projects that are federally funded or require federal permits. The Section 106 review process became important in the 1970s, when it began to protect historic properties like Fair Oaks plantation from the adverse effects of federal road construction projects. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the National Park Service became a major funding source for preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation work in Natchez through their matching grant program. Numerous Natchez area buildings, including Magnolia Hall, Monmouth, the William Johnson House, the Winchester House, the Angelety House, Jefferson College, and thirteen downtown commercial buildings (Historic Natchez Foundation Storefront Program) benefited from National Park Service matching grants.

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) also became more involved in the Natchez area during the 1970s. They acquired both the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians and Historic Jefferson College, the first state-chartered institution of higher learning, and opened them to the public in the mid-1970s. In its role as state historic preservation office, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History also administered the National Park Service matching grant program.

1.3 Scope and Purpose of the Historic Resource Study

A Historic Resource Study (HRS) identifies and evaluates, using National Register criteria, the historic resources of a national park. The study establishes and documents historic contexts associated with a park and evaluates the extent to which historic resources within the park represent those contexts. Work being done concurrently to supplement the HRS includes a Historic Structure Report (HSR) and Historic Furnishings Report (HFR) for the William Johnson House and a Historic Structures Report (HSR), Cultural Landscape Report (CLR), and Historic Furnishings Report (HFR) for Melrose.

The National Park Service has identified significant themes relating to natural and cultural resources that help determine the national significance of any National Park Service area. In 1988, as part of the management plans for the park, the National Park

Service Southeast Regional Office identified areas that are relevant to the Natchez National Historical Park. They include the following:

- I. Cultural Developments: Indigenous American Populations
 - A. Post-Archaic and Pre-Contact Developments
 - B. Ethnohistory of Indigenous American Populations
 - 1. Varieties of Early Conflict, Conquest, or Accommodation
- II. European Colonial Exploration and Settlement
 - A. Spanish Exploration and Settlement
 - B. French Exploration and Settlement
 - C. English Exploration and Settlement
- IV. The American Revolution
- VII. The Civil War
 - A. War in the West
 - B. Naval Action
- X. Westward Expansion of the British Colonies and the U. S. (1793-1899)
 - A. Western Trails and Travelers
- XI. Agriculture
 - A. Plantation Agriculture (1607-1860)
- XIV. Transportation
 - A. Early Turnpikes, Roads, and Taverns East of the Mississippi
- XVI. Architecture
 - A. Federal (1780-1820)
 - B. Greek Revival (1820-1840)
- XVII. Landscape Architecture
- XXVI. Decorative and Folk Art
- XXX. American Ways of Life
 - A. Slavery and Plantation Life

Each of the topics identified by the Southeast Regional Office as nationally significant has been explored in the HRS. The sheer breadth of the topics and the wealth of historic resources that support them have required that some topics be discussed in less detail than others. The HRS also recommends an expansion of the significant topics outlined in 1988 by the Southeast Regional Office. Most historians would concur that Natchez is

also nationally significant for its Reconstruction and post-Civil War history, represented by the continued use of park-owned properties by the descendants of William Johnson and the families, black and white, associated with Melrose after the Civil War. The HRS also clarifies and expands upon the topics outlined by the Southeast Regional Office. It illustrates, for example, that the Civil War significance, cited by the National Park Service in 1988, is more strongly tied to its pre-Civil War politics and its wartime Union occupation than for any strategic role prior to the occupation in 1863.

In the area of architecture, the HRS supports the 1988 outline that deems Natchez nationally significant only for Federal and Greek Revival architecture, but it expands the parenthetical dates for each style. Although Natchez was up-to-date in popular taste in decorative arts, which are portable, it lagged architecturally as architecture is more firmly rooted in time and place. Natchez was still building Federal-style houses in the early to mid-1830s, and the Greek Revival style continued in popularity until about 1870.

The HRS for the Natchez National Historical Park will serve as a guide for future site planning, resource management, and interpretive programs at the park. It should also serve as the basis for expanded research and further studies related to themes and topics that are addressed as part of the study. The HRS, however, is not intended to be the final word on the significance of historic resources associated with the Natchez National Historical Park. It has been written in conjunction with, and supplements, a Cultural Landscape Report for Melrose, an HSR for Melrose, and an HSR for the William Johnson House. These three reports provide a more detailed assessment of the significance of each resource identified.

1.4 Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

The mission of Public Law 100-479, which created the Natchez National Historical Park, is very broad and directs the National Park Service to preserve and interpret the history of Natchez and its surrounding area, and to preserve and interpret the sites and structures associated with all its people, from its earliest inhabitants to the modern era. The HRS reflects this mission by including a narrative overview of the history of the Natchez region. This narrative overview establishes and documents prehistoric and historic contexts associated with the Natchez region and evaluates the extent to which historic resources within the Park represent those contexts. The Park consists of three noncontiguous sites owned or to be acquired by the National Park Service and a large preservation district, or area of influence. The HRS involved both primary and secondary research and includes a comprehensive bibliography of resources consulted, as well as a list of potential resources that might yield additional information on the history of Natchez or park-owned properties within the Natchez National Historical Park.

The HRS also involved the review of all National Register nominations, individual and district, for properties in the Natchez region. A complete survey of historic resources in Adams County was made and a list was compiled of potentially eligible properties,

individual and district, that have not yet had nominations prepared. Appendix 8.6 includes a list of Adams County properties that are both listed and potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and notes properties that are endangered. Also reviewed were the National Register nominations for surrounding Mississippi counties and Louisiana parishes, as well as historic site files at both the Mississippi Department of Archives and History and the Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation for information about regional prehistoric and historic sites that further define the mission expressed in Public Law 100-479. The existing preservation district boundaries may need to be expanded to encompass all of the Woodlawn Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1995, and to include the potential Brumfield Historic District on St. Catherine Street.

The individual National Register nominations previously prepared for both Melrose and the William Johnson House were also reviewed. The Melrose nomination was prepared in conjunction with its designation as a National Historic Landmark as the result of a 1973 thematic study of nineteenth-century American architecture. The nomination was brief, included no inventory of buildings and structures, and excluded some of the land historically associated with the property. The nomination for the William Johnson House focused entirely on the historical importance of diarist William Johnson. Although the property is most significant as the home of a free African-American diarist in the antebellum South, it is also significant for its association with the diarist's descendants, whose letters and papers provide valuable information about the post-Civil War South.

The HRS includes a new National Register nomination for Melrose, with eligibility under Criteria A and C, with national significance related to the themes of architecture and American ways of life for the period 1842 to 1865. The property has state significance for historic preservation for the period 1865 to 1946, the fifty-year cut-off date for National Register eligibility. The new National Register nomination includes an inventory, description, and map for all buildings and structures on the Melrose property, with buildings designated as contributing and noncontributing. The new nomination also expands the boundaries to include all the acreage associated with Melrose both historically and through ownership by the National Park Service.

The HRS incorporates the existing National Register nomination for the William Johnson House that was prepared in 1976. New information contained in the developmental history of the William Johnson House Historic Structure Report both expands and corrects the physical description portion of the National Register nomination, but not to the extent that a new nomination needs to be prepared. Despite a strong statement of significance, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History and its Professional Review Board judged the property to have state rather than national significance.

1.5 Acknowledgments and Project Team

The project team would like to thank the staff of the Natchez National Historical Park for their assistance in sharing research materials and providing access to the site. These include: Bob Dodson, Superintendent; Thom Rosenblum, Curator; Kathleen Jenkins, Museum Technician; and Kim Fuller, Maintenance Foreman. In addition to the site staff, Robert Blythe and Lucy Lawliss, with the National Park Service Southeast Regional Office in Atlanta, GA, have reviewed work in progress. We would like to thank Dr. and Mrs. Thomas H. Gandy and the Norman Collection, the Louisiana State University Libraries, and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History for sharing their research materials and allowing us to reproduce some of their illustrations. Project Team for the HRS included the following:

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**2.0 THE SETTLEMENT OF NATCHEZ AND
THE BIRTH OF THE COTTON KINGDOM**



2.1 Native Americans

The city of Natchez was named for the Natchez Indians (Fig. 1), who were living in scattered village areas near the future site of the town when Europeans first explored the area. Many scholars believe the Natchez Indians to have been the last surviving vestige of an earlier and more advanced group called the Mississippian Culture that began about A.D. 1000 and reached its zenith not long before the onset of European exploration in North America. The Mississippian Culture flourished along the banks of the Mississippi River, and contact with the Indian cultures of Mexico may have sparked their cultural achievements. The people worshipped the sun and built large ceremonial mounds. The two largest surviving mounds of the Mississippian Culture are Monk's Mound in Cahokia, Illinois, and Emerald Mound near Natchez, today owned and interpreted by the National Park Service as part of the Natchez Trace Parkway.¹

Hernando de Soto probably met the Natchez Indians when he explored the Mississippi River in the early 1540s. The name Natchez, however, first appeared in the writing of Rene Robert Cavalier, Sieur de la Salle, who described the Natchez in 1682.² Frenchman Antoine Simon le Page du Pratz, who arrived in Natchez in 1720, provided the most comprehensive description of the Natchez Indians and their culture.³

The Natchez Indians were a matrilineal society with distinct social classes. The monarch was the "Great Sun" and a member of the Sun class, or royal family. The sister of the Great Sun was more important than his wife, and the first nephew born to a sister of the Great Sun was heir to the throne. The classes beneath the Sun class were the "Nobles" and the "Honored People." Commoners were called "Stinkards." Each class married the class below, with the Stinkards marrying into the Sun class. Only sons of women born into the Sun class, however, could become the Great Sun. Although peaceful people, the Natchez practiced ritualistic human sacrifice.⁴

Archeological evidence indicates that the buildings of the Natchez Indians were simple structures with walls constructed of thin posts placed either in individual post molds or in wall trenches. The roofs were thatched and the walls covered in caned mats. Drawings

¹ Emerald Mound and Grand Village of the Natchez Indians, Adams County, National Register File and Statewide Survey of Historic Sites, Division of Historic Preservation, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson; Ian W. Brown, *Natchez Indian Archaeology: Culture Change and Stability in the Lower Mississippi Valley* (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History [hereafter cited as MDAH], 1985), 1-6.

² Brown, *Natchez Indian Archaeology*, 2.

³ D. Clayton James, *Antebellum Natchez* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 3-4; Antoine Simon le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975).

⁴ James, 4.

by the Frenchman Alexander De Batz (Fig. 2) document the detailed appearance of both a temple and the house of the Great Sun.⁵

The Natchez, like other Southeastern Indian groups, depended on agriculture. During the prehistoric period, their territory extended from the vicinity of Vicksburg, Mississippi, to the Homochitto River south of Natchez. By the time of European exploration, however, the majority of the Natchez Indians lived in and around the present city of Natchez. Population decline due to European diseases, at the time of European contact, was probably the reason for the contraction of their territory. Historical documents reveal that the Natchez Indians were living in nine village areas near the present town of Natchez, but archeologists have identified and studied only seven of these.⁶ The main village at this time was the Grand Village, located within the city limits of Natchez and today owned and interpreted by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. National Historic Landmark sites in the Natchez area associated with the Natchez Indians and their ancestors include the Grand Village, Emerald Mound, and the Anna Site.⁷

Three Indian cultures—the Natchez, Chickasaw, and Choctaw—were dominant at the time of European settlement in what is today the state of Mississippi. Linking these Indian nations was a footpath that extended through Chickasaw and Choctaw territory to the territory of the Natchez. This footpath became known as the Natchez Trace.

By 1729, the rapidly growing French population in the Natchez area had begun to impose itself to such a degree on the land and culture of the Natchez Indians that they revolted and massacred the Frenchmen at Fort Rosalie. The French retaliated and the Natchez Indians ceased to exist as a nation in 1731. The French sold the conquered Natchez Indians as slaves, but some Natchez escaped and found refuge among other Indian nations, including the Chickasaw and the Cherokee. Natchez Indians were among the Cherokees who, in the 1830s, were forcibly relocated to Oklahoma on the “Trail of Tears.”⁸

The greatest lasting influence of the Natchez Indians upon the physical character of Natchez is probably the dispersed settlement pattern that characterized the development of Natchez. The French adopted this native pattern rather than imposing the long-lot system employed in the development of New Orleans.⁹ An account of Frenchman Antoine Simon le Page Du Pratz, who arrived in Natchez in 1720, supports this theory:

⁵ Alexandre De Batz, drawings of Natchez Indian temple and house of Great Sun, Natchez Indians slide file, Historic Natchez Foundation, Natchez, MS [hereafter referred to as HNF].

⁶ Brown, *Natchez Indian Archaeology*, 1–6.

⁷ Anna Site, Emerald Mound, and Grand Village of the Natchez Indians, Adams County, National Register File and Statewide Survey of Historic Sites, Division of Historic Preservation, MDAH.

⁸ Ian W. Brown, “An Archaeological Study of Culture Contact and Change in the Natchez Bluffs Region,” *La Salle and His Legacy: Frenchmen and Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, ed. Patricia Galloway (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1982), 176–193.

⁹ Jack D. Elliott, Jr., “Comprehensive Plan for Historic Preservation for the Period of European Colonization in Mississippi,” February 16, 1989, Division of Historic Preservation, MDAH, 30.

I found upon the main road that leads from the chief village of the Natchez to the fort...a cabin of the natives upon the road side, surrounded with a spot of cleared ground, the whole of which I bought by means of an interpreter. I made this purchase with the more pleasure, as I had upon the spot, wherewithal to lodge me and my people, with all my effects: the cleared ground was about six acres, which would form a garden and a plantation for tobacco, which was then the only commodity cultivated by the inhabitants. I had water convenient for my house, and all my land was very good.... All this piece of ground was in general good, and contained about four hundred acres.¹⁰

The French writer Francois Rene de Chateaubriand romanticized and immortalized the Natchez Indians in two early-nineteenth-century novels, *Atala* and *Rene*. Chateaubriand's literary portrayals of the Natchez captured the interest of French artists, including Girodet, whose *The Burial of Atala* (first exhibited in 1808) is at the Louvre, and Delacroix, whose *The Natchez* (exhibited in 1835) is at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.¹¹

2.2 European Exploration

European exploration of Mississippi had begun with Hernando de Soto, who entered northeast Mississippi in late 1540, crossed the Mississippi River in 1541, and returned to the Mississippi River, somewhere north of Natchez, where he died in 1542. With de Soto came European diseases that severely reduced the Indian population of Mississippi. More than a century later, in 1682, Rene Robert Cavalier, Sieur de la Salle, conducted an expedition that brought the French to the Lower Mississippi Valley, where they encountered the Natchez Indians.¹²

In 1700, Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville, visited the Natchez Indians, and, about the same time, Jesuit priests established a mission in the country of the Natchez. In 1714, Antoine de la Mothe, Sieur de Cadillac, governor of Louisiana, established a trading post on the Mississippi River not far from the villages of the Natchez.¹³

2.3 French Colonial Period

The opening of a trading post at Natchez probably spurred the construction of a fort in 1716. Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur d'Bienville, brother of Iberville, built Fort Rosalie, and named it in honor of the wife of the Minister of Marine, le Comte de Pontchartrain.¹⁴ The establishment of the fort in 1716 marked the beginning of permanent European

¹⁰ Du Pratz, 27.

¹¹ Natchez Indians Research File, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Fall 1990, photocopy, HNF.

¹² J. F. H. Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory, and State with Biographical Notices of Eminent Citizens* (1880; reprint, Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, Publishers, 1978), 3-11.

¹³ James, 3-6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

settlement in Natchez and the town's official birth. The fort stood just south of the historic house Rosalie, built from 1822 to 1823. Numerous maps, land descriptions in deed books, diaries, travel accounts, and newspaper articles document its position. The French chose the location because it was an easily defensible position on the Mississippi River, capable of protecting a promising agricultural production. For defense, the French located the fort on top of a hill near the edge of a high bluff overlooking the Mississippi River. For farming, it was on the edge of an elevated strip of extremely rich soil, well watered, and blessed with a mild climate. The long years of settlement by the Natchez Indians and their ancestors were also an important factor in location, because the Natchez had already cleared much of the land for farming.

Fort Rosalie stood on a high bluff, but the support structures, which included a church and rectory, houses, and warehouses, were on a terrace between the bluff and the Mississippi River. French agricultural production fanned out from the fort for a radius of approximately three miles. Most of the farms were small but included at least two relatively large plantations, known as the St. Catherine and Terre Blanche concessions.¹⁵

In 1717, John Law, French minister of finance, united the Company of the Indies with the Royal Bank of France to create a company that received the proprietorship of the French province of Louisiana, then including Natchez. The new company promoted settlement in the province and greatly exaggerated its merits to potential settlers. The population grew, and the French eventually divided the province into nine districts, one of which was the Natchez District, with Fort Rosalie as its center of government. During the early French period, settlers produced tobacco and wheat, and small quantities of indigo, silk, rice, cotton, pitch, tar, and dressed timber. Fur trading was also an important part of the Natchez District economy.¹⁶

From the founding of the fort in 1716, the population of the Natchez area included African slaves, and, while John Law's Company of the Indies controlled the Natchez District, the number of African slaves greatly increased. In 1723, the population of the Natchez settlement was 303, including 111 slaves. By 1727, the population had more than doubled, to 713, including 280 slaves.¹⁷ This rapid increase resulted in the 1724 adoption of Bienville's "Code Noire," or Black Code, to regulate slavery. The intent of the code was to prohibit cruelty and define constraints. It forbade the separation of husbands and wives and of children under fourteen from their mothers, but it also restricted slaves from congregating, drinking, and carrying weapons. While somewhat enlightened regarding the treatment of African slaves, the Black Code also prohibited the immigration of Jews into the province and established Roman Catholicism as the official religion of both slaves and free citizens.¹⁸

¹⁵ Elliott, "Comprehensive Plan for Historic Preservation," 30-33.

¹⁶ James, 6-7.

¹⁷ Ibid., 8.

¹⁸ Claiborne, 40.

As the population of the Natchez region grew, so did the hostility between the French and the Natchez Indians. The Natchez saw their way of life being eroded, and the French became increasingly greedy for lands occupied by the Natchez. In 1729, the Natchez Indians revolted by attacking the settlers at Fort Rosalie. They killed all the white men, killed and captured women and children, freed the slaves, and burned buildings associated with the fort. In 1731, the French successfully retaliated and destroyed the Natchez Indians as a nation.¹⁹

In the same year, John Law's Company of the Indies collapsed. The period of proprietorship by the Company of the Indies later became known as the "Mississippi Bubble," marked the first of many boom-and-bust cycles in the Natchez area economy.²⁰ After the massacre at Fort Rosalie and the collapse of the Company of the Indies, the French became disheartened and lost interest in the Natchez settlement. Nonetheless, they established a provisional fort southwest of the original Fort Rosalie and built a new fort on the site of the original one. The new fort was built in the shape of a pentagon with earthen embankments and moats and was depicted in 1732 by Ignace Francois Broutin (Fig. 3). France's involvement in the Natchez district over the next three decades of French occupation consisted of little more than a garrison of approximately fifty men at the fort.²¹

Descriptions and drawings indicate that the buildings of the French settlers looked somewhat like the buildings of their Indian predecessors, with walls constructed of posts in the ground. Details from ca. 1720s drawings of Fort Rosalie by Dumont de Montigny (Fig. 4) illustrate houses like those shown in a 1720 drawing of the Biloxi settlement (Fig. 5) on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and earlier ones documented in Haiti. Montigny also described the typical cabin built by the French settler:

In regard to cabins; they do not require much craftsmanship and their method of construction is very quick. First one takes as many poles or forked logs as are judged appropriate to the length and width desired for the cabin. These forked logs ought to be at least a dozen feet long. They are planted in the ground at regular intervals two and a half feet deep and joined together by plates laid on top. Thus is formed a rectangle of which the short sides make the width of the cabin, taking the place of a gable. In the middle of the two short sides, one raises two other forked poles to the height of sixteen to eighteen feet on which is placed the ridge pole to which are nailed the rafters, the latter being properly spaced and falling on the plates to which they are also nailed. The framework of the cabin is thus raised. It is closed in with cypress stakes driven a foot into the ground and fastened above to the plates with nails, allowing for door and

¹⁹ James, 10; Claiborne, 45-50.

²⁰ James, 6; Claiborne, 35, 38, 39.

²¹ Jack D. Elliott, "Fort Rosalie and the Colonial Origins of Mississippi," January 6, 1988, Division of Historic Preservation, MDAH, 2.

windows in the walls. Finally it is covered, as I have said, with cypress bark or palmetto leaves and, *voilà*, a cabin has been built. One can see that in a country as well wooded as Louisiana there should be no difficulty of procuring shelter since one can build a house in twenty-four hours.²²

The 1729 massacre and collapse of the Company of the Indies prevented the French from playing any major role in influencing the development of architecture in the Natchez District. Their lasting contributions to the physical character of Natchez are the adoption and continuation of the dispersed settlement pattern of the Natchez Indians and the determination of the future location of the town by the siting of Fort Rosalie.

2.4 English Colonial Period

In 1763, England defeated France in the Seven Years' War, also known as the French and Indian War. The Treaty of Paris ceded to Great Britain all French territory east of the Mississippi except New Orleans, and the Natchez District joined the British empire as part of British West Florida. Fort Rosalie became Fort Panmure and remained the headquarters of government for the English, just as it had been for the French.²³ In 1765, Phillip Pittman drew a map of Fort Rosalie that provides one of the best illustrations of Natchez during the early English period. Englishman Montford Browne, the lieutenant of West Florida, toured the Natchez area in 1768 and described it as one of the "most charming prospects in the world," and noted that from the fort at Natchez could be seen "extensive plains intermixed with beautiful hills, and small rivers."²⁴

The population expanded under British rule, with large land grants given to British military officers to reward them for their service in the Seven Years' War. When the American Revolution broke out in April 1775, immigration to the western portion of British West Florida settlement increased dramatically. American loyalists and neutralists from the eastern colonies sought refuge in a land politically dominated by former English military officers, who were slow to embrace the idea of American independence. Between 1775 and 1779, the population of the western portion of British West Florida more than doubled.²⁵ In 1778, the Natchez District became a distinct governmental subdivision of British West Florida.²⁶

In February 1778, James Willing, brother of prominent Philadelphian Thomas Willing, brought the Revolutionary War to Natchez when he arrived with a party of raiders and hoisted the American flag over Fort Panmure. Willing exaggerated the size of his force and persuaded the citizens of Natchez to sign an agreement that they would "not in any

²² Elliott, "Comprehensive Plan for Historic Preservation," 44-45.

²³ Robert V. Haynes, *The Natchez District and the American Revolution* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1976), 4; Elliot, "Comprehensive Plan for Historic Preservation," 54-56.

²⁴ Haynes, 7.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁶ James, 24.

wise [sic] take up arms against the United States of America or aid, abet or in any wise [sic] give assistance to the enemies."²⁷ Later in April, English loyalist Anthony Hutchins and his supporters surprised the American patriots, killing five and capturing twenty-eight. Hutchins then removed the American flag and restored the British flag to Fort Panmure.²⁸ Thomas Willing's raid and his associated escapades in the Southwest damaged the American cause and actually increased loyalist sentiment. British rule of the Natchez District ended during the Revolutionary War in 1779, when Spain seized control of the Natchez District shortly after declaring war against England.²⁹

Although settlement grew rapidly during the English period, architectural sophistication advanced only a little. In 1765, two years after the English took charge of the fort, engineer Phillip Pittman visited the fort and noted that all the buildings were "made of framed timber, filled up with mud and *barbe Espagnole* [Spanish moss]."³⁰ In 1776, just three years before the Spanish arrived in 1779, Calvin Smith described the English settlement at Natchez as consisting of "ten log houses and two frame houses all situated under the bluff."³¹ These twelve buildings represent the first town at the Natchez settlement. Although Governor Peter Chester made an announcement to the Council of British West Florida in 1776 that he had ordered a surveyor to lay out a town at Natchez, no record of any such survey has been found, and no reference to a surveyed plan appears in a map or land deed.³²

Log was apparently the predominant building material in Natchez during the English period. John Hutchins, who was born in 1774, the same year that his father, English loyalist Anthony Hutchins, arrived in Natchez, recalled in his memoirs that his family initially constructed log houses. He further noted, "Our houses were very crude and rough built, covered without nail or hammer."³³ Unfortunately, no early log houses from the English period have survived, and knowledge of early log buildings derives from drawings, historic photographs, and contemporary descriptions.

Although the English were in control of the Natchez District for less than two decades, the large numbers of Anglo-Americans who remained or moved to the area during later periods became the dominant influence on the culture and physical character of Natchez. The English also established the first semblance of a town at Natchez along the waterfront beneath the bluff. The twelve buildings below the bluff, described by Calvin Smith in 1779, evolved into what became known as Natchez Under-the-Hill after a town had been established on top of the bluff.

²⁷ Ibid., 22.

²⁸ Haynes, 99–100.

²⁹ Ibid., 21–100.

³⁰ Phillip Pittman, *The Present State of the European Settlements on the Mississippi* (1770; reprint Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1906), 80–81.

³¹ Elliott, "Comprehensive Plan for Historic Preservation," 67–68.

³² Ibid., 69–70.

³³ John Odlin Hutchins, "Reminiscences in the Life of Anthony and John Hutchins," 1879, Z/1376.000, MDAH.

2.5 Spanish Colonial Period

The British subjects of Natchez initially resented the 1779 seizure of the Natchez District by the Spanish. Natchez prospered under the Spanish government, however, which confirmed the earlier land grants made by the English and increased the population of the district by offering liberal land grants to new settlers. Unlike the French, the Spanish had no restrictions against Jewish immigration, and the first Jewish settlers arrived during this period. Although Catholicism was the official religion, the Spaniards were also tolerant of Protestantism.³⁴ In a travel account published in 1835, almost forty years after the departure of the Spanish, Joseph Holt Ingraham noted the nostalgia of older residents for this period in the town's history. Ingraham wrote, "The Yoke of their government sat easy on the neck of the Anglo-Americans who lived under it, and they still speak of the Spanish time as the golden age."³⁵

Although governed by Spain, the population of Natchez remained predominantly Anglo-American. In 1785, Francisco Boulogny, commandant of the Natchez fort, wrote to the Spanish governor in New Orleans that "the greater part of the inhabitants of this town are natives of North America, others are English Royalists, a few are French, and very rarely there is a Spaniard."³⁶ As late as 1797, at the close of the Spanish period, traveler Francis Bailey noted, "This District has been settled principally by English and Americans; and though the country was given up to the Spaniards in 1783 [sic], the proportion of Spanish inhabitants is very small."³⁷

Although Natchez was only a colonial outpost and frontier settlement during most of the eighteenth century, its people rapidly developed a reputation for sophistication during the Spanish era. In a 1797 letter from American General James Wilkinson to Captain Isaac Guion, Wilkinson cautioned Guion that "At Natchez, you will find yourself in an extensive, opulent and polished community, agitated by a variety of political interests and opinions."³⁸

The agricultural economy of Natchez underwent rapid change during the Spanish period. Tobacco had been the money crop of the region under both the French and English, but the tobacco market collapsed about 1790. Indigo replaced tobacco but remained the money crop only until about 1795, when insects proved so disastrous that the farmers abandoned production. That same year, Natchez had its first version of Eli Whitney's

³⁴ James, 31-53; Claiborne, 135-136.

³⁵ Joseph Holt Ingraham, *The South-West. By A Yankee* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Cliff-St., 1835), 2:134.

³⁶ Lawrence Kinnard, ed., *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the year 1945* [Volume 3, part 2] (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1946), 136.

³⁷ Francis Bailey, *Journal of a Tour in Unsettled Parts of North America in 1796 and 1797*, ed. Jack D. L. Holmes (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University, 1969), 150.

³⁸ Claiborne, 179.

cotton gin.³⁹ In 1796, David Greenleaf began the construction of cotton gins as a commercial enterprise and built the first public gin at Selsertown, a nonextant settlement on the boundary line between Adams and Jefferson Counties.⁴⁰

The planters had turned their attention to cotton before the introduction of the cotton gin, and, by the end of the Spanish era, it was firmly established as the money crop of the Natchez region.⁴¹ Before the cotton gin, it had taken one person a full day to clean the seeds from a single pound of cotton. Whitney's original invention, the hand-turned gin, made it possible for one person to clean 50 pounds of cotton per day, and the first power-driven gins cleaned a 1,000 pounds per day. Suddenly, everyone in the South wanted to grow cotton, and the plantation system rapidly spread from the coastal lowlands to the Piedmont, the Alabama Black Belt, and then to the Mississippi Valley. The national exportation of cotton rose from 138,000 pounds in 1792 to 6,276,000 pounds in 1795, and 17,790,000 pounds in 1800, while the price of slaves rose with the demands for cotton.⁴²

Like tobacco and unlike rice and sugar, cotton was a crop well-suited to the small farmer and the large plantation. No expensive equipment was needed for its cultivation, and no extensive and costly construction of irrigation canals or protective levees was required in order to bring a field into production. Cotton did not rot or spoil after being picked. It could easily be stored until enough was gathered to justify a trip to a gin; after ginning and pressing into a bale, its value per volume was high; and its imperishability made transportation easy. For these reasons, cotton could be grown profitably on any scale, from the subsistence farm where only a few acres were planted just for some cash, to the largest plantation with its hundreds of slaves and thousands of acres. The most significant economic advantage of slavery was that it allowed farm size to increase significantly.⁴³ With the growth of the cotton economy during the later years of the Spanish period came even greater dependence upon slave labor.

From 1779 until 1789, the commandant of Fort Panmure was the governing authority of the territory. In 1789, Manuel Gayoso de Lemos assumed the position of civilian governor.⁴⁴ The creation of a town on top of the Natchez bluff was a "direct consequence of the transfer of the Natchez District from military to civilian rule."⁴⁵

³⁹ James H. McLendon, "The Development of Mississippi Agriculture," *Journal of Mississippi History* 13 (1951): 78.

⁴⁰ Claiborne, 135-68.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁴² Daniel P. Mannix, *Black Cargoes: A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1518-1865* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 187.

⁴³ John B. Boles, *Black Southerners 1619-1869* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 73-74.

⁴⁴ James, 32

⁴⁵ Elliott, 72.

In 1791, Gayoso engaged John Girault “officially to survey and lay out the city anew, as no vestiges then remained of the former survey.”⁴⁶ Girault submitted a town plan to Gayoso, who, in June 1791, commissioned Girault to lay out the city, “leaving the square in front between Front Street [also First and later Canal Street], and the Bluff for a Common or parade ground, subject to the further orders of the Governor.”⁴⁷ The plan was a grid that included six streets running north and south, with the first street east of the bluff being designated First Street [now Canal] and the sixth street designated as Sixth Street [now Rankin]. Seven streets ran east and west, with the center street designated as Main Street. The streets north of Main were designated as First North [now Franklin], Second North [now Jefferson], and Third North [now High]. The streets south of Main were First South [now State], Second South [now Washington], and Third South [now Orleans]. Each square in the town plan was further divided into four lots. The southwestern quarter of each square was designated lot 1; the northwestern quarter, lot 2; the southeastern quarter, lot 3; and the northeastern quarter, lot 4. Two maps of the original town plan, one undated by Thomas Freeman and the other by William Dunbar in 1794, are located in the Adams County Courthouse.⁴⁸ The town grid quickly expanded eastward by the addition of Seventh Street (now Martin Luther King; formerly Pine Street).⁴⁹ In the 1830s, a new street, Broadway, was laid out between First Street (Canal) and the edge of the bluff.⁵⁰

The Spanish also established Silver Street, leading from the town on top of the bluff to a new river landing below. Historic maps document that the original landing established by the French was below the plateau of French settlement associated with the fort. Early access from the bluff to the waterfront during the French period was provided by approximately four roads that led from the fort to the plateau below and a single road from the plateau to the landing. The Phillip Pittman map documents that the same road apparently provided access during the English period.⁵¹

The signing of the Treaty of San Lorenzo on October 27, 1795, officially began the transition of power in the Natchez District from Spain to the United States and the subsequent establishment of the Mississippi Territory. This treaty, also called Pinckney’s

⁴⁶ Ibid., 73.

⁴⁷ The 1791 date for plotting the town is supported by a January 6, 1792, letter from Gayoso that states, “Last year we drew plans for a city adjacent to the fort of Natchez.” Additional documentation is provided by an 1818 land deed (Deed Book K:109) that refers to the “town lots laid out by John Girault esquire late deceased.” A tombstone on the Market Street side of the Adams County Courthouse indicates that John Girault is buried on the courthouse green.

⁴⁸ Adams County, Office of the Chancery Clerk, map room, Thomas Freeman, Plan of the City of Natchez, photostat; William Dunbar, Map of the City of Natchez, Deed Book C:268.

⁴⁹ Adams County Courthouse, Office of the Chancery Clerk, Deed Book D:50-52.

⁵⁰ Ibid., Deed Book C:676-679.

⁵¹ Dumont de Montigny, “Carte de la Riviere Des Pascagoula ou l’on voit la situation des isles, lacs et terrain des habitants,” MDAH, slide, HNF; Ignace Francois Broutin, “Carte des environs du Fort Rosalie des Natchez et du Fort Provisionnelle fait depuis la destruction de ce poste,” Archives Nationales, Paris, slide, HNF; Phillip Pittman, “Plan of Fort Rosalie,” MDAH, slide HNF.

Treaty, was one of the most successful ever negotiated by the United States. In addition to promising Americans the right of free navigation on the Mississippi River and the free use of the port of New Orleans, the act established the right of the United States to the land on the east bank of the Mississippi River above the 31st parallel, an area whose seat of government was located at Natchez. The 31st parallel extended across the Mississippi Territory at the present boundary between Mississippi and southeastern Louisiana.⁵²

After the signing of the Treaty of San Lorenzo, the shift from Spanish to American control of the Natchez District dragged on for almost two and one-half years as officials argued over the exact boundary. The United States appointed Andrew Ellicott to work with the Spanish commissioner, Natchez planter William Dunbar, to determine the 31st parallel, which was to be the border between American and Spanish territory. The United States also instructed Ellicott to persuade the Spanish to withdraw from the Natchez District.⁵³

Andrew Ellicott arrived in Natchez in 1797 and encamped on the southern end of a ridge that is the present site of the House on Ellicott Hill. Ellicott raised the American flag at his encampment in defiance of the Spanish flag that flew at nearby Fort Rosalie, less than a mile away. For over a year, Ellicott exhorted the Spanish at the fort to evacuate the area. He described the eventual Spanish departure in his journal:

On the 29th of March 1798 late in the evening, I was informed through a confidential channel, that the evacuation would take place the next morning, before day; in consequence of which, I rose the next morning at five o'clock, and walked to the fort, and found the last party, or rear guard just leaving it, and as the gate was left open, I went in, and enjoyed from the parapet, the pleasing prospects of the gallies [sic] and the boats leaving the shore and getting underway. They were out of sight of town before daylight.⁵⁴

Maps and a few drawings of individual buildings provide the best illustrations of the physical appearance of Natchez during the Spanish period. Two of the best images of Natchez from the Spanish period, both drawn by Victor Collot, are a view of the fort dating to ca. 1796 (Fig. 6) and a map of about the same date (Fig. 7) that depicts the town plan and Fort Rosalie in relationship to the Mississippi River and the surrounding area. Collot also illustrated a building that was located inside Fort Rosalie (Fig. 8) and a building from another fortification (Fig. 9) that was typical of buildings inside Spanish-era fortifications. A drawing of a Spanish-era jail designed by William Dunbar (Fig. 10) also exists. Traveler Francis Bailey described Natchez at the end of the Spanish period as being "situated upon a high hill, which terminates in a bluff at the river, and consists of about eighty or ninety houses scattered over a great space of land. The streets are laid out

⁵² James, 62–63.

⁵³ Ibid., 62–75; Claiborne, 178–201.

⁵⁴ Andrew Ellicott, *Journal of Andrew Ellicott* (Philadelphia: William Fry, 1814), 176.

in a regular plan; but there is so much ground between most of the houses, that it appears as if each dwelling was furnished with a plantation.”⁵⁵

The log building that characterized the English period of Natchez architecture continued into the Spanish period. One of the most important accounts of log construction appears in a travel account written by Major Samuel S. Forman in 1788 and 1789. Describing a Natchez plantation purchased by his uncle, Forman wrote, “The place had a small clearing and a log house on it, and he put up another log house to correspond with it about fourteen feet apart, connecting them with boards, with a piazza in front of the whole. The usual term applied to such a structure was that it was ‘two pens and a passage.’ This connecting passage made a fine hall and altogether gave it a good and comfortable appearance.”⁵⁶ In this passage, Samuel Forman provided the earliest description of a Mississippi “dog-trot” cabin. A late-nineteenth- or early-twentieth-century photograph illustrates an early, unidentified log cabin that once stood in Adams County (Fig. 11).

Besides log buildings, settlers in Spanish Natchez also constructed heavy timber structures. French General Victor Collot traveled the interior of the United States during the Spanish period and illustrated a typical log house in the American interior, as well as frontier buildings inside fortifications.⁵⁷ Mount Locust on the Natchez Trace survives as an important document for understanding the architectural character of those early heavy timber buildings. It functioned as both a home for a local planter and as an inn for travelers on the Natchez Trace, the historic road that had begun as an animal and Indian path and linked Nashville and Natchez. A 1785 survey of the Mount Locust property delineated the house and 725 arpents (.085 of an acre) of land.⁵⁸ Court records document that the house was typical of those being built during the Spanish period, such as that described in the 1781 inventory of the estate of Patrick Foley: a “framed house, 40 ft. in length and 20 ft. in breadth with floored galleries front and back, containing one parlour, two chambers and two cabinets on the back gallery with doors, windows, locks, hooks, etc.”⁵⁹

Restored Mount Locust is a textbook example of an early planter’s cottage constructed during the Spanish period. The frame house rests upon wood stumps rather than stone or brick piers. Chamfered posts support the front and rear galleries. Window and door arrangement is asymmetrical, reflecting functional rather than aesthetic priorities. The characteristic broken slope of the roof plane and the typical outside end chimney are evident on the gable end. On the rear of the house are the regionally common cabinet rooms flanking a loggia, or recessed central gallery. Mount Locust also exhibits typical early architectural details such as wide beaded siding, wood-shingle roofing, hand-

⁵⁵ Bailey, 149.

⁵⁶ Samuel S. Forman, *Narrative of a Journey down the Ohio and Mississippi in 1789–90* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1888), 53.

⁵⁷ Victor Collot, *A Journey in North America* (1924; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1974).

⁵⁸ Dawson A. Phelps, “Mount Locust, A Restudy of Its History” (Natchez Trace Parkway, May 17, 1955), 2.

⁵⁹ Adams County, Office of the Chancery Clerk, Spanish Record Book A, 30.

wrought or rose-headed nails, board-and-batten doors, strap hinges, interior walls finished in boards rather than plaster, and the use of blue poplar as well as cypress.

The architectural character and details of Mount Locust are similar to King's Tavern in downtown Natchez, which probably dates to shortly after 1794, when Prosper King petitioned to build a house on the lot.⁶⁰ Historian J. F. H. Claiborne provided this description of King's Tavern: "Probably the oldest house now existing in Natchez is the one occupied by Mrs. Postlethwaite on Jefferson Street, between Union and Rankin. It was one time kept as a tavern by a man named King and was the stopping place of western men on their return from New Orleans, after selling out their flatboats of produce."⁶¹ Like Mount Locust, King's Tavern features chamfered posts, wide beaded siding, wood-shingle roofing, rose-headed nails, board-and-batten doors, and interior walls finished in boards rather than plaster.

The only extant house in Natchez constructed for a Spaniard is Texada Tavern, built for Manuel Texada, and probably not until 1798, the year that Natchez became part of the Mississippi Territory.⁶² An 1806 newspaper advertisement described the house as a "new brick house" and stated that the house would be "superior, when finished, to any other in the territory for accommodations."⁶³ An 1856 newspaper article described the house as the first brick house built in Natchez, and John James Audubon illustrated it in his 1822 landscape of Natchez.⁶⁴ Texada had the highest valuation in the 1805 tax rolls for the city of Natchez, and its carved interior cornices were among the earliest academic details applied to a Natchez building.⁶⁵

Other extant buildings dating to the Spanish period are few; they include the Governor Holmes House, the Griffith-McComas House, and the center section of Richmond, Airlie and Hope Farm, home of Carlos de Grand Pre. All have been extensively enlarged and remodeled, and only Airlie exhibits many of the architectural details that are typical of Natchez buildings constructed during the period.⁶⁶ The grandest house built at this time was Concord, the home of Spanish Governor Gayoso. Built in the early 1790s, Concord most resembled the House on Ellicott Hill (ca. 1800). The Concord illustrated in historic photographs shows later neoclassical features, including giant-order columns probably added in the 1830s. The house burned in 1901.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Ibid., Spanish Record Book D, 354.

⁶¹ Claiborne, 519.

⁶² Texada Site File, chain of title, HNF.

⁶³ *Mississippi Herald and Natchez Gazette*, January 22, 1806.

⁶⁴ *Natchez Daily Courier*, March 7, 1856.

⁶⁵ "City of Natchez, Assessments in Conformity of an Ordinance of the 17th July 1805," bound photostat, Armstrong Library, Natchez.

⁶⁶ Mary W. Miller, "Comprehensive Plan for Historic Preservation for the Territorial Period in Mississippi," architecture section, "Airlie," draft report, n.d., HNF, n.p..

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Spain's greatest influence on the physical character of Natchez was the laying out of the town plan and the development of Silver Street. References to Spanish influence in Natchez architecture have been principally the product of twentieth-century writers. The nostalgia for Spanish Natchez that Joseph Holt Ingraham noted in 1835 was still evident a century later in 1935, when promoters of the Natchez Pilgrimage resurrected this "golden age" to romanticize the past and entice travelers to visit Natchez.⁶⁸ The carpenters erecting buildings in Natchez during the Spanish period were all Anglo-Americans and included John Shannon, Patrick McDermott, James Cole, and John Scott.⁶⁹

Modern attempts to attribute the forms of early Natchez architecture to French or Spanish origins have usually proved fruitless. The French did little more than maintain a military presence in the Natchez District after the massacre of Fort Rosalie, and no buildings survive from that period. Buildings dating to the Spanish period were almost all built by Anglo-Americans for Anglo-Americans. Any Natchez architectural ties to the architecture of France or Spain relate more to connections between Natchez and the West Indies than to the colonial history of Mississippi. Natchez and the West Indies shared a similar mixture of national influences, trade interests, some settlers, and a warm climate, and therefore developed similar building traditions. In 1807, traveler Fortescue Cumings noted "the similarity of Natchez to many of the smaller West India towns, particularly St. Johns Antigua, though not near so large as it. The houses all with balconies and piazzas..."⁷⁰

2.6 Mississippi Territorial Period

On April 7, 1798, a little more than a week after the Spanish departed from the fort, the United States Congress created the Mississippi Territory and designated Natchez as the capital. The original boundaries of the territory were the Chattahoochee River to the east, the Mississippi River to the west, Spanish Florida to the south, and on the north, a line drawn east from 32 degrees 28 minutes, a point near the mouth of the Yazoo River. In 1804, the northern boundary became the southern boundary of Tennessee, and in 1812, the boundaries extended southward below the 31st parallel to include a portion of what was then West Florida. By 1813, the Mississippi Territory included all the land within the present boundaries of Alabama and Mississippi.⁷¹

Congress modeled the government of the newly created Mississippi Territory on the Northwest Territory, with one major difference: slavery was illegal in the Northwest

⁶⁸ Mary W. Miller and Ronald W. Miller, "The Spanish Architecture of Natchez," lecture presented to Natchez Literary Festival, May 1980, HNF, 1.

⁶⁹ Adams County, Office of Chancery Clerk, Spanish Record Book C, Will of John Shannon, 5; Spanish Record Book D, Apprenticeship to Patrick McDermott, carpenter and millwright, 136; Spanish Record Book E, Land Claims, Petition of James Cole, carpenter, 513; Spanish Record Book D, Land Claims, Petition of John Scott, carpenter, 341.

⁷⁰ Fortescue Cuming, "Sketches of a tour to the western country," *Early Western Travels 1748-1846*, ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland, Ohio: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1904), 320.

⁷¹ Mary W. Miller, "Comprehensive Plan for Historic Preservation," historical overview section, n.p.

Territory but permitted in the Mississippi Territory.⁷² Winthrop Sargent of Massachusetts, secretary of the Northwest Territory, became governor of the Mississippi Territory. The fort at Natchez was renamed Fort Sargent in his honor, but was only briefly the center of territorial authority.⁷³ The fort played what may have been its last ceremonial role in 1799, described by a witness to the ceremony as follows:

At the time of Washington's death, Natchez was occupied by a military force; the fort, which overlooks the Mississippi and is now [1826] in ruins, was in every direction pointed with cannon, and gave to the place, amid the grandeur of the natural scenery, something of a formidable and picturesque appearance.... The procession moved from under the embrasures of the fort; the discharges from heavy artillery ran along the wild and solitary banks of the Mississippi, and dying away amidst the deep morasses on the opposite side of the town, would return among the forest covered hills that encompassed it, in redoubled echoes.⁷⁴

Fort Rosalie [also known as Fort Panmure, Fort Natchez, and Fort Sargent], the focus of four nations' struggle for empire, fell into disuse during the territorial period. In 1806, the city government of newly incorporated Natchez moved the fort blockhouse into the town proper for use as a jail.⁷⁵ In 1820, John James Audubon noted that the town gallows stood in the center of the fort and that the ditch [moat] provided a burial ground for slaves.⁷⁶ Joseph Holt Ingraham described the fort in the 1830s as "the romantic ruins of Fort Rosalie, now enameled with a rich coating of verdure."⁷⁷ The fort existed as a ruin throughout the nineteenth century, and as late as 1897, Steven Power noted that "the ruins of the old Fort Rosalie still stand...."⁷⁸

During the territorial period, the seat of government moved from the fort to the town earlier laid out on top of the bluff by the Spanish. Paralleling the increased development of the town on top of the bluff was the growing reputation of Natchez as a town with a split personality—Natchez proper and Natchez "improper." The town on top of the bluff gained all the trappings of genteel society. The town below the bluff, known as "Natchez Under-the-Hill," quickly gained a reputation as one of the roughest and rowdiest ports on the Mississippi River. Here docked the keelboats and the flatboats and, beginning in 1811, the steamboats. Taverns, gambling halls, and brothels lined the principal street. Transient river travelers like boatmen, gamblers, trappers, and fishermen were largely

⁷² Ibid.; Claiborne, 202.

⁷³ Mary W. Miller, "Comprehensive Plan for Historic Preservation," military section, "Fort Rosalie," n.p.

⁷⁴ *Natchez Courier*, March 2, 1852.

⁷⁵ James, 81.

⁷⁶ Donald Culross Peattie, ed., *Audubon's America: The Narratives and Experiences of John James Audubon* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949), 152.

⁷⁷ Ingraham, 2:23.

⁷⁸ Stephen Power, *The Memento, Old and New Natchez 1700 to 1897* (Natchez: Major Steve Power, 1897), 7.

responsible for the dissipation observed by travelers during the territorial period. In 1808, Henry Ker wrote:

A small part of the town is under the hill, immediately on the river; it is well known to be the resort of dissipation. Here is the bold-faced strumpet, full of blasphemies, who looks upon the virtuous part of her sex with contempt and hatred; every house is a grocery, containing gambling, music, and dancing, fornicators, &c. This is the stopping place for all boatmen from Kentucky and Tennessee, &c.; yes, I have in that place seen 150 boats, loaded with produce, bound to New Orleans, delaying their time, and spending days in the lowest orders of dissipation.⁷⁹

The disrepute of the waterfront had increased by the end of the territorial period. In 1816, William Richardson described Natchez Under-the-Hill as being “without a single exception the most licentious spot I ever saw. It is inhabited by the worst characters and it is well known that not a virtuous female will ride in this polluted spot.”⁸⁰

In 1798, most of the newly formed Mississippi Territory was Indian country, with the only significant white settlement, St. Stephens, located on the Tombigbee River in what is now Alabama.⁸¹ In 1799, the territorial legislature created Mississippi’s first two counties—Adams and Pickering, later renamed Jefferson, and Natchez became the county seat of Adams.⁸²

Winthrop Sargent, a New England Federalist, experienced difficulties in governing the new territory. He showed a preference for appointing members of the Natchez upper class who had been closely associated with the Spanish authorities. An association of planters espousing the principles of Jeffersonian Republicanism opposed this and pushed to remove him. The election of Thomas Jefferson in 1800 sealed Sargent’s fate, and William Charles Cole Claiborne from Tennessee became territorial governor in 1801.⁸³ Despite the difficulties Sargent experienced in governing the territory, he remained in Natchez until his death in 1820. Gloucester, the house that Sargent acquired and enlarged in 1807, is one of the most architecturally significant Natchez buildings from the territorial period.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Henry Ker, *Travels Through the Western Interior of the United States, 1808–1816* (Elizabeth, New Jersey: 1816), 41.

⁸⁰ William Richardson, *Journal from Boston to the Western Country and down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans by William Richardson: 1815–1816* (New York: Valve Pilot Corporation, 1940), 34.

⁸¹ Mary W. Miller, “Comprehensive Plan for Historic Preservation,” historical overview section, n.p.
⁸² James, 77.

⁸³ Mary W. Miller, “Comprehensive Plan for Historic Preservation,” historical overview section, n.p.

⁸⁴ Gloucester site file, chain of title, National Register nominations, research notes from Winthrop Sargent Papers at Massachusetts Historical Society, HNF.

The same faction that engineered Sargent's removal in 1801 was also successful in moving the territorial capital from Federalist-dominated Natchez to the neighboring village of Washington, located six miles to the north.⁸⁵ In the same year, the territorial legislature established Jefferson College, Mississippi's first government-chartered institution of higher learning. Located in Washington, Jefferson College never realized the potential imagined by the territorial legislators and operated as a preparatory school during most of its history. Jefferson College is today operated as a state historic site by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Washington today is only a crossroads, and Natchez, incorporated by the territorial legislature in 1803, is the only incorporated town in Adams County.⁸⁶

Claiborne served as territorial governor only until 1803, when Jefferson appointed him the first governor of the Louisiana Territory. Robert Williams succeeded Claiborne. In 1809, Williams was replaced by David Holmes, who served as governor throughout the remainder of the territorial period and became the first governor of the state of Mississippi.⁸⁷

From 1798 to 1803, the year of the Louisiana Purchase, Natchez was the most southwesterly outpost of the United States. To improve communication, the federal government designated the old Natchez Trace as a post road in 1800. From 1801 to 1802, the United States improved the Natchez Trace and relocated it to pass through Washington, the territorial capital, rather than the Pine Ridge settlement.⁸⁸

Prior to 1790, the Mississippi River had not been a major transportation route, but later it became the most traveled route for new settlers immigrating to Natchez, and despite the improvements to the Natchez Trace, most settlers continued to arrive in Natchez by water. The Natchez Trace remained important during the territorial period as a trade route for upcountry boatmen who floated goods down the river to Natchez and New Orleans and returned north by foot and horseback.⁸⁹

While the United States was improving the Natchez Trace, the government also negotiated with the Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians to encourage the development of "stands," taverns or houses offering accommodations along the Natchez Trace. Some of the Natchez Trace stands were crude and little more than unheated, tentlike structures; others, like Mount Locust, provided better accommodations. The stands accommodated the increasing number of people who traveled between Natchez and Nashville or points farther north like Washington and Philadelphia.

⁸⁵ Mary W. Miller, "Comprehensive Plan for Historic Preservation," historical overview section, n.p.

⁸⁶ James, 77.

⁸⁷ Claiborne, 302-303.

⁸⁸ Dawson A. Phelps, "Stands and Travel Accommodations on the Natchez Trace," *Journal of Mississippi History* 11 (1949): 8.

⁸⁹ James, 42-43.

The Natchez Trace had begun to diminish in importance by 1815, when steamboats started to travel up the Mississippi River north of Natchez. By 1824, the founding of other towns such as Jackson and Columbus, Mississippi; Florence, Alabama; and Columbia, Tennessee, made a new road system necessary. At the same time, travel by steamboat up and down the Mississippi River was becoming commonplace. What had been an important American transportation route for a quarter century became obsolete and eventually ceased to exist except in sections used for local traffic.⁹⁰

Most territorial settlers who came to Natchez by flatboat and keelboat brought household goods with them. Northeasterners traveled by wagon and horseback to Pittsburgh, where they bought household goods needed in the Southwest. Pittsburgh was also a major supplier of goods to Natchez during the early territorial period. From there, settlers or merchants traveled on the Ohio River to the Mississippi River. Low water on the Ohio River, illness, difficulty in obtaining food, and hostile Indians plagued river travelers.⁹¹

The most famous person to float down the Mississippi River to Natchez during the territorial period was Aaron Burr, former vice president and duelist who killed Alexander Hamilton. Burr came down the Mississippi as a leader of an expeditionary force whose purpose is still debated by historians. President Jefferson warned the citizens of the Natchez region to beware of the expedition, suspecting the force of plotting treason against the United States. Authorities arrested Burr and held an arraignment in Washington, the territorial capital. Although he was not indicted, he escaped from Natchez before his official release. Recaptured near Mobile, Burr stood trial in Richmond and was eventually released for lack of evidence.⁹² Later in the nineteenth century, obituaries or other sources sometimes mentioned in a death notice that the decedent had come to Natchez with the Burr expedition.⁹³ The two buildings associated with Burr's trip to Natchez no longer stand. The grounds of Jefferson College now cover the site of the meeting house where Burr's arraignment was held. Windy Hill Manor, where Burr stayed with Colonel Benijah Osmun, was demolished in the 1960s.

The combination of territorial status, improvements in cotton growing and production, and the ability to ship cotton on steamboats ushered in the era of "King Cotton," causing the Natchez economy to boom. In a letter dated May 23, 1799, planter William Dunbar wrote, "We continue to cultivate cotton with very great success. It is by far the most

⁹⁰ Phelps, "Stands and Travel Accommodations on the Natchez Trace," 1-8.

⁹¹ *Letters of Looe and Eliza Baker from 1801 to 1821, Edited and Copied by Looe Baker, Esq. also Reminiscences and Sketch of the Family and of Looe and William C. Baker by Eliza Wardell Baker, March 1924, the Whole Being Collected by Kate Stuart Lowry, Great Granddaughter of Looe Baker, (n.p: n. p., n.d.), 47-51, photocopy, HNF.*

⁹² Claiborne, 283-189.

⁹³ Joseph Buck Stratton, Diary, May 14, 1873 (death of Robert Fagan), Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collection, Louisiana State University [hereafter referred to as LLMVC/LSU], photocopy of typescript, HNF and Jefferson Street Methodist Church, Natchez, Membership Records, May 13, 1873 (death of Robert Fagan).

profitable crop we have ever undertaken in this country."⁹⁴ The introduction of the cotton gin spurred the development of public gins. The proprietors of the public gins gave planters receipts specifying the amount of cotton delivered, and these receipts, by usage at first and afterward by law, became the paper currency of the territory.⁹⁵ Advertisements in territorial newspapers document the use of cotton receipts as money. In 1800, Henry Turner advertised goods for sale at his Natchez store and advised potential customers that they could pay with cotton.⁹⁶ In 1810, John Henderson offered his house, The Elms, for sale for either cash or cotton.⁹⁷

Planters like William Dunbar also found other ways to capitalize on the expanding cotton economy. In 1800, Dunbar and Bernard Lintot erected "a large and commodious warehouse" at the Natchez landing for the reception of cotton. Storage charges were twelve and one-half cents per bale per month.⁹⁸

Improvements in growing cotton also played a role in the Natchez area's growing economy. Planters used cotton seeds from Jamaica and Georgia until approximately 1811, when rot appeared. The Jamaican and Georgian seeds were replaced by a variety from the Cumberland River Valley that was impervious to rot but produced an inferior short staple cotton.⁹⁹ Improvements in harvesting included installing cotton presses that revolutionized the process of packing cotton lint. Originally, the cotton lint was placed in long bags, but an iron press enabled the cotton to be packaged in compact, cubical bales that were easier to handle and store.¹⁰⁰

The first Natchez planter to ship cotton on a steamboat was Samuel Davis, who was bold enough to place his cargo on the *New Orleans* for its maiden voyage from Natchez to New Orleans in 1811.¹⁰¹ From 1811 to 1814, steamboats operated only between Natchez and New Orleans. By 1815, however, steamboats with more powerful engines ascended as far north as Louisville.¹⁰² Joseph Dunbar Shields provided a colorful description of the first steamboat:

I was dozing quietly on my hill when I was somewhat startled by a loud, hoarse cough, apparently from the lungs of a mastodon...I looked up and saw the most extraordinary monster that ever met my vision; the smoke fumed from its nostrils and it coughed at every step; it moved like a thing

⁹⁴ Claiborne, 143.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ *Green's Impartial Observer*, May 5, 1800, 2.

⁹⁷ *Natchez Chronicle*, April 10, 1810.

⁹⁸ *Green's Impartial Observer*, November 29, 1800, 4.

⁹⁹ Claiborne, 140-41.

¹⁰⁰ McLendon, 75-81.

¹⁰¹ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Mississippi* (Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1891), 2:71 and James, 154.

¹⁰² James, 197.

of life and literally walked upon the water.... The thing was of the bell cattle kind, for when she got opposite, she rung her bell.¹⁰³

As the erosion-prone loess soil of Natchez began to wear out during the territorial period, planters expanded their cotton-growing activity across the Mississippi River to the fertile flat land of Louisiana. By the end of the territorial period in 1817, Concordia Parish had become a planting province of Natchez.¹⁰⁴

Although slave labor had been an important part of overall agricultural production in Natchez since 1716, its tremendous growth after 1800 was due to the rapid expansion of the region's cotton economy. In 1800, the year of the first United States census in the Mississippi Territory, the number of slaves was 3,489. Within the first decade of the territorial period, the number of slaves had grown to 17,088, an increase of almost 400 percent.¹⁰⁵

One of the watersheds in the history of African enslavement occurred during the territorial period in 1808, with the enactment of the federal law that prohibited the importation of slaves. As lands wore out in the older eastern states and the demands for slaves increased in the Deep South, the number of the slaves being transported from states like Virginia and the Carolinas steadily increased. The 1808 ban on importation caused a boom in the demand for American-born slaves to supply the needs of cotton planters in the Deep South. According to the historian Charles Sydnor, "In Mississippi the supply of slaves seldom equaled the demand...Mississippians bought many slaves from other States [sic] but exported relatively few."¹⁰⁶

Natchez probably had the only permanent slave market in Mississippi during the territorial period, although more or less permanent markets were later established in towns like Vicksburg. During the colonial and early territorial periods, slave sales were held at the landing and throughout the town, but, by the early 1790s, more slave transactions began to take place at the Forks-of-the-Road slave markets on the outskirts of town.¹⁰⁷ According to historian D. Clayton James, the slave markets at Natchez (Forks-of-the-Road) and New Orleans (located across the river in Algiers) became the two busiest slave markets in the entire South.¹⁰⁸

A significant population of free African Americans began to emerge in Mississippi during the territorial period, and most of these free African Americans lived in Natchez. Many of the prominent free African Americans were mulattos who got their start in life through inheritances from the white owners who fathered them and later freed them. Will and

¹⁰³ Joseph D. Shields, *Natchez: Its Early History*, ed. Elizabeth D. Murray (Louisville, 1930), 84.

¹⁰⁴ James, 148.

¹⁰⁵ Charles Sydnor, *Slavery in Mississippi* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1933), 186.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁰⁷ James, 46.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 197.

probate records in Adams County indicate that stable relationships between white males and black women, slave and free, were more common and more openly acknowledged during the colonial and territorial period than after statehood. These relationships may have been more readily accepted when men outnumbered women during the frontier period of the city's history.¹⁰⁹

During the territorial period, settlement in Natchez increased rapidly as the town developed a reputation as a place to get rich in a short time. In 1805, evangelist Lorenzo Dow wrote, "The inhabitants, who are very industrious, make property and get rich very fast...."¹¹⁰ According to an 1811 published guide to the Mississippi River, "The accumulation of wealth being the grand polar star to which all the pursuits of the inhabitants are directed at present, the acquirements of taste and education perhaps are too much neglected in and about Natchez...."¹¹¹

Growing sophistication in Natchez architecture reflected the increasing affluence of territorial settlers. Natchez builders began to use academic embellishments to dress up building forms that had developed locally. At Texada, built for a Spaniard in 1798 at the dawn of the territorial period, these embellishments include carved wood cornices and Federal-style interior millwork.¹¹² Between 1798 and 1801, on the site of Andrew Ellicott's encampment, local merchant James Moore built what is today known as the House on Ellicott Hill. A National Historic Landmark, this structure is a sophisticated and grand example of early vernacular architecture of the Lower Mississippi Valley. The builder installed Natchez's first fanlight above the main entrance door and finely detailed Federal-style millwork on the interior.¹¹³

The House on Ellicott Hill exhibits a central gable with surrounding shed attachment, which marks a departure from what was common in early Natchez. This roof shape is sometimes confused with its French Louisiana counterpart, a hipped roof with surrounding sheds. The central gable was both an original and remodeled feature on Natchez houses dating to the colonial and territorial periods. Historic photographs and drawings document it on several nonextant Adams County buildings, including the ca.

¹⁰⁹ Adams County, Office of the Chancery Clerk, Will Book 1:88 and 132. The wills of James McCary and William Barland document the white ancestry of the free African-American McCary and Barland families.

¹¹⁰ John G. Jones, *A Complete History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Nashville: 1887).

¹¹¹ Zadok Cramer, *The Navigator: Containing Directions for Navigating the Monongahela, Allegheny, Ohio, and Mississippi Rivers* (Pittsburgh: Cramer, Spear & Eichbaum, 1811), 214.

¹¹² Texada site file, National Register nomination, HNF.

¹¹³ Mary W. Miller and Ronald Miller, *The Great Houses of Natchez* (Jackson and London: University Press of Mississippi, 1986), 57; United States Department of the Interior, Natchez Trace Parkway, "Historic Site Survey: Ellicott Hill, Natchez, Mississippi," February 7, 1952, by Dawson Phelps.

1790 mansion Concord, The Hermitage, Laurel Hill, and a Natchez jail designed by William Dunbar.¹¹⁴

The two-story facade of the House on Ellicott Hill (Fig. 12) was created by a basement story dug into the side of the hill. Eliza Baker described this in an 1805 letter from Natchez to her native New Jersey as “the style which prevails in Southern countries, namely one-story with this difference—that there is a lower story dug out of the side of the hill presenting two stories in front and but one in the rear [with] a long gallery or piazza, partly enclosed by Venetian blinds.”¹¹⁵

Travel writer Fortescue Cuming made note of the “houses all with balconies and piazzas,” but galleries were not always an original feature of most of the earliest Natchez houses.¹¹⁶ Residents and builders alike must have soon recognized the utility of having porches or galleries to combat the hot, wet Natchez climate. For example, the center section of Richmond, which may date from as early as 1784, did not originally have galleries. The lack of original galleries is documented by the survival of massive hewn log gutters in the eave formed by the addition of the later gallery.¹¹⁷ Galleries were first built as shed-roof additions to existing houses. Soon builders included galleries as original features but retained the broken-slope roof of their predecessors. The Briars, built ca. 1818, features an inset or integral gallery, and is the quintessential example of what is regionally called a “planter’s cottage,” a house with gable roof fronted by a full-width gallery.

Other important Natchez-area examples of early territorial architecture are Gloucester and Springfield, which is in neighboring Jefferson County. The detached sidelights of both houses and the Federal-style millwork of Gloucester relate to Federal Hill in Bardstown, Kentucky. Both Gloucester and Springfield feature the gouge-carved millwork that is typical of finer Natchez houses built during the territorial period. Gloucester is the more sophisticated of the two houses, with a semi-octagonal bay at its western end and entrance doorways with beautifully detailed fanlights and Federal-style millwork. An 1806 sale described Gloucester as a “most beautiful modern built Dwelling House, too well known to need description.”¹¹⁸ Springfield probably dates to 1806, when an advertisement placed by Kentucky builder John Hall solicited carpenters to work at Mr. Thomas M. Green’s.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Concord site file, Kingston research file (The Hermitage), Laurel Hill site file, and slide Natchez jail designed by William Dunbar, HNF.

¹¹⁵ *Letters of Looe and Eliza Baker from 1801 to 1821*, 51.

¹¹⁶ Cuming, 320.

¹¹⁷ This information is based on a site inspection of Richmond by Mary W. Miller of HNF.

¹¹⁸ *Mississippi Messenger*, November 25, 1806.

¹¹⁹ *Mississippi Messenger*, April 8, 1806; Adams County, Office of Chancery Clerk, Probate Box 17 [estate papers of John Hall]; Adams County Deed Book B, 187 [describes John Hall as being from George Town, Kentucky]. For over a century, writers have promoted Springfield as the site of a 1791 marriage between Andrew Jackson and Rachel Robards; however, historians do not believe the

The first Natchez building to combine both the details and the form of academic architecture was Auburn (Fig. 13), a National Historic Landmark designed and built in 1812 by Levi Weeks for Lyman Harding, both natives of Massachusetts. In a letter home in 1812, Weeks claimed that Auburn was the first building in the Mississippi Territory to exhibit the “orders of architecture,” and no architectural historian has been able to disprove the claim.¹²⁰ The importance of the classical portico at Auburn reached far beyond Natchez. It was one of the first Southern houses to have the two-story white columns that came to epitomize what is colloquially known as “Southern Colonial” architecture. The portico predates several other famous Southern examples such as the porticos added to the White House and Arlington in Virginia, as well as the porticos designed by Thomas Jefferson for the University of Virginia.¹²¹

Auburn’s Georgian interior details were somewhat behind the times and illustrate the use of published pattern books by architects working in nineteenth-century Natchez. Salmon’s *Palladio Londonensis*, published in 1734, provided the inspiration for one interior doorway with swan’s neck pediment (Fig. 14). Another doorway with broken pediment and shell cartouche was derived from William Paine’s *Builder’s Companion*, published in 1758. The circular stair, which Weeks described as his “geometric” stair, was copied from Paine’s *British Palladio*, published in 1786 (Fig. 15).¹²²

Levi Weeks arrived in Natchez in 1808 or 1809. Earlier he had been acquitted in one of America’s most notorious murder trials, the first in America to have a court transcript. His defense attorneys were Brockholst Livingston, Alexander Hamilton, and Aaron Burr, working together before the duel in which Burr took Hamilton’s life.¹²³ Weeks may have come to Natchez on the recommendation of Burr, who had been arraigned for treason near Natchez in 1807. A boom town on the frontier, Natchez would have been a place where Weeks could practice his trade as a builder and cabinetmaker, and possibly escape the notoriety of the trial. In addition to introducing the orders of architecture to the Mississippi Territory, Weeks also brought the cistern system to Natchez.¹²⁴ He died of yellow fever in an 1819 epidemic.¹²⁵

In 1815, a second influential house was built on The Forest plantation for Dinah Dunbar, widow of planter William Dunbar. A drawing by the governess at The Forest (Fig. 16) depicts a large, two-story house with peripteral, or encircling, colonnade. The Forest was probably the first house in America to have one. A building contract that figured in a law

1791 marriage occurred and architectural historians date the building to the first decade of the nineteenth century.

¹²⁰ Auburn Site File, Levi Weeks to Epaphras Hoyt, September 27, 1812, MDAH, typescript, HNF.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Mildred McGehee, “Auburn in Natchez,” *The Magazine Antiques* [1977], March, 546–553.

¹²³ Estelle Fox Kleiger, *The Trial of Levi Weeks or The Manhattan Well Mystery* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1989), 10.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 213.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 203.

suit filed by Dinah Dunbar against the brick mason documents that the encircling colonnade was original.¹²⁶ Dunleith, built in 1856, is the only surviving house in Mississippi with a peripteral colonnade, although other documented examples existed; among them, were Montebello in Adams County and Windsor in Claiborne County.¹²⁷ Louisiana probably has the largest number of extant examples.

Suburban Linden and the Mercer House in downtown Natchez are also significant examples of Natchez territorial-period architecture. Built about 1815 for Thomas Reed, one of Mississippi's first state senators, Linden's entrance is considered the most finely detailed, fanlighted doorway in Mississippi. The Mercer House was built for merchant James Wilkins, probably not long before 1817, and echoed the octagonal bay of Gloucester's western end. Its rear elevation featured two symmetrical bays flanking an inset rear gallery.¹²⁸

In 1824, Englishman Adams Hodgson's description of The Forest provided an enlightening view of plantation society in the Natchez area:

His [William Dunbar's] widow [Dinah Dunbar] lives in a very handsome house, in the middle of the woods, near the centre of their cotton plantations; and her eldest son, who studied medicine in the North, that he might practice gratuitously among the Negroes of the various branches of the family, lives with her. His wife is a young lady from the neighbourhood of Philadelphia. The interior of the house, and the domestic economy, resembled that of the family of one of our wealthy country gentlemen, and the manners of the inmates were such as you expect to meet with in well-educated and well-bred society in England.¹²⁹

Clearly, the reputation Natchez had gained for sophistication, noted in 1797 by General Wilkinson, grew during the territorial period. In 1805, Lorenzo Dow wrote that Natchez people "live very luxuriously, fare sumptuously every day, and are clothed in purple and fine linen."¹³⁰ A fondness for trappings of sophistication, even in early territorial Natchez, is evident in an 1801 invoice for luxury goods shipped direct from Bordeaux, France, to merchant Walter Burling of Natchez:

720 casks of Claret
2400 bottles of St. Estephe Medoc
15 pipes of brandy
Sweet oil and bottles

¹²⁶ The Forest Research file, builder's contract, photocopy, HNF.

¹²⁷ Windsor Site File, Jefferson County, photocopy of 1863 sketch, HNF and Montebello photograph, Norman and Gandy Collection, Natchez, photocopy, HNF.

¹²⁸ Mercer House Site File, chain of title, HNF.

¹²⁹ Adams Hodgson, *Letters from North America* (London, 1824), 1:211-212.

¹³⁰ John G. Jones, *A Complete History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Nashville: Methodist Episcopal Church, 1887), n.p.

Cambricks, 576 ells
 Linen for sheets, 520 ells
 Britanias, 1200 ells
 70 dozen men's white silk stockings
 18 gross white playing cards
 312 dozen kid gloves of assorted finishes, lengths, and colours
 96 reams of faint blue common uncut paper
 208 boxes of soap (9544 pieces)
 44 demi johns containing 902 soft shelled almonds¹³¹

During the territorial period, Natchez became a destination for itinerant painters who capitalized on the growing wealth of the city's residents. Among them was Alexander Wilson, America's first great ornithologist, who journeyed to Natchez in 1810.¹³² William Edward West was probably the only major portrait artist to visit Natchez during the territorial period. He was remembered in a Natchez newspaper article as a relative of Edward Turner (whose first wife, a daughter of Cato West, may have been the actual relative) and as "a sprightly, entertaining lad, evincing much native refinement."¹³³ In 1815, he was working in New Orleans, where he undoubtedly painted some of his early portraits of Natchez subjects, and, in 1817, he moved to Natchez.¹³⁴ Edward West maintained close ties to Natchez and later painted portraits of Edward and Eliza Turner during a visit to New York. In 1856, Turner wrote West, then in ill health, and issued an invitation for him to winter in Natchez.¹³⁵

A number of cabinetmakers also practiced their trade in Natchez during the territorial period, and they often allied with local builders to produce millwork as well as furniture. The probate records of cabinetmaker William Lowery document that he made window sash as well as furniture, while architect/builder Levi Weeks also operated a cabinet shop.¹³⁶ Natchez newspapers indicate that the city had several cabinetmaking businesses during the territorial period, and that chairs seemed to be the article of furniture most frequently produced. Pierson Lewis advertised in 1804 that he had established himself in the chairmaking business.¹³⁷ Adams County Circuit Court records indicate that territorial cabinetmakers would sometimes purchase furniture parts from Northern cabinetmakers and complete the piece of furniture in Natchez. One particular court case involved a suit filed by a Pittsburgh cabinetmaker against the estate of a Natchez cabinetmaker for collection of money due him for making and shipping bedposts to Natchez.

¹³¹ Ronald and Mary W. Miller, "Natchez, the Bath or Clifton of the South," lecture, November 6, 1987, HNF.

¹³² Robert Cantwell, *Alexander Wilson, Naturalist and Pioneer, a Biography* (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1961), 225.

¹³³ *Natchez Tri-Weekly New Era*, March 14, 1881.

¹³⁴ Patti Carr Black, "Arts and Artists in Mississippi, 1720-1995," draft manuscript, typescript, HNF, 61-65.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹³⁶ Adams County Courthouse, Office of the Chancery Clerk, probate box 52; Mildred Blewett McGehee, "Levi Weeks, Early Nineteenth-Century Architect" (Master's thesis, University of Delaware, Winterthur Program, 1976), 7.

¹³⁷ *Mississippi Herald and Natchez City Gazette*, June 26, 1804.

An 1812 letter written by architect Levi Weeks documents that Natchez had five gold and silversmiths during the territorial period and most of the professions necessary to accommodate the wants and needs of a population that was becoming increasingly sophisticated on the eve of statehood. Included among the professional establishments listed by Weeks were tailors (4), blacksmiths (6), sadlers (4), carpenters (6), cabinetmakers (5), coach and sign painter (1), house painters (3), hatters (4), tanners (2), cobblers (5), trunk maker (1), bookbinder (1), wagon maker (1), coach maker (1), barbers (3), butchers (2), bakers (5), bricklayers (4), plasterers (2), physicians (8), lawyers (7), and confectioner and distiller (1).¹³⁸

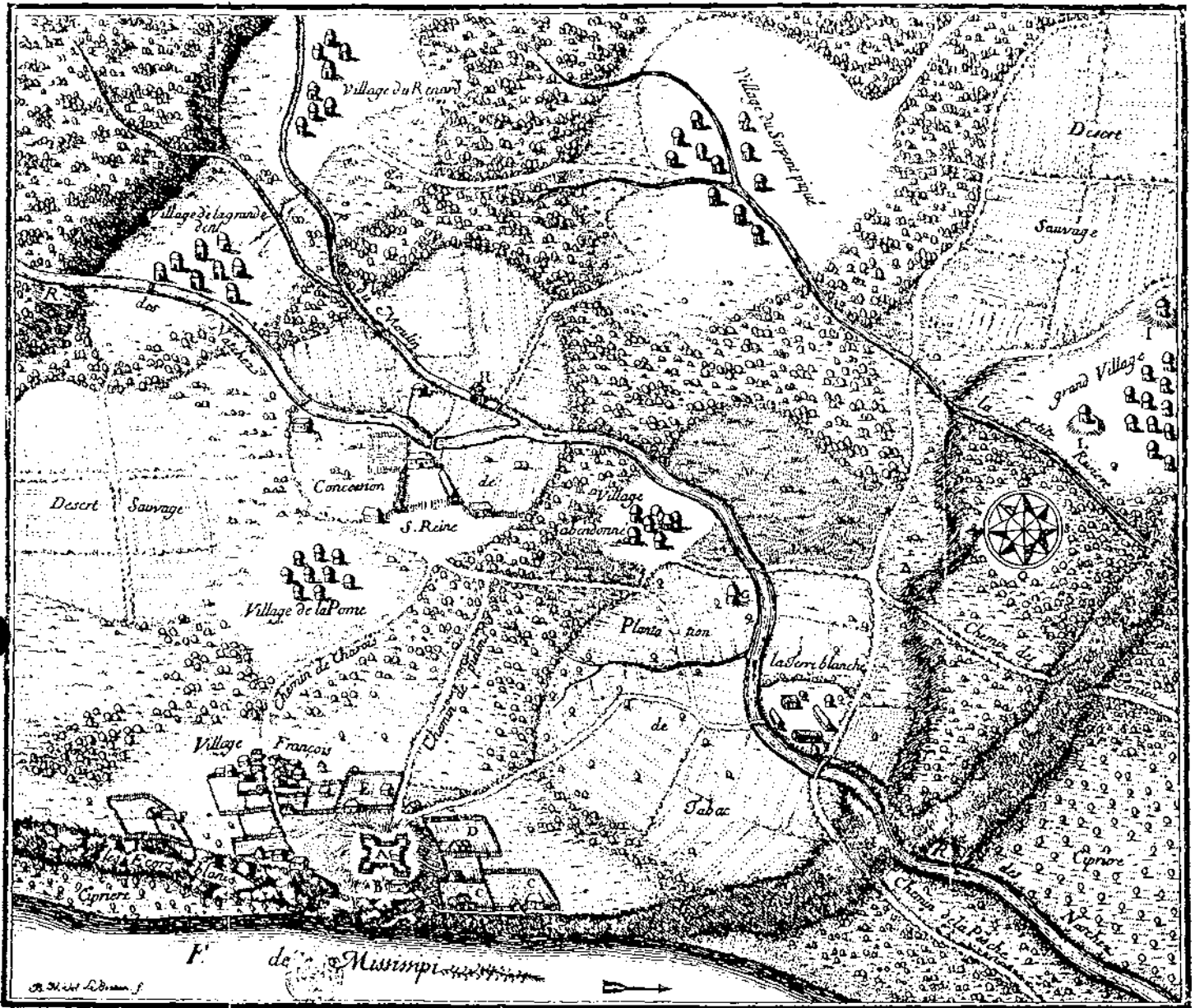
¹³⁸ Kleiger, 212.



1. Early eighteenth-century drawing of the Natchez Indians by Alexander De Batz.

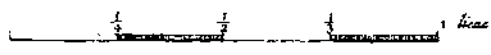


2. Early-eighteenth century drawing of a Natchez Indian temple and house of the chief by Alexander De Batz.



- A. Fort
- B. Magasin
- C. Gouvernement
- D. Commandant
- E. Paroisse

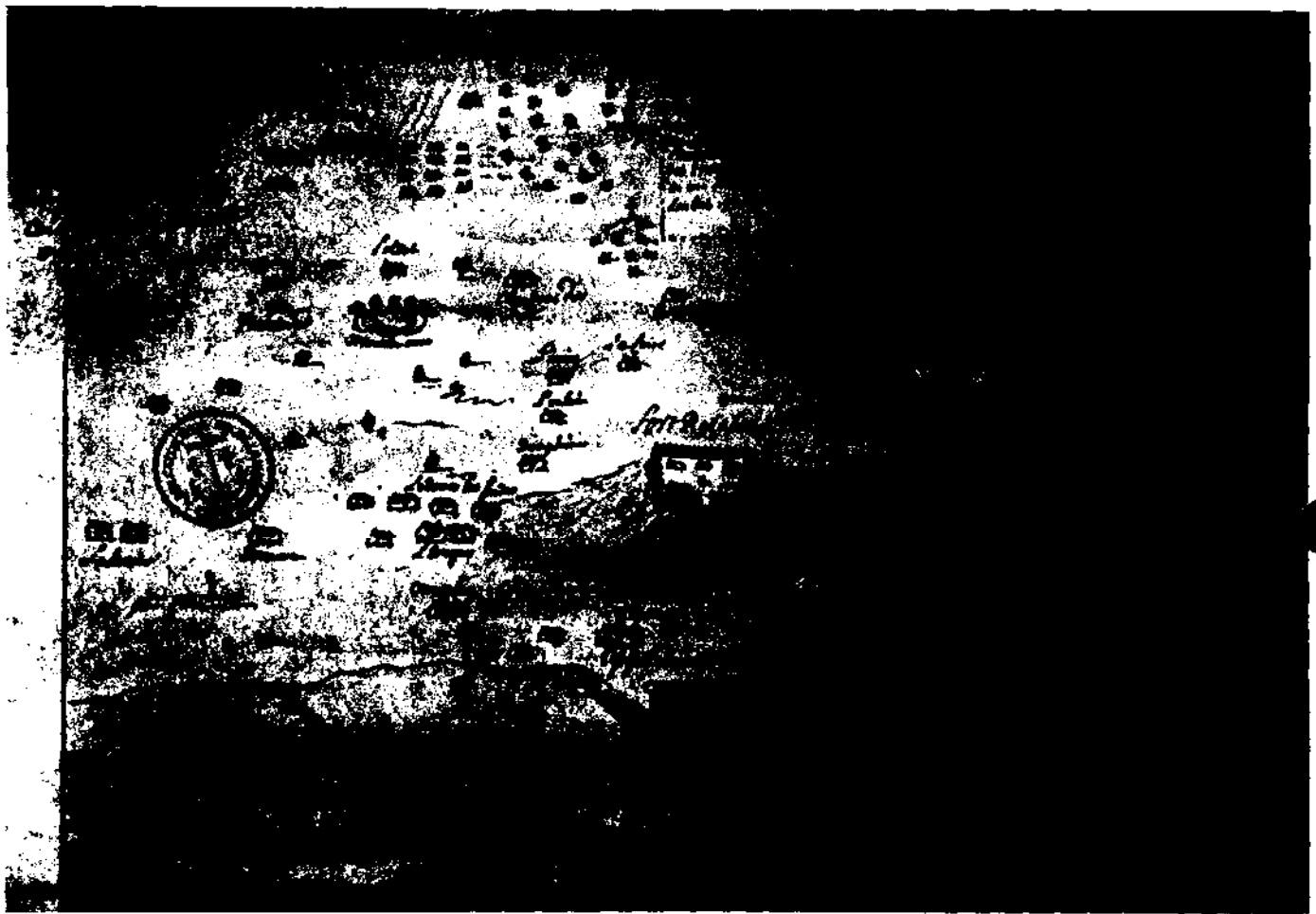
Les Natchez



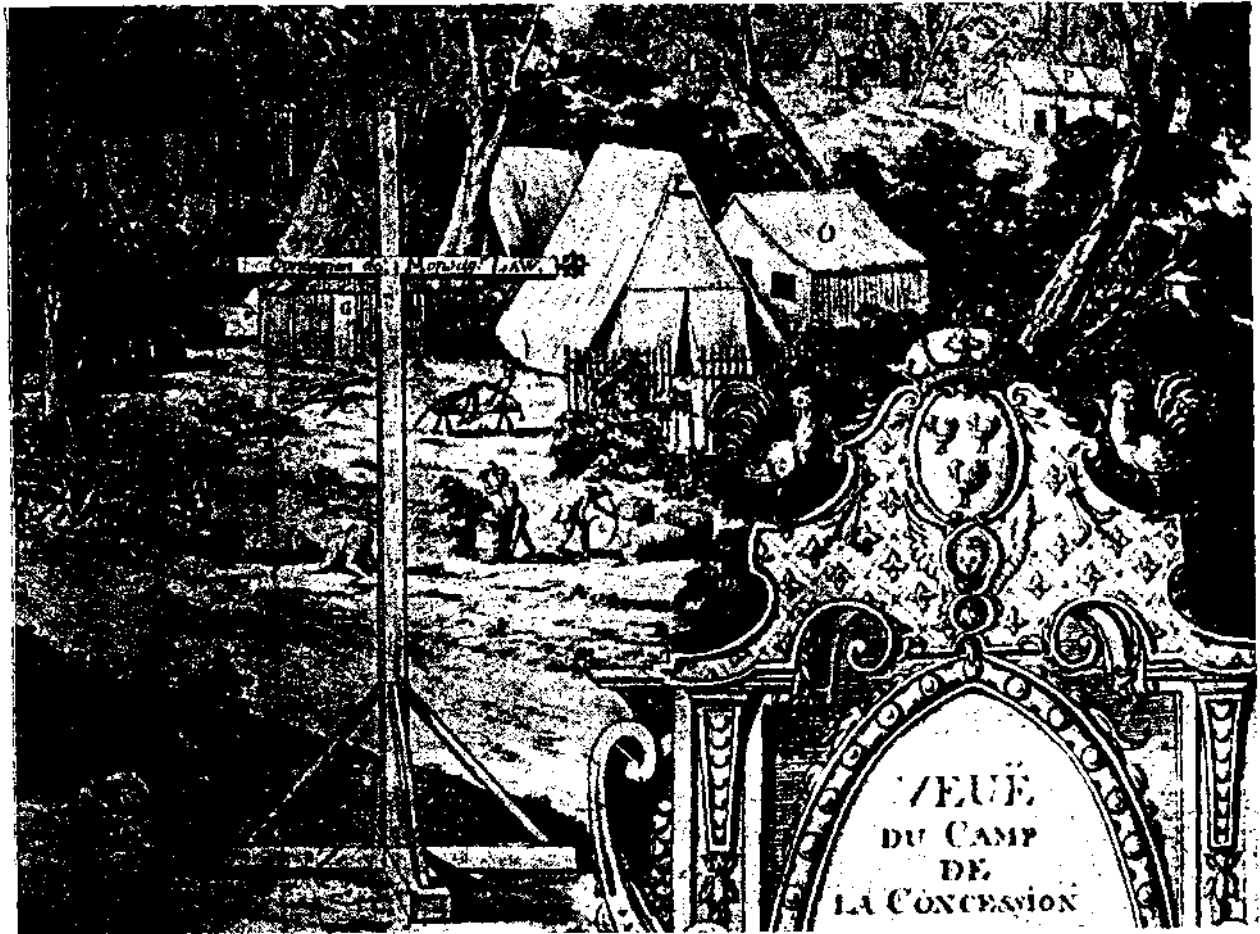
- F. Sourd magasin
- G. Vieux Temple
- H. Moulin a farine
- I. Temple
- L. Grand Chef

lettre B.

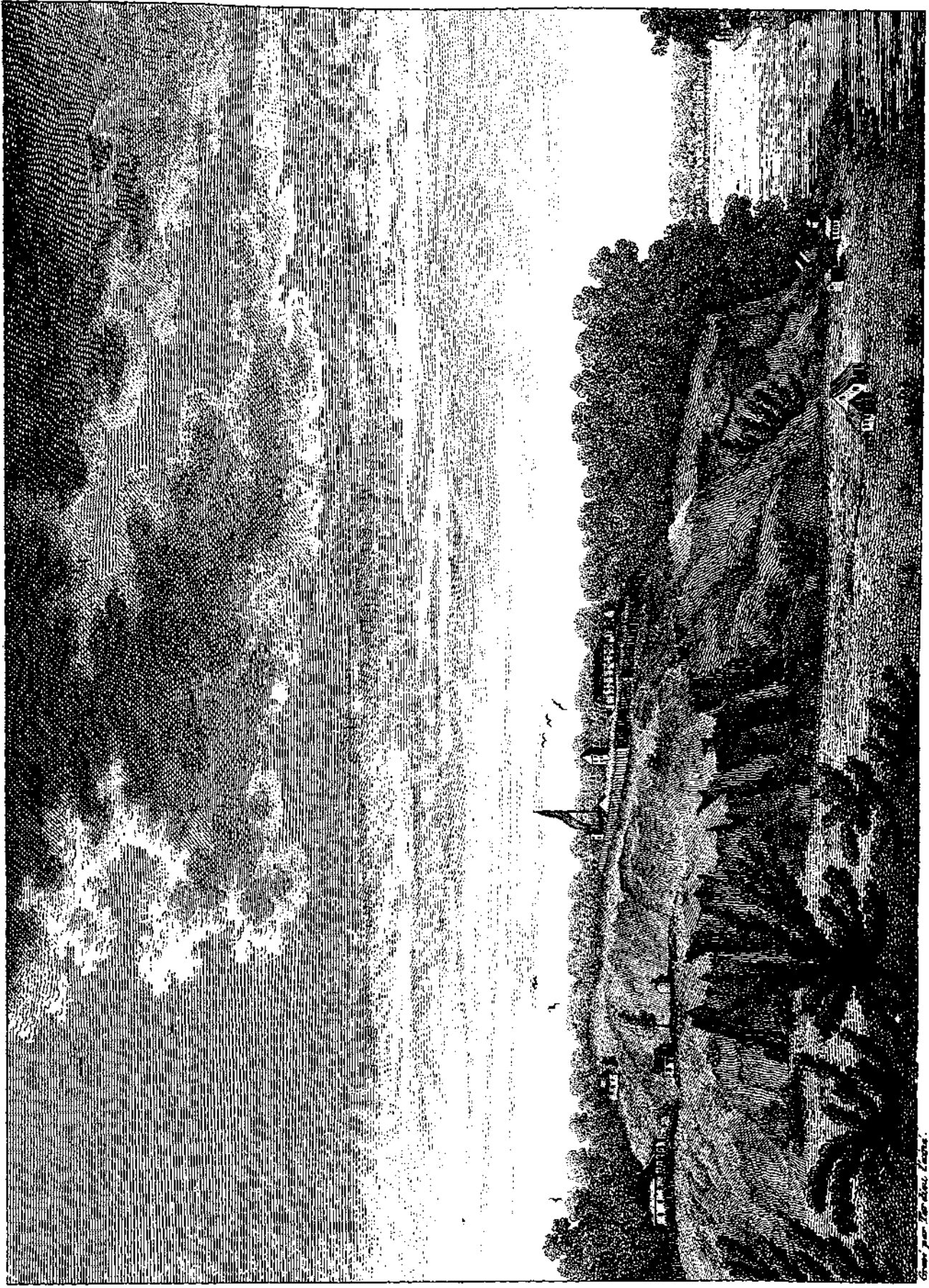
3. 1728 Map of Natchez showing Fort Rosalie by Ignace Francois Broutin.



4. Early-eighteenth century drawing of Fort Rosalie by Dumont de Montigny.

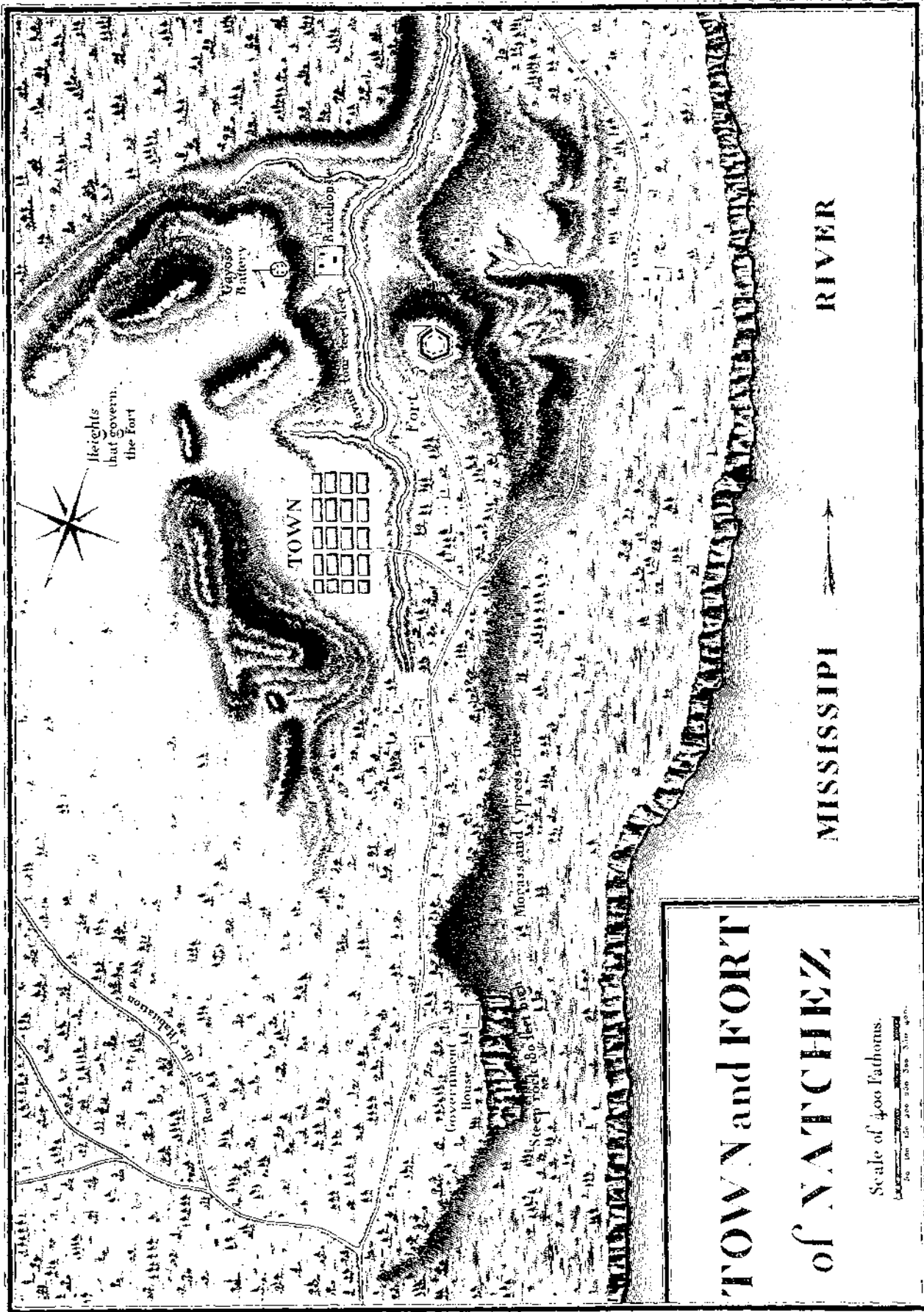


5. View of "Camp de la Concession" at Biloxi ca. 1720, showing houses similar to those described in Natchez during the same period.



6. Drawing of the Fort of the Natchez by Victor Collot ca. 1796

View from the river, Natchez.



TOWN and FORT of NATCHEZ

7. Town and Fort of Natchez map by Victor Collot ca. 1794.

Hotel de la Caspa.



Seis de largo y 15 de ancho.

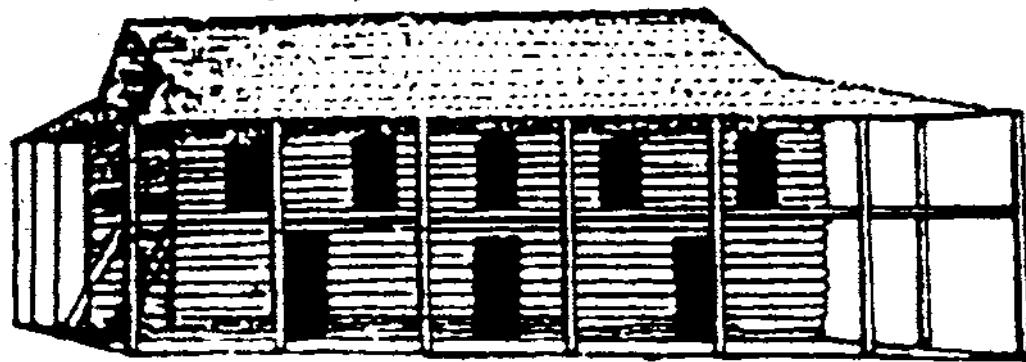
8. Heavy timber building at Fort Rosalie drawn by Victor Collot ca. 1796.



Castro sombrero Ancho

9. Fortification building drawn by Victor Collot ca. 1796, similar to buildings within Fort Rosalie.

Clausura y Proposición del Cárcel

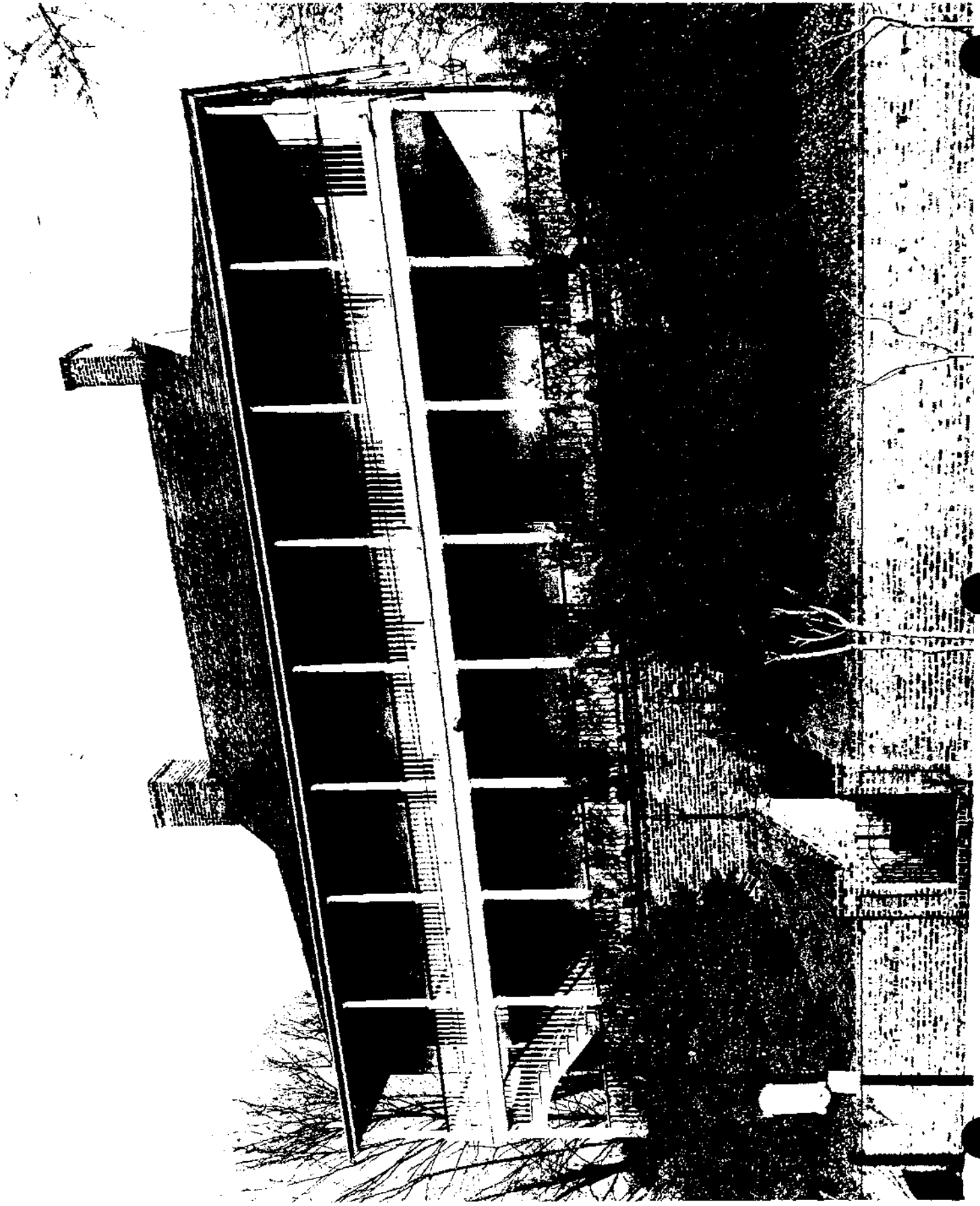


Spanish jail, Natchez, Mississippi, drawing by William Dunbar, 1798. *Archivo General de Simancas*

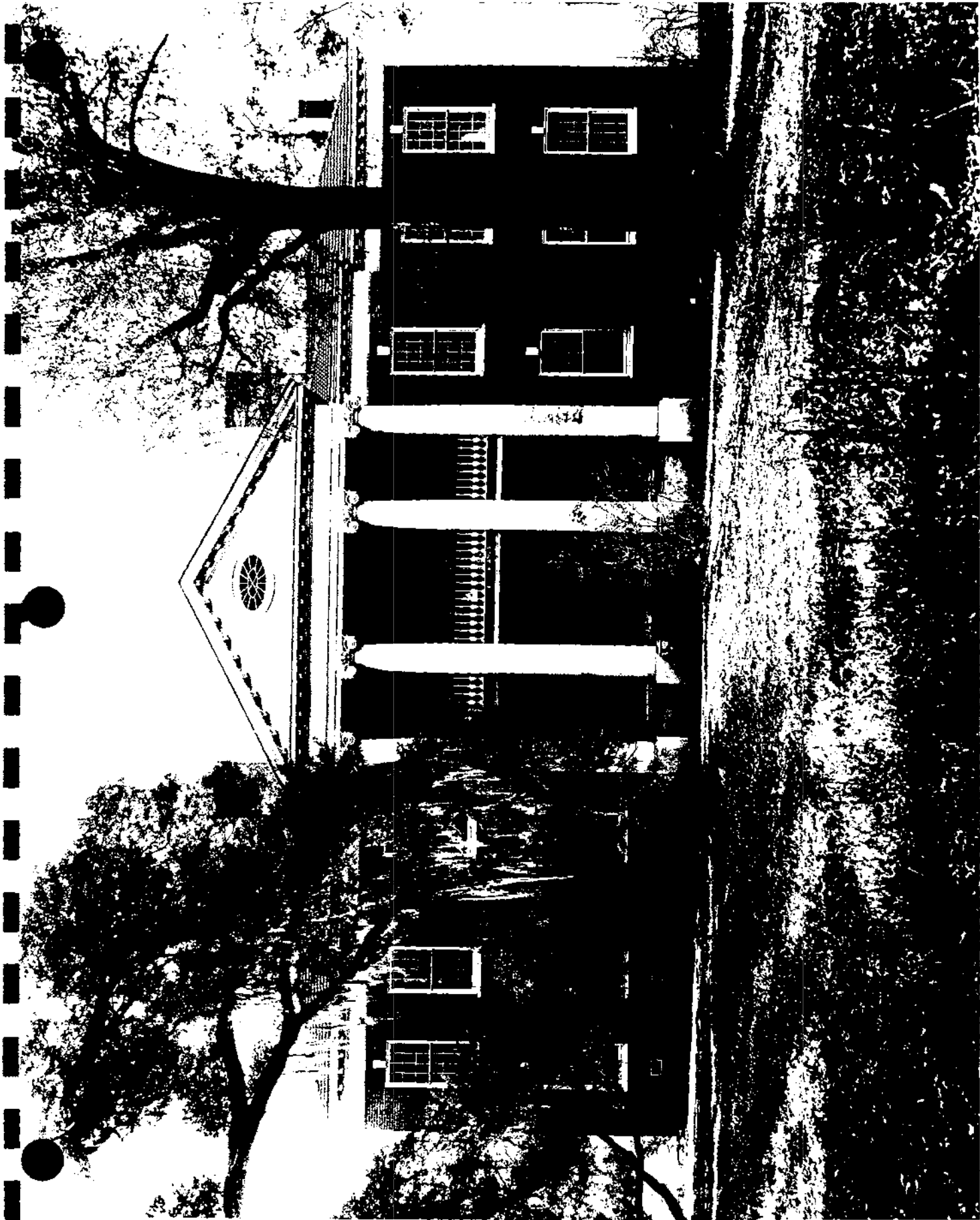
10. Spanish jail at Natchez by William Dunbar, ca. 1798.



11. Unidentified log house in Adams County.



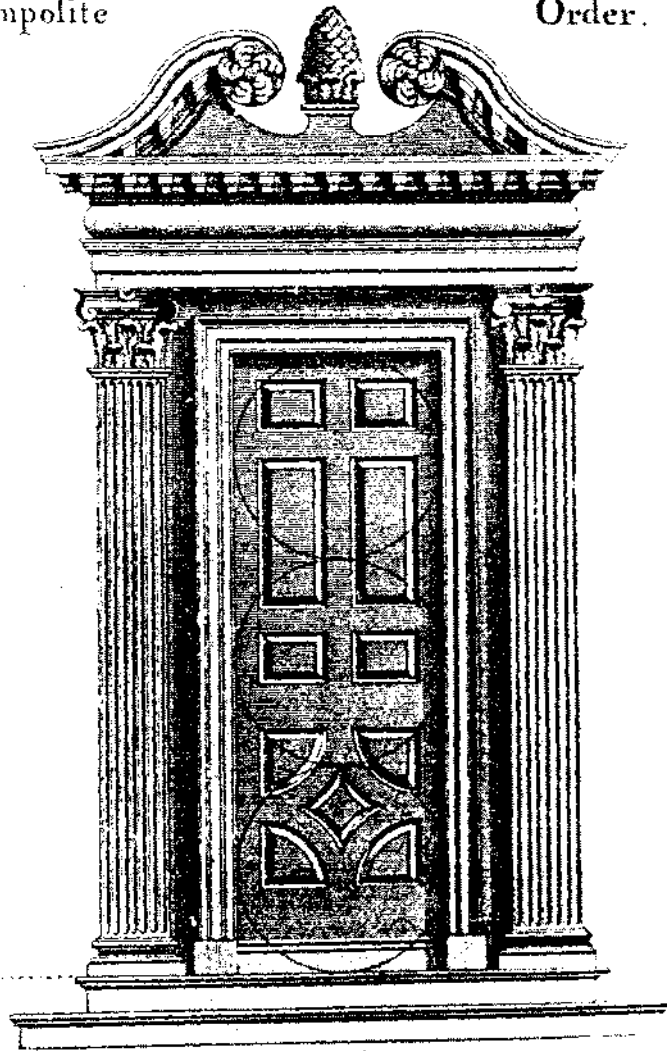
12. "Connecticut's Tavern" now known as the House of Parliament.



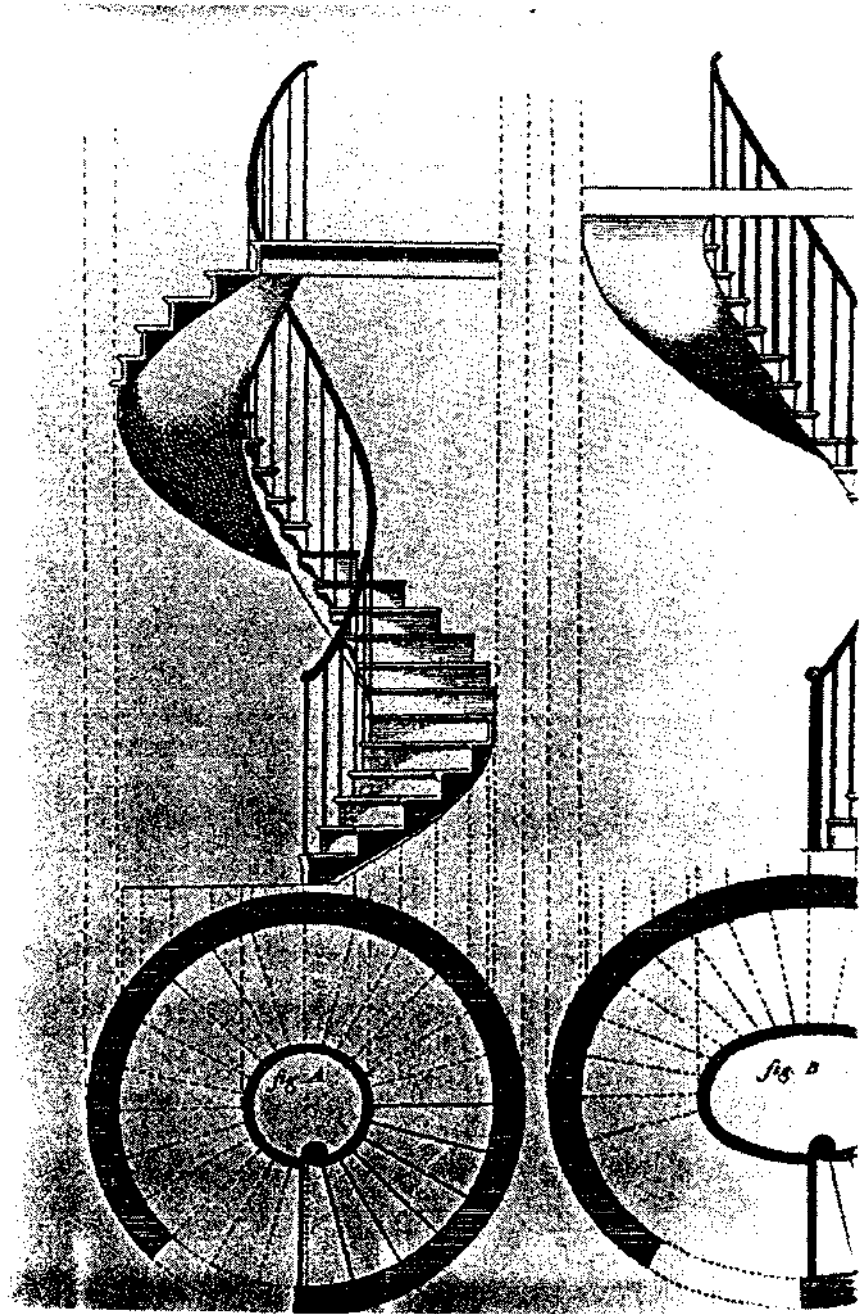
13. Front elevation of Auburn.

Composite

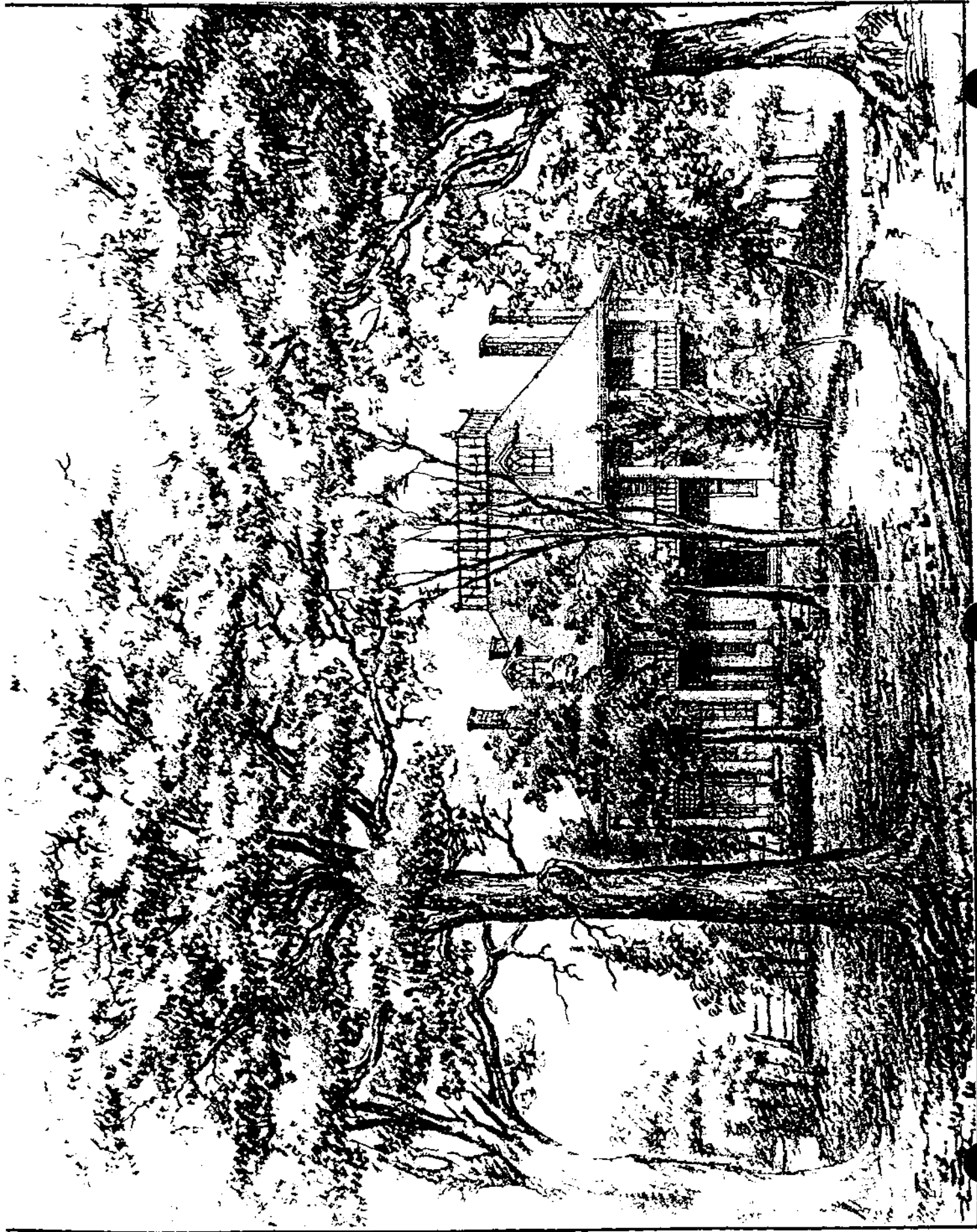
Order.



14. Plate 26 from *Palladio Londinensis*, published by William Salmon in 1734, that was the inspiration for the Auburn doorway.



15. Plate 41 from *British Palladio*, published by William Paine in 1786, which was the inspiration for the staircase at Auburn.



60 Panel sketch of [redacted] by a [redacted] member of the [redacted] family for the [redacted] in [redacted]

3.0 ANTEBELLUM NATCHEZ (1815 to 1861)



3.1 Statehood and Prosperity

By 1815, the population of the Mississippi Territory had grown so large that Natchez area leaders began to push for division of the territory. They feared loss of influence as the population grew in the eastern portion of the territory, and the seven counties of the old Natchez District (Adams, Jefferson, Claiborne, Wilkinson, Amite, Franklin, and Warren) bore seventy-four percent of the tax load of the entire territory.¹³⁹ Although all factions eventually recognized that the Mississippi Territory would be divided, disagreement existed about particulars. Some thought the line should be drawn from west to east; others from north to south. Eventually, the boundary was established from north to south to give each of two new territories access to the Gulf. President Madison signed the act dividing the territory in 1817 and authorized a state constitutional convention for the western portion that became the state of Mississippi. The eastern portion became the state of Alabama in 1819.

Mississippi held its state constitutional convention in August 1817 in the territorial capital of Washington. The meeting house used for the convention no longer stands, but its site is incorporated in the grounds of Jefferson College. The delegates designated Natchez as the first state capital. Edward Turner, an influential politician during both the territorial and antebellum statehood periods, bought Texada and apparently rented it to the state legislature for a legislative hall.¹⁴⁰ Natchez remained the capital only until 1821, when the legislature voted to relocate, first to Columbia, then to Monticello, and finally, in 1822, to Jackson, which was laid out that same year.¹⁴¹

The cotton economy of Natchez continued to expand during statehood. In 1822, newly arrived attorney John Quitman wrote his father, "No part of the United States holds out better prospects for a young lawyer...[The planters] live profusely; drink costly Port, Madeira, and sherry, after the English fashion, and are exceedingly hospitable. Cotton planting is the most lucrative business that can be followed. Some of the planters net \$50,000 from a single crop."¹⁴² Joseph Holt Ingraham furnished a firsthand account of the Mississippi mania for cotton planting:

A plantation well stocked with hands, is the *ne plus ultra* of every man's ambition who resides at the South. Young men who come to this country, 'to make money,' soon catch the mania, and nothing less than a broad plantation, waving with the snow white cotton bolls, can fill their mental vision.... Hence, the great number of planters and the few professional men of long or eminent standing in their several professions. In such a state of things no men grow old or gray in their profession if at all successful....

¹³⁹ James, 110.

¹⁴⁰ Texada Site File, chain of title, HNF; *Natchez Daily Courier*, March 7 and 8, 1856.

¹⁴¹ James, 114.

¹⁴² Katharine M. Jones, *The Plantation South* (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1957), 235-36.

Physicians make money much more rapidly than lawyers, and sooner retire from practice and assume the planter. They, however, retain their titles, so that medico-planters are now numerous, far out-numbering the regular practitioners, who have not yet climbed high enough up the wall to leap down into a cotton field on the other side. Ministers, who constitute the third item of the diploma'd triad, are not free from the universal mania....

Cotton and negroes are the constant theme—the ever harped upon, never worn out subject of conversation among all classes.... Not till every acre is purchased and cultivated—not till Mississippi becomes one vast cotton field, will this mania, which has entered into the very marrow, bone and sinew of a Mississippian's system, pass away. And not then, till the lands become exhausted and wholly unfit for farther cultivation....¹⁴³

What northerners heard about planters in the South from letters and travel accounts during the late territorial and early statehood periods was well known by the mid-1830s. Ingraham summed up the position of the Natchez planter in the national economy: "Among northerners, southern planters are reputed wealthy. This idea is not far from correct—as a class they are so; perhaps more so than any other body of men in America.... Incomes of twenty thousand dollars are common here. Several individuals possess incomes of from forty to fifty thousand dollars, and live in a style commensurate with their wealth."¹⁴⁴

As the cotton economy expanded, so did the realm of the Natchez cotton planters. During the territorial period, the planters had moved across the river to the rich flatlands of Louisiana; during the antebellum statehood period, they began to focus their attention on the fertile flatlands of the Mississippi Delta, the flood-enriched fertile plain stretching from Vicksburg to Memphis and bordered by the Mississippi River on the west and the Yazoo River on the east. Ingraham noted in the 1830s: "Planters, who have exhausted their old lands in this vicinity, are settling and removing to these new lands, which will soon become the richest cotton growing part of Mississippi. Parents do not now think of settling their children on plantations near Natchez, but purchase for them in the upper part of the state."¹⁴⁵ Eventually, the planters expanded their planting activities to east Texas and Arkansas.

During the 1830s, a new strain of cotton increased production. In 1833, Rush Nutt introduced Petit Gulf cotton to Natchez. Nutt developed the seed on his Laurel Hill Plantation, located near Petit Gulf, later known as Rodney, in Jefferson County. The Petit Gulf seed produced a long staple cotton that was easily picked, had a greater yield than any other cotton, and was not subject to rot.¹⁴⁶ Historians disagree about who

¹⁴³ Ingraham, 2:84–86.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:89–91.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:95.

¹⁴⁶ James, 156.

brought the cotton seed that produced Petit Gulf cotton to Mississippi, although all seem to acknowledge that it was a Mexican strain of cotton. Nineteenth-century historian B. L. C. Wailes credited the introduction of the Mexican seed to Walter Burling of Natchez, while nineteenth-century historians J. F. H. Claiborne and twentieth-century historian D. Clayton James give the credit primarily to planter Rush Nutt.¹⁴⁷ J. F. H. Claiborne was the nephew of W. C. C. Claiborne, the second governor of the Mississippi Territory and subsequently the governor of Louisiana.¹⁴⁸

Rush Nutt made many contributions to agriculture in Mississippi. According to historian J. F. H. Claiborne and Goodspeed's *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Mississippi*, Nutt studied the cotton gin and "improved it until it reached, in his hands, a perfection beyond which it has not advanced.... He was the first to attach the long flues to the gin-stand with grated floors, to separate the dust and cut fiber or waste cotton from the marketable cotton...and was the first to substitute, in 1830, the steam engine for horse power."¹⁴⁹ Rush Nutt's Laurel Hill Plantation burned in the 1980s, but his son Haller Nutt's octagonal suburban villa residence, Longwood, and plantation house, Winter Quarters, in Tensas Parish, Louisiana, both survive.

The cotton- and slave-based economy created a credit system that may have been unique to the agricultural economy of the South. According to contemporary writer Joseph Ingraham: "The system of credit in this country is peculiar. From new-year's to new-year's is the customary extension of this accommodation, and the first of January, as planters have then usually disposed of their crops, is a season for a general settlement throughout every branch of business."¹⁵⁰ Cotton and credit produced a boom-and-bust economy that was accompanied by speculation, debt, wealth, and occasionally ruin. John McMurrin of Melrose also participated in the credit system. He lent money and borrowed money and once remarked in a letter to his law partner John Quitman that he hoped rumors of difficulties with England were untrue because he had "debts—which are heavy growing out of my purchase last spring in Concordia Parish, altogether on a credit. Such a war would most seriously embarrass, if not sacrifice me, with my debts running at heavy interest."¹⁵¹

The Panic of 1837 interrupted the expanding economy of Natchez, and some planters and businessmen found themselves bankrupt. However, many who were ruined by the Panic had recouped their wealth by the time of the Civil War. Cotton commission merchant

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.; Claiborne, 140–141; B. L. C. Wailes, *Report on the Agriculture and Geology of Mississippi, Embracing a Sketch of the Social and Natural History of the State* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, and Co., for E. Barksdale, State Printer, 1854), 143.

¹⁴⁸ Claiborne, iv.

¹⁴⁹ Claiborne, 141 and *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Mississippi*, 2:519.

¹⁵⁰ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs*, 2:93.

¹⁵¹ John T. McMurrin to John Quitman, February 28, 1856, Quitman Papers, Subseries I.1, Folder 87, Southern Folklife and Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC [Hereafter cited as SHC/UNC], transcript in History Files, Natchez National Historical Park [Hereafter cited as NATC].

and planter Frederick Stanton was bankrupt by 1840, but rebounded to build the city's most palatial townhouse, Stanton Hall, in 1857.¹⁵²

In the aftermath of the Panic of 1837, a tornado struck Natchez in 1840. One of the most devastating tornadoes in American history, it killed approximately 300 people, many of whom were passengers on steamboats docked at Natchez Under-the-Hill.¹⁵³ Natchez spent the decade of the 1840s rebuilding and repairing the damage. When Englishman Charles Lyell visited Natchez in 1848, he could still see evidence of the tornado's destruction and remarked that it had "checked the progress of Natchez."¹⁵⁴

The steamboat assumed a greater role in marketing cotton during the antebellum statehood period as the power, size, and range of the boats increased. Actor Tyrone Power, ancestor of this century's movie star, described seeing "one monster come groaning down the stream, looking like a huge cotton-bale on fire. Not a portion of the vessel remained above water, that could be seen, excepting the ends of the chimneys; the hull and all else was hidden by the cotton-bags, piled on each other, tier over tier, like bricks."¹⁵⁵ The steamboat also increased the sophistication of Natchez planters, because it made it easier to travel up and down the Mississippi River and to northeastern taste centers.

Natchez failed in the 1830s to establish railroad connections. A railroad venture headed by John Quitman succeeded in building only about twenty-five miles of railroad before going bankrupt in 1840.¹⁵⁶ Natchez remained without railroad connections until after the Civil War. By 1860, this failure had allowed nearby Vicksburg, which was both a river port and railroad center, to surpass Natchez in commercial importance.¹⁵⁷

Dependence on slave labor also rose with the expanding cotton economy. As the need increased and abolitionist sentiment grew in the North, planters became increasingly defensive about slavery. During the early statehood period, many Natchez politicians and wealthy planters still admitted the evils of slavery, as they had in the colonial and territorial periods. In 1818, George Poindexter noted that slavery for Mississippians was "not a matter of choice.... We found them here, and we are obliged to maintain and employ them. It would be a blessing could we get rid of them; but the wisest and best men among us have not been able to devise a plan for doing it."¹⁵⁸ In 1828, Governor Gerard Brandon of Adams County stated, "Slavery is an evil at best...."¹⁵⁹ Expressions of such sentiments became increasingly rare during succeeding decades.

¹⁵² Stanton Hall Site File, photocopy of undated newspaper legal notice, HNF.

¹⁵³ *Mississippi Free Trader and Natchez Gazette Extra Edition*, May 8, 1840.

¹⁵⁴ Sir Charles Lyell, F. R. S., *A Second Visit to the United States of America* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1850), 2:198-199.

¹⁵⁵ Tyrone Power, Esq., *Impressions of America: During the Years 1833, 1834, and 1835* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1836), 125.

¹⁵⁶ James, 191-192.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 190 and 212-213.

¹⁵⁸ Sydnor, *Slavery in Mississippi*, 239.

¹⁵⁹ Claiborne, 386.

By the time of the Civil War, many white Southerners had become increasingly defensive of the institution, often in response to attacks on the South by abolitionist literature in the North. Dr. William H. Holcombe, who practiced medicine in Natchez in the 1850s, wrote that "Northern books pamphlets & newspapers exasperated instead of enlightened the South."¹⁶⁰ He also wrote a defense of slavery that included a suggestion that slavery was a necessary passage from hunter life to agricultural life and cited the Hebrews, Greeks, and other cultures as examples.¹⁶¹ (See also Chapter 5.)

In 1831, a group of Natchez planters organized the Mississippi Colonization Society. The group was affiliated with the American Colonization Society, which sponsored the formation of the country of Liberia on the west coast of Africa. Stephen Duncan, John Ker, and James Railey of Adams County also served as officers of the national organization. Although the charters of both the national organization and the Mississippi chapter expressed as their purpose the resettlement of free African Americans in Africa, the Natchez organizers of the Mississippi Colonization Society seemed more focused on using Liberia as a vehicle to free slaves.¹⁶² Before its demise in the early 1840s, the Mississippi Colonization Society had relocated 571 Mississippi African Americans to Liberia. The Mississippi Colonization Society ceased to exist after the Mississippi legislature enacted a law in 1842, forbidding the manumission of slaves by will, even if conditional on the slave leaving the state forever. The organization also became increasingly unpopular on the local level as abolition fever mounted in the North.¹⁶³

3.2 Architecture

Natchez is famous among America's historic cities for its wealth of architecturally significant buildings and grand interiors that have been preserved as evidence of the opulent life of the city's planting society during the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century. Few Southern towns have produced, or imported, and then preserved such a rich flowering of architecture and decorative arts. This rich flowering is remarkable, since the town numbered about 6,600 people on the eve of the Civil War.¹⁶⁴ However, it is understandable when one considers that Natchez was one of the richest towns per capita in the United States at the time.

Settlement increased with statehood, and Mississippi, like the rest of the United States, began to demonstrate greater sophistication in architecture. The physical appearance of Natchez during the antebellum period is documented in two landscape paintings of the city. These paintings support Joseph Holt Ingraham's 1835 description of the city's beauty:

¹⁶⁰ William H. Holcombe, autobiography and diary, SHC/UNC, photocopy of typescript, HNF, 164.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁶² Sydnor, 206-211.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 216-217, 237.

¹⁶⁴ James, 161.

To the west, the eye travels over the majestic breadth of the river, here a mile wide.... Turning from this scene of grandeur and beauty to the east, Natchez, mantled with rich green foliage like a garment, with its handsome structures and fine avenues, here a dome and there a tower, lies immediately before me.... The front, or first parallel street is laid out about one hundred yards back from the verge of the bluff, leaving a noble green esplanade along the front of the city, which not only adds to its beauty, but is highly useful as a promenade and parade ground...¹⁶⁵

During the early statehood period, naturalist John James Audubon was one of the many itinerant artists who came to Natchez in search of work. Audubon lived in Natchez in the early 1820s while creating his landmark publication *Birds of America*.¹⁶⁶ Audubon taught drawing at Elizabeth Female Academy in nearby Washington, Mississippi, and enrolled his two sons as students at Jefferson College.¹⁶⁷ Audubon painted a landscape of Natchez (Fig. 17) that may have been his earliest work in oil, as well as the best representation of the physical appearance of the town during the early statehood period. In December 1822, Audubon recorded in his journal that he was sketching a view of the city of Natchez, and noted that he was learning to paint in oil from an itinerant artist named Stein.¹⁶⁸ The completed landscape was advertised for sale on April 16, 1823.¹⁶⁹ George Malin Davis acquired the painting in the 1870s, and for many years, it hung in Davis's mansion, Melrose.¹⁷⁰ Today it is owned by his descendants.

Two 1856 newspaper articles describing the Audubon landscape help interpret the buildings that are depicted.¹⁷¹ One was Parker's Hotel, the site of the public reception for the Marquis de Lafayette when he visited Natchez in April 1825.¹⁷² Demolished in the 1840 tornado, the hotel ruins provided free African American William Johnson with bricks for building his 1841 townhouse.¹⁷³ The Audubon landscape provides the only representation of the great mansion, Clifton, destroyed during the Civil War. Texada, Holly Hedges, the Adams County Courthouse, the jail, and Trinity Episcopal Church are all visible, while in the foreground of the painting is the brick kiln for the construction of Rosalie.

¹⁶⁵ Ingraham, 2:22-24.

¹⁶⁶ Frances Hobart Herrick, *Audubon the Naturalist: A History of his Life and Time* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1968).

¹⁶⁷ Lucy Audubon, *The Life of John James Audubon: The Naturalist* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1894), 91; William T. Blain, *Education in the Old Southwest: A History of Jefferson College, Washington, Mississippi* (Washington, Mississippi: Friends of Jefferson College, 1976), 93

¹⁶⁸ Lucy Audubon, 93.

¹⁶⁹ *Mississippi State Gazette*, April 16, 1823.

¹⁷⁰ Audubon landscape of Natchez, research file, HNF, and *Natchez Bi-Weekly New Era*, March 14, 1881.

¹⁷¹ *Natchez Daily Courier*, March 7 and 8, 1856.

¹⁷² *Natchez Mississippi State Gazette*, April 23, 1825.

¹⁷³ William Ranson Hogan and Edwin Adams Davis, *William Johnson's Natchez: The Ante-Bellum Diary of a Free Negro* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 281, 283, 284.

Kentucky artist Matthew Jouett also lived briefly in Natchez during the 1820s. While in Natchez, Jouett painted portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Turner, their daughter Mary Louisa (later McMurren), and Edward Turner's daughter by his first marriage, Theodosia Griffith.¹⁷⁴ Another Kentucky artist, Joseph Bush, also worked in Natchez intermittently from about 1818 until just before the Civil War. Examples of Bush's work in Natchez include portraits of Grace Mansfield Lintot, James Surget, Catherine Surget Bingaman, and Robert Young Wood.¹⁷⁵

Other noted artists who worked in Natchez during the statehood period include George Caleb Bingham, who painted portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Cyrus Marsh, and James Reid Lambdin, whose brother Samuel Lambdin became a resident of Natchez and married a member of the locally prominent Bisland family. James Reid Lambdin painted a portrait of General Zachary Taylor for John and Mary Louisa McMurren. According to Lambdin, the Taylor portrait was painted in Baton Rouge. This portrait hung in Melrose until the house was sold in 1976. Lambdin also painted portraits of members of the Bisland, Beltzhoover, and Stanton families.¹⁷⁶

A second landscape of Natchez (Fig. 18) was drawn in 1835 by nineteen-year-old artist James Tooley, a native of Natchez.¹⁷⁷ Tooley was the first native-born artist in Mississippi to achieve a national reputation. Tooley studied in Philadelphia under Thomas Sulley, who became the subject of one of his miniatures. Tooley became a member of the established art community in Philadelphia, where the famed Auguste Edouart cut his portrait silhouette in 1843. Edouart cut a second silhouette of Tooley in Natchez in 1844, shortly before Tooley's death at 28. Dominant features of the Tooley landscape are the First Presbyterian Church (1828-30) and Rosalie (1823).¹⁷⁸

An 1841 perspective pencil drawing of downtown Natchez by planter and folk artist John Miller also provides information about the appearance of downtown Natchez during the antebellum period. This pencil drawing depicts the First Presbyterian Church without its steeple, which was destroyed in the 1840 tornado and not rebuilt until 1842.¹⁷⁹ Other information about the physical character of antebellum Natchez is found in surveys, deed and partition maps, drawings of individual buildings and street scenes, perspective views dating to the 1850s and 1860s and published in periodicals like *Harper's*, and numerous drawings (Fig. 19) of Natchez Under-the-Hill, the Mississippi River, and the City of Natchez as seen from the river.

¹⁷⁴ Patti Carr Black, "Arts and Artists in Mississippi, 1720-1995," draft manuscript, typescript, HNF, 67.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 75-80.

¹⁷⁷ *Natchez Mississippi Free Trader*, August 28, 1844.

¹⁷⁸ J. Julian Chisolm, *History of the First Presbyterian Church of Natchez, Mississippi* (Natchez: McDonald's Printers and Publishers, 1972), 27.

¹⁷⁹ John Miller Research File, 1841 sketch of Natchez, photocopy, HNF.

3.3 The Antebellum Natchez Villa

The establishment of suburban villas was another significant development in Natchez during the antebellum period and may have been based on the Indian settlement pattern adopted by the French and maintained by the English and Spanish. The concept of a rural retreat from the city and its commercial pursuits was an ideal of the cultured elite that appeared as early as Roman times. The classical Roman villa form had been revived by Andrea Palladio in the sixteenth century and emulated in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Frederick Doveton Nichols noted "Palladio took the large Italian farm, with its many scattered buildings, and unified the composition (in the process creating a hierarchy of spaces), making the organization appealing to the following generations of country gentlemen of Europe and America."¹⁸⁰

Drayton Hall (1740) in South Carolina and Mount Airy (1758) in Virginia were early examples of Palladian-inspired architecture in the U. S. The use of a high piano nobile to heighten the facade, a sheltering portico, and a wide center hall on the main floor of the house, as well as the separation of utilitarian functions such as the kitchen into distinct, symmetrically arranged buildings, were all adaptations to the hot climate of Italy, and it is not surprising that the Palladian villa was more fully developed in the southern parts of the U. S. than in the north. The term villa was used in the mid-nineteenth century to describe the suburban residences of Natchez. Frederick Law Olmsted noted: "Within three miles of the town the country is entirely occupied by houses and grounds of a villa character."¹⁸¹

Natchez would have withered had the planters moved their families away from Natchez to the sites of their planting activities, but they generally preferred the convenience of life near town to life on the plantation. The planters also believed that lowland areas were prone to yellow fever and other diseases. Consequently, most of the more prosperous planters established their families in grand townhouses like Stanton Hall and Choctaw, or in suburban villa estates like Melrose and Longwood on the outskirts of Natchez. These villas combined the convenience of a townhouse location with the beauty and serenity of a country estate. Residing on a suburban villa estate enabled planting families to enjoy the benefits of town life in a pastoral setting, free from the isolation of plantation life and the dirt and noise of city life, and far from the cotton fields that supported them.

Natchez planters were far more avant-garde with their home furnishings than with the architecture that housed them. Furnishings were portable, and planters could easily place orders in the Northeast, in New Orleans, or from local dealers who advertised the latest, most fashionable wares. The architecture was more rooted in time and place, and incorporated vernacular traditions developed in response to the hot climate. The planters were also dependent upon local master builders, who were grounded in those same traditions.

¹⁸⁰ Frederick Doveton Nichols, "Palladio's Influence on American Architecture," *Palladio in America* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications Inc., 1978), 101.

¹⁸¹ Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Back Country* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1863), 35.

Before the Civil War, few Americans considered themselves to be professional architects in the sense that they designed buildings for others to construct. Most early American buildings were the products of master builders who both designed buildings and oversaw their construction and chose to define themselves as simply carpenters, house carpenters, master carpenters, or master builders. No Natchez planter is documented to have consulted an out-of-town architect until 1859, when Samuel Lambdin hired Howard and Diettel of New Orleans to design Edgewood and Haller Nutt engaged Samuel Sloan of Philadelphia to adapt a previously published design for Nutt's residence in Natchez.¹⁸² To the 1850 census-taker, Jacob Byers, builder of Melrose, gave his profession as "carpenter," as did other Natchez designer/builders. James Hardie, Natchez's most prolific nineteenth-century architect and builder, listed himself as a carpenter in the 1850 census, though his 1889 obituary later described him as an "eminent architect and builder."¹⁸³

The local Natchez architect/builders, like their counterparts throughout America, relied heavily on published pattern books. In 1762, James Stuart and Nicholas Revett published the first volume of their *Antiquities of Athens*, which, along with publications by Vitruvius and Palladio, became the most influential books in the history of architecture.¹⁸⁴ Stuart and Revett inspired other designers, who published pattern books based on their work. In designing Auburn (1812), discussed in Section 2, Levi Weeks based elements on Salmon's *Palladio Londonensis*, published in 1734, William Paine's *Builder's Companion*, published in 1758, and Paine's *British Palladio*, published in 1786.¹⁸⁵

In the early nineteenth century, pattern books published by American designers Asher Benjamin, Minard Lafever, and others appeared, and Natchez builders looked to them to keep up with changing architectural tastes. In 1818, John and Jane [Surget] White built Arlington, whose portico was undoubtedly inspired by Auburn and its fanlight probably derived from designs of Asher Benjamin. A National Historic Landmark, Arlington apparently introduced a floor plan with side stair hall that was repeated later in other Natchez mansions. The same year, John Perkins built The Briars (Fig. 20), the quintessential example of a planter's cottage of the Lower Mississippi Valley. Although The Briars followed the local vernacular in form and plan, no other planter's cottage was ever so elaborately or academically articulated in the Federal style.

About 1821, Samuel Postlethwaite built Clifton, a mansion sited on a rise at the northern end of the public common. Based on the image in Audubon's landscape, Clifton was a two-story mansion with giant-order columns that formed a colonnade across the front. Ingraham described the house in 1835 as "nearly resembling" Rosalie with "its lofty

¹⁸² Edgewood Site File, National Register nomination and photocopy of original specifications, HNF; Ronald and Mary W. Miller, "Longwood," a lecture delivered at the Pilgrimage Garden Club Antiques Forum, November 1994, HNF.

¹⁸³ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, September 11, 1889, 2.

¹⁸⁴ Hugh Morrison, *Early American Architecture: From the First Colonial Settlements to the National Period* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), 569.

¹⁸⁵ Mildred McGee, "Auburn in Natchez," 546-553.

colonnades glancing in the sun—a magnificent garden spreading out around it, luxuriant with foliage—diversified with avenues and terraces, and adorned with grottoes and summer-houses.”¹⁸⁶ The Union army demolished the mansion to construct an earthwork fortification known as Fort McPherson.

In 1823, the giant-order, or two-story-tall, porticoes of Auburn and Arlington were echoed at Rosalie (Fig. 21), a National Historic Landmark. The Rosalie portico combined with other architectural features to produce the first complete form of the “grand mansion” common to Natchez and, to a lesser extent, other areas of the South. As introduced at Rosalie, this form is based on a nearly cubical brick block crowned by a hipped roof with balustrade encircling the apex of the roof. Of the five openings on the front, the center three are sheltered by a portico supported by giant-order columns. The columns are repeated at the rear, where they form a colonnade that extends the full width of the rear elevation.

Three other National Historic Landmark mansions with earlier dates than Rosalie also exhibit the complete form, but as a result of later remodeling. The rear colonnades of Auburn (1812) and Arlington (ca. 1818) were added later, most likely in the 1830s.¹⁸⁷ Monmouth (ca. 1818) received both its giant-order portico and its rear colonnade during an 1850s remodeling.¹⁸⁸ Even Gloucester, which has an unusual single-pile plan with regionally popular rear cabinet rooms, received a variation of the form when a three-bay portico and rear colonnade between the cabinet rooms were later added to the house, again probably in the 1830s.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Ingraham, 2:23.

¹⁸⁷ The ca. 1818 date for Arlington is based on the 1818 acquisition of the property by John Hampton and Jane Surget White (Adams County Deed Book K:346), the 1819 death of John Hampton White from yellow fever (Arlington Site File, National Register nomination, HNF), and the subsequent advertisement for sale of Mrs. White’s “elegant two-story BRICK HOUSE” (*The Natchez Ariel*, December 25, 1825). The addition of rear colonnades to Auburn and Arlington is readily apparent from the physical evidence. The rear colonnades seem to have been added to both houses as part of major renovation work undertaken in the later 1830s or early 1840s after the introduction of the Greek Revival style to Natchez in 1833 with the construction of the Agricultural Bank (most recently Britton and Koontz First National Bank). Auburn has recessed side wings, a two-story brick kitchen building, and a frame billiard hall, all with Greek Revival form and/or detailing. At Arlington, the parlor mantel, the over-door shelves with classical console brackets, the jib doors providing access to the upper level of the colonnaded rear gallery, and the Chinese Chippendale lattice enclosing the lower level of the rear gallery are all typical of the 1830s period. Chinese Chippendale latticework is also a feature of Gloucester’s portico added in the 1830s and the balustrade on the roof of Choctaw, built in 1836. Asher Benjamin included drawings for Chinese Chippendale balustrade panels in his 1830 publication, *The Practical House Carpenter*.

¹⁸⁸ The remodeling and enlargement of Monmouth from 1853-55 is documented in numerous Quitman family letters found in the John A. Quitman Papers, MDAH.

¹⁸⁹ Gloucester was built about 1803 and enlarged in 1807. Visible in the attic of the house are weathered wood shingles beneath the portico that indicate that the house stood in its 1807 enlarged form for quite a few years before the portico was added. The portico and colonnade appear to be part of a major remodeling that occurred in the 1830s after the introduction of the Greek Revival style to Natchez. Other 1830s additions to Gloucester include the insertion of a front cross hall with Grecian

In addition to Melrose, other extant Natchez houses that exhibit the form of the grand Natchez mansion established at Rosalie include Choctaw (1836) (Fig. 22), Belmont (ca. 1838), and Magnolia Hall (ca. 1858).¹⁹⁰ Two nonextant houses, the Harper House and Ashburn, are also documented as exhibiting the characteristic form. The Harper House, which was located on Broadway Street, appears to date to after 1855 and was demolished ca. 1900.¹⁹¹ The suburban villa Ashburn burned in 1872 and was described by its owner as being one of the last great houses constructed before the Civil War.¹⁹² Two Natchez houses completed in 1858, Stanton Hall and nonextant Homewood, exhibit a variation of the form.¹⁹³ At both Stanton Hall and Homewood, the rear colonnade is replaced by a double tier of columns.

The grand Natchez mansion and the planter's cottage with gable roof and front gallery, basic building forms common to Natchez, were dressed in different architectural styles in different periods before the Civil War. Each academic style combined certain distinctive features in a way that is characteristic of its particular period. The Georgian style, which derived from the Italian Renaissance and its emphasis on bold classical details, was popular nationally in the eighteenth century until about 1790. Auburn (1812) exhibits Georgian detailing in the design of its interior millwork, which includes a doorway with swan's neck pediment. The Federal style (also called the Adam style) is characterized by delicacy and lightness. Columns and pilasters are slender and attenuated, and ornament is often geometrical and in low relief. Nationally the Federal style was popular from about 1790 until 1820, but it did not appear in Natchez until about 1800. Both Texada (ca. 1798) and the House on Ellicott Hill (1798-1801) exhibit elements of the Federal style. The Federal style continued in popularity until 1833, when the construction of the Agricultural Bank (later Britton and Koontz) (Fig. 23) introduced the Greek Revival style to Natchez and Mississippi.¹⁹⁴

Classically-inspired architecture had been the norm in the United States since soon after the founding of the colonies. The taste for Greek, rather than Roman, proportions blossomed after the Greek war for independence in 1820, when it was embraced as the

moldings, a Greek Revival marble mantelpiece in the main parlor, and jib doors providing second-story access to the upper level of the portico.

¹⁹⁰ Choctaw's 1836 date is documented in the records of the Andrew Brown sawmill (Andrew Brown Papers) and in the probate papers of the Neibert and Gemmell contracting firm (Adams County Probate Box 70). Belmont's ca. 1838 date is based on stylistic examination and an advertisement for sale with description (*Natchez Courier*, May 3, 1850). Magnolia Hall's 1858 date is based on the acquisition of the property by Thomas Henderson in 1858 (Adams County Deed Book LL:603) and on its deed description as a "new brick dwelling house" when it was sold in 1866 (Deed Book OO:368).

¹⁹¹ *Natchez Historical and Picturesque* (ca. 1900; reprint; Natchez: Myrtle Bank Publishers, 1983), n. p. The bracketed cornice stylistically dates the Harper House to 1855 or later.

¹⁹² Joseph Buck Stratton, Diary, November 29, 1872, LLMVC/LSU, photocopy, HNF.

¹⁹³ The date "1857" appears in plaster relief on the pediment tympanum of Stanton Hall and in the *Natchez Mississippi Free Trader*, April 5, 1858. The 1858 completion of Homewood by Balfour is documented in the Homewood Research File, HNF and in the Andrew Brown Sawmill Records, UM, HNF.

¹⁹⁴ Ingraham, 2:37-38.

“perfect style for expressing the ideals of American democracy.”¹⁹⁵ The relatively straightforward massing, rectilinear forms, and simple details were readily translated into builders’ handbooks and grasped by the average carpenter or mason, while the first generation of architects created sophisticated and varied compositions in the style. The Greek Revival style coincided with the great early-nineteenth-century wave of territorial expansion, and nascent communities from Ohio to Louisiana boasted temple-front churches, homes, and municipal buildings in the decades prior to the Civil War.

Greek Revival buildings tend to be simple rectangular blocks with low-pitched roofs. They usually feature a wide band of trim beneath the cornice that is often enriched with Grecian moldings and sometimes Grecian ornament. Melrose features a bold Grecian cornice that extends around all elevations of the house and incorporates the portico and rear colonnaded gallery as well. The Greek classical orders are expressed on the exterior of Greek Revival houses both as columns and pilasters. The square- or rectangular-sectioned column is particularly indicative of the style. At Melrose, the portico of the facade is supported by round Grecian Doric columns echoed on the front wall by pilasters, but the rear colonnade is composed of tapered rectangular-sectioned Doric columns that are repeated in the balustrade of tapered rectangular-sectioned balusters. The absence of column bases on the columns distinguishes the Grecian Doric from the Roman Doric.

All windows and doors in Greek Revival architecture are trabeated, or follow the principle of post and lintel construction, as distinguished from construction using arches and vaults. The fanlighted arch of the Federal style is replaced by a rectangular transom of the Greek Revival. All exterior and some interior doorways at Melrose feature the rectangular transoms so typical of the Greek Revival style. Doorways and mantel pieces sometimes exhibit an Egyptian influence with architraves that are both shouldered and tapered. This Egyptian influence is seen at Melrose, which features mantel pieces with shouldered and tapered (architraves) in the drawing room, dining room, and parlor. This same influence is seen also in the doorways that open into the first-story service hall leading from the dining room to the rear gallery.

Windows during the Greek Revival period tend to have six-over-six, double-hung sash, and doors usually feature two vertical panels or four panels with Grecian molding profiles. Melrose features six-over-six windows and both two-panel and four-panel door. The two-panel doors are employed in shorter openings like the closet beneath the stair or the door that opens into the basement stair from the rear gallery.

The two principal ornaments of the Grecian style are the anthemion and the Grecian fret. Anthemions are used extensively at Melrose in the design of the cast-iron balustrade of the portico, the dining room punkah, and plaster ceiling medallions.

¹⁹⁵ William H. Pierson, Jr., *American Buildings and Their Architects: The Colonial and Neo-Classical Styles* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1976), 417.

In the Mississippi Valley, the Greek Revival style coincided with the apex of the Cotton Kingdom, and, by the 1830s, a Natchez newspaper noted that “Buildings are going up in every part of the city, carpenters and joiners, painters, &c. have more work than they can accomplish [and] are realizing fortunes.”¹⁹⁶ This building boom lured such architects as William Nichols, James Gallier, James Dakin, and Charles Dakin into the Deep South, and it brought to Natchez a large number of builders who remained long after the boom was over. Maryland provided Natchez with at least two builders during this boom period, John Crothers, who built Dunleith in 1856, and Jacob Byers, who built Melrose.¹⁹⁷

The Greek Revival remained popular until after the Civil War, with at least three extant houses with classical porticos constructed ca. 1870 in that style.¹⁹⁸ Local landmarks of the style include Ravenna (1835) and The Burn (1836), the two earliest residential buildings in that style, as well as D’Evereux (1836), the Commercial Bank and Banker’s House (1838), the front section of Richmond (ca. 1838), Melrose (1847), Dunleith (1856), Stanton Hall (1858), Homewood (1858, no longer standing), and Magnolia Hall (1858). The Commercial Bank and Banker’s House, Melrose, Dunleith, and Stanton Hall are National Historic Landmarks.

Greek Revival buildings built after 1855 tended to be embellished with details reflecting the newly popular Italianate style. Both Stanton Hall and Magnolia Hall exhibit details like brackets and arched windows or door panels. The full-blown Italianate style first appeared in 1855 at Montaigne, a large picturesque cottage, remodeled in 1927 in the neoclassical Revival style. The grandest Italianate houses built in the Natchez area were Edgewood and Llangollen, both dating to about 1859.¹⁹⁹ Two of the most significant examples of the style are The Wigwam and The Towers, both ca. 1859 remodelings of earlier cottage-form houses into Italianate mansions.²⁰⁰ Longwood, a National Historic Landmark and unfinished octagonal castle, features an onion dome evocative of Moorish architecture, but the house’s architectural detailing is Italianate.

The earliest documented example of Gothic Revival architecture in Natchez and the state is St. Mary’s Chapel (dedicated 1839) at Laurel Hill Plantation (established in the 1770s).²⁰¹ The state’s grandest example of Gothic Revival is St. Mary’s Cathedral, built

¹⁹⁶ *Natchez Mississippi Free Trader*, November 27, 1835.

¹⁹⁷ Documentation for John Crothers as the builder of Dunleith is found in *The Natchez Daily Democrat*, January 24, 1886. The birth of Crothers in Maryland is documented in the Population Schedules, Adams County, Mississippi, 1860, 44. Dunleith’s 1856 construction date is documented in the Andrew Brown Day Books, August 4, 1856 and April 29, 1857, UM, photocopy, HNF.

¹⁹⁸ Circa 1870 houses with Greek Revival porticoes include 108 Washington Street, 403 North Union Street, and 112 Martin Luther King Street.

¹⁹⁹ Edgewood Site File, National Register nomination, HNF and Llangollen Research File, photocopy of photograph from the Norman Collection, chain of title, and notes by Otis Trepanier, whose family owned the house when it burned in the early twentieth century, HNF.

²⁰⁰ The Wigwam Site File, chain of title, inspection notes by Mary W. Miller, HNF and The Towers site file, photocopy of advertisement by Henkel and Guild of Cincinnati, HNF.

²⁰¹ Laurel Hill Site File, National Register nomination, HNF.

in 1842. This style was never very popular in Natchez, with residential examples limited to Glenfield on Providence Road, the Pintard House on North Union, and the Angelety House on St. Catherine Street, all three dating from the 1850s.

3.4 Landscape Design and Gardening

Although Natchez was noted during the antebellum statehood period for its grand architecture, most travelers were unimpressed with its gardens. Only the gardens of a few of the plantation houses and suburban estates, such as Clifton and Magnolia Vale, were singled out for description. Joseph Holt Ingraham described Clifton in 1835 as having a garden of “almost unrivaled beauty, and rich in the number of variety of its shrubs and plants.”²⁰² At the same time, he noted the paucity of ornamental gardens in the Natchez area:

There are many private residences, in the vicinity of Natchez whose elegant interiors, contrasting with the neglected grounds about them, suggest the idea of a handsome city residence, accidentally dropped upon a bleak hill, or into the midst of a partially cleared forest, and there remaining, with its noble roof grasped by the arms of an oak, and its windows and columns festooned by the drooping moss, heavily waving in the wind.... Very few of the planters' villas, even within a few miles of Natchez, are adorned with surrounding ornamental shrubbery walks, or any other artificial auxiliaries to the natural scenery, except a few shade trees and a narrow, graveled avenue from the gate to the house. A long avenue of trees, ornamenting and sheltering the approach to a dwelling, is a rare sight in this state, though very frequently seen in Louisiana...and though he [the planter] may inhabit a building that would grace an English park, the grounds and scenery about it...are suffered to remain in their pristine rudeness.²⁰³

A New Englander by birth, Ingraham contrasted the gardens of the South to those of the North, and concluded that Southerners seemed to enjoy the natural garden paradise of the region without “insinuating, through the cultivation of flowers, that nature has left her work imperfect.”²⁰⁴

Frederick Law Olmsted the great landscape architect and designer of New York's Central Park, visited Natchez in 1860 and noted that the grounds of the villas surrounding Natchez exhibited, “paltry taste, with miniature terraces, and trees and shrubs planted and trimmed with no regard to architectural and landscape considerations.”²⁰⁵ Although failing to find many lavish gardens, travelers to Natchez consistently noted the “garden

²⁰² Ingraham, 1:119.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 100-102.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 114.

²⁰⁵ Olmsted, 35.

paradise” of its natural beauty and compared the topography and landscape with the countryside of England.²⁰⁶

By 1859, when T. K. Wharton visited Natchez, his impression was that the picturesque character of the landscape pervaded the city: “Noble mansions everywhere, surrounded by gardens, conservatories, lawns, and woodlands, quite clear of undergrowth, a carpet of Bermuda grass, clean and well-kept.”²⁰⁷ That year, Edgewood was designed by New Orleans architects Howard & Diettel for the Lambdin family in the Italianate style promoted by A. J. Downing. This house and landscape, as well as that of the grand Italianate cottage, Montaigne, built in 1855, represented the picturesque style popular in the United States during the decades prior to the Civil War, an aesthetic that married architecture and landscape. While so many of the Natchez villas were built in the classical vocabularies of the Federal and Greek Revival styles, the building and landscape of Edgewood and Montaigne combined to make a statement about the romanticism and naturalism of the picturesque.

This is not surprising because, after the publication of Downing’s *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* in 1841 and his subsequent works on cottage residences and rural architecture, the popularity of the picturesque spread quickly. Starting in the Hudson River Valley, it migrated from the Eastern Seaboard to sections of the South where large numbers of Union sympathizers lived, such as Natchez. The influence of Downing on the Natchez gentry is documented in the original editions of his books that can still be found in old library collections in Natchez and in a letter written to the Natchez newspaper by Charles Dahlgren, whose ca. 1856 Gothic Revival outbuildings at Dunleith were inspired by Downing.²⁰⁸

3.5 Decorative Arts

Despite the remote location of Natchez, the planters’ taste for interior decoration was up-to-date. Knowledge of popular taste was transmitted to Natchez in several ways: (1) through firsthand inspection of homes, hotels, and furniture showrooms in taste centers like New York and Philadelphia, (2) through exhibitions like the New York Crystal Palace of 1853, and (3) through periodicals like *Godey’s Ladies Book*. The newly furnished parlor of Lansdowne in Natchez was as fashionably decorated in 1854 as a New York parlor pictured the same year in a periodical.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Adams Hodgson, *Remarks During a Journey Through North America* (New York: Samuel Whiting, 1823), 168 and William Howard Russell, *My Diary: North and South* (Boston: T.O.H.P. Burnham, 1863), 291.

²⁰⁷ Diary of Thomas K. Wharton, August 23, 1859, HNF.

²⁰⁸ *Natchez Daily Democrat*, January 24, 1886. The Historic Natchez Foundation owns a first edition of Downing’s *Architecture of Country Houses* from the John P. Walworth library collection.

²⁰⁹ The parlor drawing published on November 11, 1854 in *Gleason’s Pictorial Drawing Room Companion* is illustrated in *The American Heritage History of American Antiques*, ed. Marshall B. Davidson (n.p.: American Heritage Publishing Company, Inc., 1968), 254.

The reputation of Natchez and its planters for opulent living, noted during the late colonial period and firmly established during the territorial period, expanded during the antebellum statehood period in direct proportion to their growing wealth. In 1840, J. S. Buckingham remarked that his lectures did not have the large audiences of New Orleans and Mobile, but that the audience was “the most elegant, both in dress, appearance, and ease and polish of manners, that I had yet seen in the United States.”²¹⁰

En route to Natchez, Frederick Law Olmsted, who later became a great landscape architect, asked a fellow traveler, familiar with Natchez, if the planters lived on their plantations and was told, “Why a good many of them has two or three plantations, but they don’t often live on any of them. Must have ice for their wine, you see, or they’d die, and so they have to live in Natchez or New Orleans.”²¹¹ “And in summer they go up into Kentucky, do they not?” Olmsted asked. The traveler replied:

No, sir; They go North, to New York, and Newport, and Saratoga, and Cape May, and Seneca Lake—somewhere that they can display themselves worse than they do here; Kentucky is no place for that. That’s the sort of people, sir, all the way from here to Natchez, and all round Natchez, too. You can know their children as far off as you can see them—young swell-heads! You’ll take note of them in Natchez. Why, you can tell them by their walk. They sort of throw out their legs as if they hadn’t got strength enough to lift them and put them down in any particular place. They do want so bad to look as if they weren’t made of the same clay as the rest of God’s creation.²¹²

Olmsted’s reference to the planters summering at fashionable Northeastern watering places is supported in the correspondence of planting families. About 1859, Alice Austen McMurrin of Melrose, wrote her father from Newport and noted that it seemed to her like “all Natchez is here, at least almost all of our friends & acquaintances.”²¹³

The Natchez planters also traveled to centers of finance and taste like Philadelphia and New York, often combining business with pleasure trips to resorts. The planters diversified their income by investing in Northern railroads, banks, and business enterprises. Letters from the McMurrins to the Quitman family document visits to Philadelphia, New York, Newport, and other northern cities on a single journey to the North. While in the North, members of Natchez planting society bought furnishings for their homes from northern retailers. McMurrin family correspondence documents the purchase of Venetian blinds from a Philadelphia supplier, and Dr. John Carmichael

²¹⁰ James S. Buckingham, *The Slave States of America* (London, 1842), 2:447-455.

²¹¹ Olmsted, 27-30.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Alice Austen McMurrin to Mr. George Austen, Newport, August 16, no year, Addison Papers, Private Collection, transcript, NATC.

Jenkins of Elgin Plantation near Natchez recorded shopping at lighting manufacturer Cornelius and Company in Philadelphia.²¹⁴

Where during the territorial and early statehood periods itinerant portrait artists had once come to Natchez, the Natchez nabobs later soon began to New York, Philadelphia, and later New Orleans to have their portraits painted. William Edward West, who came to Natchez during the territorial period, later painted portraits of Edward and Eliza Turner during a visit to New York.²¹⁵ Members of the Wilkins and Dunbar families of Natchez were painted by Thomas Sully in Philadelphia.²¹⁶

By the 1850s, many of the nabobs were having their portraits painted by New Orleans artists. Frederick and Huldah Stanton of Stanton Hall were painted in New Orleans by Alenson G. Powers.²¹⁷ New Orleans artist Justin Sancon painted portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Haller Nutt and their Winter Quarters Plantation.²¹⁸ Presumably, some New Orleans artists probably painted Natchez subjects both in Natchez and in their studios in New Orleans.

In the early 1850s, Louis Bahin (1813-1857) moved to Natchez, where he spent the remainder of his life.²¹⁹ He painted portraits of some of the Natchez nabobs, including Mr. and Mrs. William St. John Elliott of D'Evereux.²²⁰ The City of Natchez commissioned Bahin to paint a nearly life-size portrait of John A. Quitman, which hung for many years in Memorial Hall. Bahin also is one of the few Mississippi artists whose work includes landscapes and historical and genre scenes. One of his grandest landscapes depicts Natchez Under-the-Hill and is titled, *Sunset on the Mississippi*.²²¹

Sculptors who worked in antebellum Natchez are few in number. The most outstanding was Edwin Lyon (1806-53), who was born in England and worked in Natchez from 1844 until 1853. Lyon was probably the only Natchez sculptor who produced portrait busts as well as tombstones. His grandest work is probably the signed and dated (1848), life-size bust of General Zachary Taylor on display at Auburn in Natchez.²²² Other sculptors or

²¹⁴ John T. McMurrin to John Quitman, January 30, 1850, Quitman Papers, Z66, Box 3, Folder 1, MDAH, transcript, NATC and John Carmichael Jenkins, diary, typescript, Alma K. Carpenter, The Elms, Natchez.

²¹⁵ Black, 65.

²¹⁶ Vera Speakes, comp., *Mississippi Portraiture* (Waynesboro, MS: News Publishing Company, 1987), 98 and 276.

²¹⁷ Mary W. Miller to Kate Don Adams, February 12, 1985, Stanton Hall Site File, HNF.

²¹⁸ Black, 115.

²¹⁹ Black 112-113.

²²⁰ The portraits of Mr. and Mrs. William St. John Elliot are displayed at D'Evereux in Natchez.

²²¹ Louis Bahin's *Sunset on the Mississippi* is displayed at Auburn in Natchez.

²²² H. Parrott Bacot and Bethany B. Lambdin, "Edwin Lyon, an Anglo-American Sculptor in the Lower Mississippi River Valley," *The Magazine Antiques* 91 (March 1977), 554-559.

marble workers include Thomas Dixon and Robert Rawes, both of whom have documented tombstones in the Natchez City Cemetery.²²³

Cabinetmakers decreased in number in Natchez after the inauguration of steamboat travel on the Mississippi River. Most cabinetmakers during the statehood period probably spent more time assembling manufactured furniture parts, making caskets, and building custom bookcases than making traditional furniture forms. Robert Stewart, who opened a cabinetmaking business in Natchez in 1820, was the preeminent cabinetmaker and furniture retailer in Natchez during the statehood period.²²⁴ A worktable signed by Stewart and said to be original to Melrose is today owned by a McMurrin descendant.²²⁵ Whether Robert Stewart actually made the table or simply retailed it is unknown. An 1851 advertisement for the firm of Stewart and Burns notes that the firm will make furniture to order on the shortest notice, includes a list of furniture on hand, and advertises that the firm is constantly receiving new supplies from New York.²²⁶ New Orleans retailer Prudent Mallard marked not only imported furniture as “manufactured by P. Mallard” but also Old Paris porcelain.²²⁷

Travel to the North by Natchez planting families often involved enrolling sons and daughters in Eastern schools or paying them visits. McMurrin family correspondence documents a trip to New Jersey to visit John McMurrin Jr. at Princeton.²²⁸ Local tradition maintains that the Andrew Wilson family of Rosalie bought their Belter parlor suite from A. T. Stewart’s store in New York, where their daughter was attending school.²²⁹ Many Natchez planting families also enjoyed trips to Europe. The Surgets (Clifton), the Boyds (Arlington), the McMurrins (Melrose), and several others made the “Grand Tour.”²³⁰

Natchez today has one of America’s most significant collections of mid-nineteenth-century decorative arts. This collection exists today because the city’s planting families were wealthy enough in the mid-nineteenth century to acquire the best that was available,

²²³ Record of Estates 1849-1908, Office of the Chancery Clerk, 177; *The Mississippi Free Trader*, 2 December 1857; and Natchez City Cemetery, tombstones of Elizabeth Rawes (plat 2), Martha Chloe Fletcher (plat 2), and Ruthanna Henry (plat 1).

²²⁴ *The Mississippi State Gazette*, 19 February 1820.

²²⁵ Carol Petravage, National Park Service, Division of Historic Furnishings, Harpers Ferry Center, has inspected the table.

²²⁶ *Mississippi Free Trader*, 11 October 1851.

²²⁷ An inlaid worktable at Lansdowne in Natchez that is considered to be French is labeled “Manufactured by P. Mallard.” An Old Paris vase at Glen Auburn in Natchez bears a sticker that identifies the manufacturer as P. Mallard. Retailers frequently affixed such labels to products that they retailed.

²²⁸ Mary Louisa McMurrin to Frances Conner, September 12, 1851, Conner Papers, Series 1, Folder 2:31, LLMVC/LSU, transcript, NATC.

²²⁹ The Belter parlor suite at Rosalie is so well known among scholars and collectors that Belter furniture with the same pattern of carving is said to have the Rosalie pattern.

²³⁰ General Thomas Kilby Smith to his wife, July 19, 1863, Huntington Library, Pasadena California, photocopy of typescript, Clifton Research File, HNF; and Boyd passport, Arlington Collection, Arlington, Natchez; and Mary McMurrin to Fannie Conner, June 9, 1854, Conner Papers, Series 1, Folder 2.21, LLMVC/LSU, transcript, NATC.

and their descendants were too poor to replace it. The opulence of Natchez before the Civil War simply could not be matched by succeeding generations, and they revered these grand reminders of life before the war. Thus, to succeeding generations fell the task of caring for and living with the taste of their ancestors, even when that taste was long out of fashion. Melrose is perhaps the only great Natchez house with original decorative arts that were preserved by owners who consciously sought to preserve the past while they had the financial means to do otherwise.

Four types of resources provide the best opportunity for understanding the decorative arts history of Natchez: houses that have a long history of single-family ownership, houses that retain significant collections of original decorative arts, historic photographs of Natchez interiors, and decorative arts collections of Natchez residents who collected locally or were descended from wealthy antebellum families.

Five Natchez houses with a long history of family ownership provide the best laboratories for studying the mid-nineteenth-century Natchez interior: Richmond, Lansdowne, Greenleaves, Rosalie, and Melrose. The Levin R. Marshall family acquired Richmond in 1832 and more than doubled its size before the Civil War. Their descendants still occupy the house today. George Marshall, the son of Levin R. Marshall, and his wife, Charlotte, built Lansdowne in 1853. It is today owned by their great-grandchildren. The George Koontz family bought Greenleaves in 1849, and it too has remained in the family. Rosalie is today owned by the Daughters of the American Revolution, but it was acquired with its historic furnishings from descendants of the Wilson family, who bought the house in 1858. Melrose enjoyed the stability of a century's ownership by the Davis/Kelly family, who acquired the house in 1865 with many of its original furnishings and sold it in 1976 with most of the furnishings intact. A subsequent owner sold Melrose, with the majority of what was acquired from the Kelly family, to the National Park Service in 1990.

Just as important as the five houses of long family ownership are Arlington and Stanton Hall. Arlington has changed hands only a few times since the Civil War and each time was sold with its original furnishings. Today it retains at least eighty-five percent of its original antebellum interior decorative arts and has been owned by the same family for almost three-quarters of a century. The original contents are documented in an inventory of the house taken at the death of S. S. Boyd, its antebellum owner. The present owners have also been collectors who focused on acquiring articles with a Natchez history. They have been careful to note what was original and what was added. A significant collection of historic interior photographs of Arlington (Fig. 24) also survives.

Stanton Hall has changed hands several times and is now a garden club headquarters, but it has a significant collection of original furnishings, including gasoliers, mirrors, and furniture donated by Stanton family members. More important, perhaps, are the series of historic photographs of its triple parlors and the documentation for the furnishings, including an 1859 inventory, in the probate papers of Frederick Stanton. Stanton died within months of completing the house, and bills for furnishings are also included in his probate papers.

Local Stanton family descendants have important collections of the house's original furnishings, and Stanton Hall also has a large number of furnishings that are documented as having belonged to other houses. For example, an etagere in the parlor was once at Montaigne, and a second-story bed, armoire, and dresser came from D'Evereux.

Several Natchez houses retain collections of original furnishings or photographs and written descriptions that help document their interiors. Some of Auburn's original furnishings are in the house, but most are scattered throughout the town. The city of Natchez acquired Auburn in 1911 and shortly afterward sold the contents at a public auction. Two matching American empire chests of drawers with stenciled decoration are today at Elms Court, and an elaborately carved Rococo Revival center table is at The Elms. The Kellys at Melrose also apparently attended the auction, since family tradition attributes a mirrored dresser to Auburn. Photographs of Auburn's nineteenth-century interior survive, and postbellum letters from former slaves to the house's absentee owner document interior changes after the Civil War.

Windows in the houses of the Natchez planters were richly draped in French fabrics that hung with huge tassels from stamped brass or gilt gesso cornices, and were held back by tie-backs of stamped brass and glass. Notices of the arrival of shipments of French fabrics to Natchez and New Orleans dealers appear frequently in the local newspaper. The Melrose parlor has the matching gilt cornices that are seen also in houses like Lansdowne, Greenleaves, and Richmond. Its original parlor curtains, made of silk broccatelle, still hang at the windows along with the original tassels. The curtain tie-backs are a combination of stamped brass and glass, and are similar to the original tie-backs at Arlington. Painted window shades and venetian blinds were also popular in the Natchez interior. Original painted shades can be found at The Elms and Roseland, and the 1859 inventory of Frederick Stanton's estate documents window shades at Stanton Hall. The venetian blinds at Melrose are documented by John T. McMurrin, who wrote a letter to John Quitman saying that they were purchased at B. J. Wilhams in Philadelphia and were green with silk and worsted tape. Original venetian blinds and cornices survive at Roseland.

By the end of the 1850s, every well-to-do Natchez planter had a suite of Rococo Revival parlor furniture. The restraint of the two Melrose parlor suites (one in the drawing room and the other currently scattered throughout the house) indicates that they were probably acquired in the late 1840s rather than the 1850s. The parlor sets bought for Rosalie and Stanton Hall about 1858 are much more exuberant. Most likely the parlor suites were purchased in New York or Philadelphia, or from dealers in Natchez or New Orleans who retailed Northeastern furnishings. McMurrin and Quitman family correspondence documents purchases in all three locations, as well as in Europe.²³¹

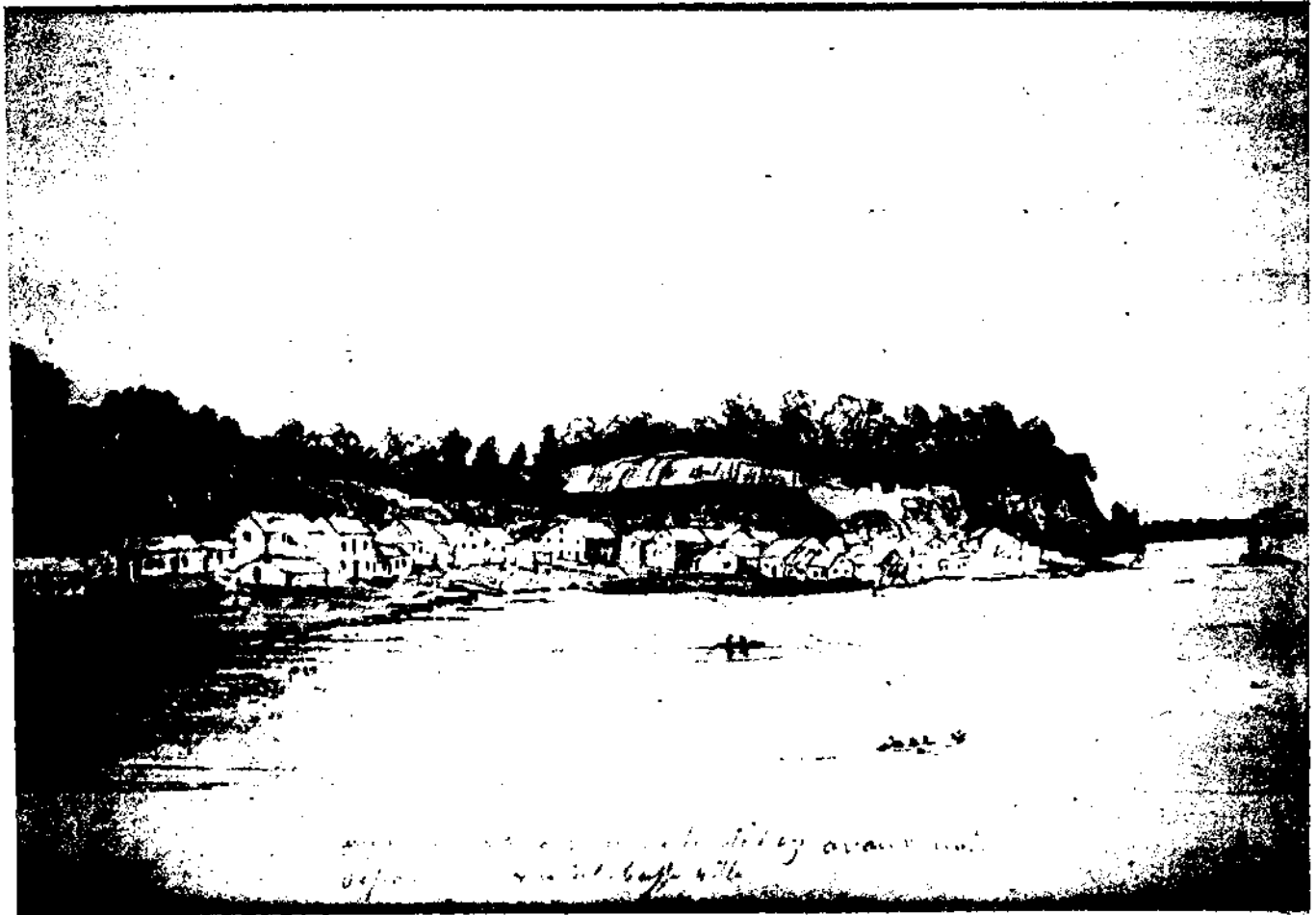
²³¹ Numerous reference to shopping in the Northeast and New Orleans appear in the family correspondence. The reference to buying in Europe and shipping home is found in a letter from Mary McMurrin to Fannie Conner, June 8, 1854, Lemuel P. Conner Papers, Series 1, Folder 2.21, LLMVC/LSU, transcript, NATC.



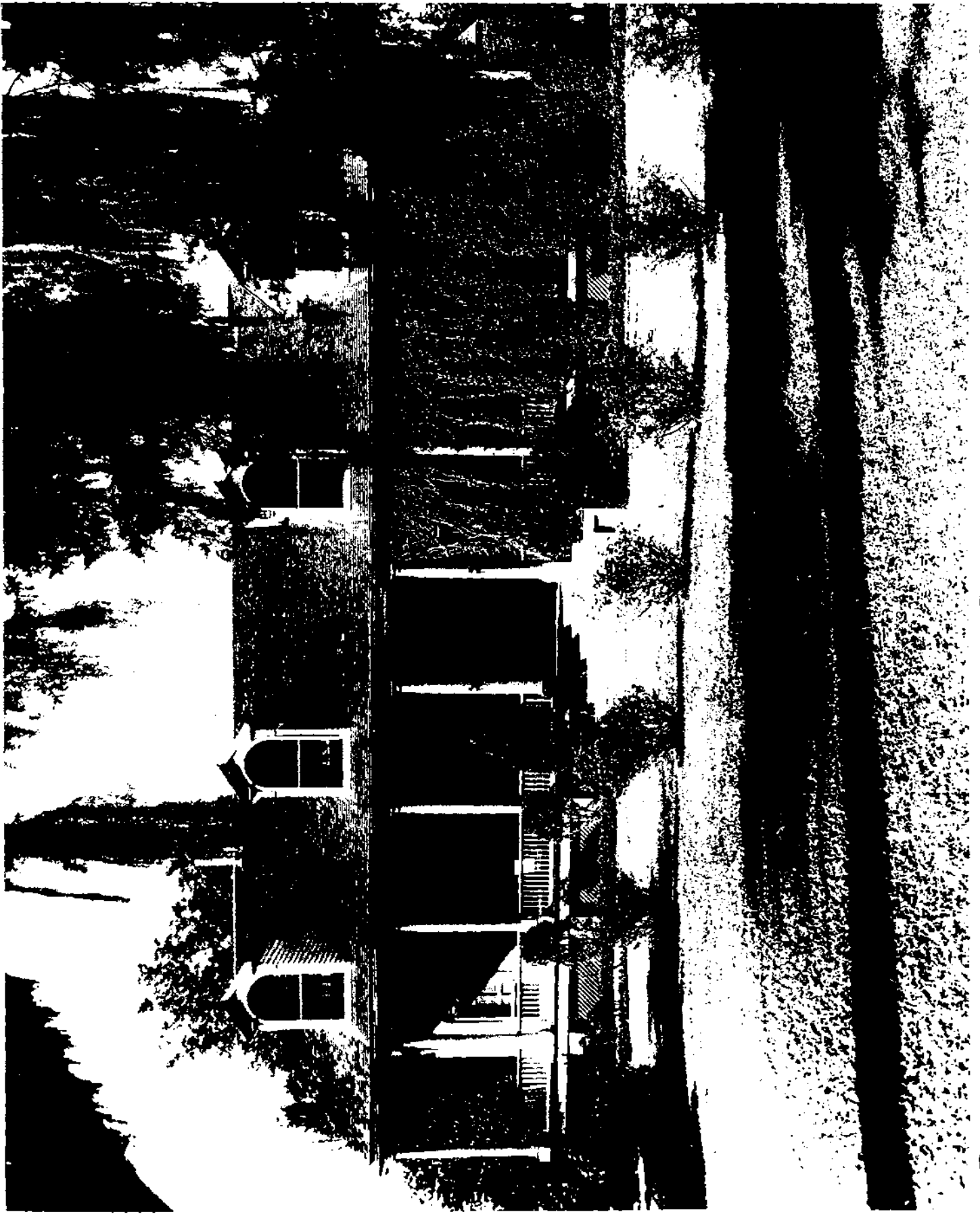
17. Detail from "Landscape of Natchez," 1823 painting by John James Audubon, showing Parker's Hotel on the right and Clifton at the center.



18. Lithograph view of Natchez by James Tooley, ca. 1835.



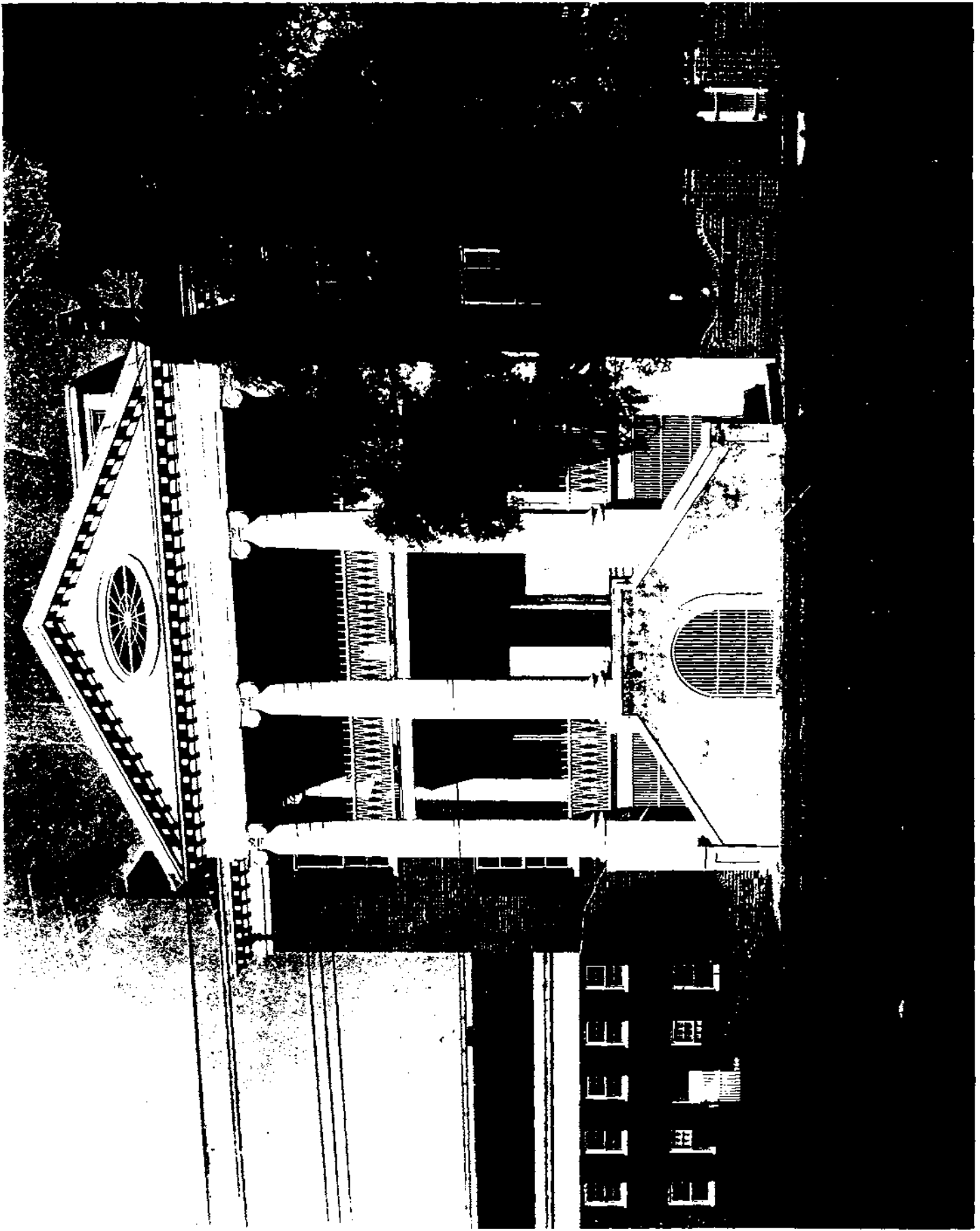
19. Sketch of Natchez Under-the-Hill ca. 1829 by C. A. LaSeuer.



View of The Briars.



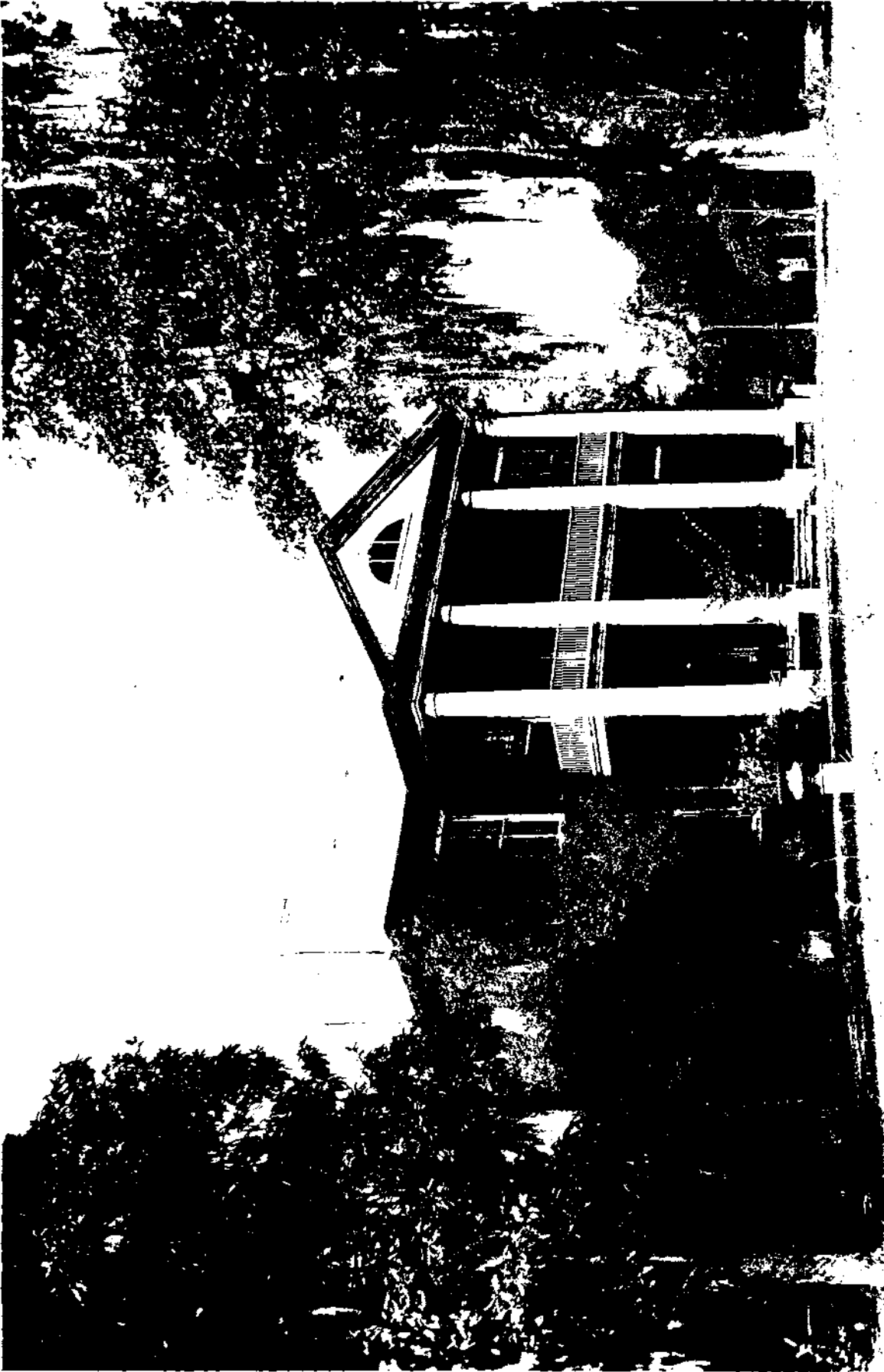
21. Rosalie.



*First Natchez Bank,
Natchez, Miss*



23. The Agricultural Bank, later the First Natchez Bank and currently Britton and Koontz.



24 ● View of Arlington ca. 1935.

**4.0 MELROSE IN THE CONTEXT OF NATCHEZ
AND AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE**



4.1 Acquisition, Construction, and Naming of the Estate

On December 16, 1841, John Thompson McMurren acquired the land that would become Melrose (Fig. 25); he bought 133 acres from his wife's uncle, Henry Turner, for \$5,000.²³² The property was near Monmouth, the suburban estate of McMurren's law partner, John Quitman, whose wife, Eliza, was the double first cousin of Mary Louisa McMurren. Living nearby at neighboring Woodlands were Mr. and Mrs. Jared Fyler; Mrs. Fyler was formerly Sarah Baker Turner and the aunt of Mary Louisa McMurren. The Conner family, who became linked to the McMurrans through marriage to Mary Louisa McMurren's sister Frances (Fanny) and daughter Mary Elizabeth, lived at Linden across from Monmouth. Between Linden and Melrose, Mrs. McMurren's sister, Frances (Fanny), and her husband, Lemuel Conner, would later build Roselawn.²³³

By early 1843, some construction may have been under way on McMurren's new property. On January 14, John Quitman, law partner of McMurren, noted in a letter to his wife that he was "sorry to hear this evening a report that one of McMurren's new buildings has been burned down" and expressed concern about fires "in our neighborhood."²³⁴ Shortly afterward, Eliza Quitman wrote her husband that Kent had not yet commenced work at Monmouth because "he is rebuilding McMurren's house.... Mr. McM. insisting upon his going to work immediately."²³⁵ The Kent mentioned in family correspondence is Elias J. Kent, who maintained a close business and personal relationship with the Quitman family. References to Kent in Quitman family correspondence indicate that he may have worked as a plantation or property manager.²³⁶ Despite a comprehensive search, no references to Kent have been found to indicate that he worked professionally as a builder. In 1847, McMurren leased a slave to Kent for six months on the same day that McMurren purchased the slave, who had been lost by Kent as a result of a court decree.²³⁷ Kent died in 1865, and his will mentions a son named John Anthony Quitman Kent, as well as a claim against Quitman's estate amounting to \$3,000.²³⁸ No other information about builder Kent and his relationship to Melrose has been found.

²³² Adams County, Mississippi, Deed Book DD:155.

²³³ The ownership and relationship of the Quitman family to Monmouth, of the Turner and Fyler families to Woodlands, and of the Conner family to Linden are well documented in multiple sources. The Conner ownership of Roselawn, whose main house has been lost and property subdivided, is documented in a handwritten note by Lisa Stratton Davis in the margin of her grandfather's diary (Joseph Buck Stratton, Diary, September 29, 1860, LLMVC/LSU, photocopy of typescript, HNF).

²³⁴ John Quitman to Eliza Quitman, January 14, 1843, Quitman Papers, Subseries 1.1, Folder 30, SHC/UNC, transcript, NATC.

²³⁵ Eliza Quitman to John Quitman, January 18, 1843, Quitman Papers, Subseries 1.1, Folder 30, SHC/UNC, transcript, NATC.

²³⁶ Eliza Quitman to John Quitman, January 15, 1844, Quitman Papers, Subseries 1.1, Folder 35, SHC/UNC, transcript, NATC.

²³⁷ Adams County, Office of the Chancery Clerk, Deed Book FF:511.

²³⁸ Adams County, Office of the Chancery Clerk, Will Book 3:262-264.

The first known reference to the name Melrose is found in an 1843 letter from Eliza Quitman to her husband, John, that described an accident involving a carriage driven by a McMurrans slave "on his way to Melrose to take his mistress to church."²³⁹ In 1844, another letter written by Eliza Quitman refers to the death of a McMurrans slave named Laura who was "buried at Melrose." The letter notes that the McMurrans had a "graveyard already prepared and planted with evergreens..."²⁴⁰

Several factors probably influenced the McMurrans in selecting Melrose for the name of their Natchez suburban estate. Sir Walter Scott, probably the most popular writer in the antebellum South, had immortalized Scotland's Melrose Abbey in his popular novel *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and his poems and novels provided inspiration for many plantation and estate names throughout the country. Copies of Scott's books abounded in the libraries of Natchez-area planting families. A bust of the poet acquired by Judge S. S. Boyd, a friend of the McMurrans family, is still on display in Boyd's Arlington. The original portico gasolier at the entrance to Stanton Hall features another portrait cast in metal. McMurrans's Scottish ancestry and a desire to echo the letter *M* of Mary and McMurrans may also have been minor factors in the selection of the name.

Family correspondence and research into the records of the Andrew Brown sawmill in Natchez indicate that the outbuildings at Melrose were built before the mansion itself. The McMurrans probably chose to build the outbuildings first to provide amenities for builders and slaves present on the property during construction and for family members when they were visiting the property. That the outbuildings were built first is substantiated by the 1843 letter recording the destruction by fire of a building at Melrose and the absence of lumber purchases in the Andrew Brown sawmill records after the McMurrans occupied the main house in late 1848. The first letter addressed from Melrose was written in January 1849, from Mary Louisa McMurrans to her sister, Frances (Fanny).²⁴¹ Landscaping of the property probably began immediately after the property was purchased and after sites were chosen for the various buildings to be constructed. An 1844 letter noted that the McMurrans already had a cemetery planted with evergreens at Melrose.²⁴²

Although research has yet to uncover the dates of construction of the varying outbuildings at Melrose, the construction date of the main house is well documented in the records of Andrew Brown's sawmill. Major purchases indicate that the main house was well under way in early 1847. On January 31, 1848, charges to McMurrans appear in

²³⁹ Eliza Quitman to John Quitman, November 20, 1843, Quitman Papers, Subseries 1.1, Folder 34, SHC/UNC, transcript, NATC.

²⁴⁰ Eliza Quitman to John Quitman, May 12, 1844, Quitman Papers, Subseries 1.1, Folder 36, SHC/UNC, transcript, NATC.

²⁴¹ Mary Louisa McMurrans to Frances E. Conner, January 25, 1849, Conner Papers, Series 1, Folder 1:4, LLMVC/LSU, transcript, NATC.

²⁴² Eliza Quitman to John Quitman, May 12, 1844, Quitman Papers, Subseries 1.1, Folder 36, SHC/UNC, transcript, NATC.

Brown's order book for 1 1/4"-by-5" flooring for specific rooms that are identified by name, including the "front rooms," "north back room," "south back room," "stair way [sic]," and "saloon [sic]," as the rear first-story hallway is also identified in an 1865 inventory of the house.²⁴³ Quitman family letters provide further documentation that the house was well under way in 1847. In April 1847, Eliza Quitman wrote to her husband that "Mr. McMurrans is rapidly progressing in building his new house at Melrose; they expect to live in it in the course of next year."²⁴⁴ Later, in September 1847, she noted that "Mr. McMurrans [sic] family are well, his house is going up finely, the brick work is nearly done...."²⁴⁵

Jacob Byers, who designed and built Melrose, was born about 1800 and was a native of Hagerstown, Maryland. Byers arrived in Natchez prior to 1830 and preceded the large number of builders who arrived in Natchez in the early 1830s to take advantage of a building boom that swept through the Lower Mississippi Valley. Though the circumstances and the year of his arrival in Natchez are uncertain, he had become thoroughly familiar with the local architectural idiom by the time he built Melrose. No architectural influence from his early years in Maryland is apparent in his work on the house. His obituary proclaimed him to be "an eminent architect and builder, having made the plan and superintended the erection of the palace mansion of J. T. McMurrans, Esq., by many considered the best edifice in the State of Mississippi."²⁴⁶ The Andrew Brown sawmill papers support the obituary's claim that Jacob Byers was the builder of Melrose. In February 1847, a lumber order under J. T. McMurrans's name has an additional citation that reads, "by Byers."²⁴⁷

No other Natchez buildings have been documented as being designed or built solely by Jacob Byers, although census records indicate that he was living in Natchez as early as 1830.²⁴⁸ That he worked as a carpenter and builder is documented in census records and in the voluminous probate papers of contractors Joseph Neibert and Peter Gemmell.²⁴⁹

The reason that McMurrans obtained the services of Jacob Byers to build Melrose could possibly be rooted in a common past. A "Mr. Byers" was working as a builder in 1801 in Franklin County, Pennsylvania, the year and place of John McMurrans's birth.²⁵⁰ Family

²⁴³ Andrew Brown Papers, Order Book 1844–1851, January 31, 1848, UM, photocopy, HNF and a photocopy of a typescript of the 1865 inventory of Melrose is located in the Melrose Site File, HNF.

²⁴⁴ Eliza Quitman to John Quitman, April 2, 1847, Quitman Papers, Subseries 1.1, Folder 50, SHC/UNC, transcript, NATC.

²⁴⁵ Eliza Quitman to John Quitman, September 2, 1847, Quitman Papers, Subseries 1.1, Folder 53, SHC/UNC, transcript, NATC.

²⁴⁶ *Natchez Mississippi Free Trader*, June 16, 1852. (This obituary provides more information about the life of Byers and his connection to Melrose than any other single document.)

²⁴⁷ Andrew Brown Papers, Day Book 1843–1848, February 16, 1847, UM, photocopy, HNF..

²⁴⁸ *Mississippi 1830 Census*, eds. Irene S. and Norman E. Gillis (Baton Rouge: Norman E. Gillis, 1965), n.p..

²⁴⁹ Adams County, Office of the Chancery Clerk, Probate Box 70.

²⁵⁰ I. H. McCauley, *Historic Sketch of Franklin County, Pennsylvania* (Chambersburg, Pennsylvania: D. F. Pursel, 1878), n.p., transcript, NATC.

correspondence indicates that the McMurrans lived outside the town of McConnellsburg.²⁵¹ Jacob Byers was born in Hagerstown, Maryland, located about twenty-five miles from McConnellsburg. John McMurren was born in 1801, and census records indicate that Byers was born in either 1800 or 1801.²⁵² Whether or not a relationship between McMurren and Byers extended back to Pennsylvania and Maryland is not known, but the two men were the same age and were from the same area of the country.

In 1838, Jacob Byers sought public office as city tax assessor and was elected by a solid majority. Judging by election results in 1839, 1840, and 1841, he served well and was reelected each year, with lackluster opponents unable to capture more than a handful of votes. The political career of Jacob Byers appears to have come to an end about the time that John T. McMurren acquired the property that would become Melrose.²⁵³

Although Byers identified his profession as carpenter to the 1850 census taker, obviously he was a skilled master builder.²⁵⁴ Natchez's most prolific nineteenth-century designer and builder, James Hardie, is also identified simply as a carpenter in the 1850 census, but as a master carpenter in 1860.²⁵⁵

Although Jacob Byers was born in Maryland, the architecture of Melrose indicates that he was well versed in the local architectural idiom. The main house at Melrose exhibits the architectural form of the grand Natchez mansion that was introduced at Auburn in 1812 and fully established at Rosalie in 1823.²⁵⁶ Like Melrose, both houses are National Historic Landmarks. The grand Natchez mansion form consists of a nearly cubical brick block with five-bay facade that is surmounted by a balustraded hipped roof, fronted by a three-bay giant-order portico, and spanned across the rear by a giant-order colonnade. The floor plan, the inclusion of a jib window, and the dining room punkah are all typical features of Natchez regional architecture. Although predominantly Greek Revival in character, Melrose includes some architectural detailing, like the oval patera of the panels above the sliding doors and central tablets of the dining room door and window surrounds, that echoes the earlier Federal style and indicates that Byers was not a revolutionary designer.

The skill of Jacob Byers as a builder is demonstrated not so much in the design of Melrose as in the quality of its interior and exterior finishes. Its brickwork is the finest in the Natchez region with pressed brick laid in an all-stretcher bond with narrow, intricately tooled white mortar joints. The most outstanding interior features of Melrose are the

²⁵¹ Elizabeth Turner to Margaret Biggs, August 20, 1838, Turner Papers, S-120, 1403, LLMVC/LSU, transcript, NATC.

²⁵² Bureau of the Census, Population Schedules, 1850, 8.

²⁵³ Minutes of the Selectmen of the City of Natchez, 1838-1842, Natchez City Hall.

²⁵⁴ Population Schedules, 1850, 8.

²⁵⁵ Population Schedules, 1850, 19 and 1860, 21.

²⁵⁶ Auburn Site File, National Register Nomination, HNF and Rosalie Site File, typescript of 1856 description of Audubon's Natchez landscape and photocopy of Rosalie excerpt from Matilda Gresham's *Life of Walter Quintin Gresham*, HNF.

Ionic frontispieces that frame the doorways between the parlors and the doorway that defines the stair hall. The frontispieces consist of fluted Ionic columns supporting a full molded entablature. Within the frontispieces are regionally unique panels with an oval patera. In the hallway frontispiece, the oval patera is superimposed above a transom with glass panels forming X's. The entrance hallway, the triple parlors, and the grand rear hallway (also known as the saloon) are all crowned by a full entablature in plaster that is supported by pilasters that also function as doorway and window surrounds.

4.2 Site Development and Landscape

Although the landscape of Melrose had a picturesque informality in the English style of landscape gardening, Babbitt's 1908 survey plan suggests that the inner zone near the house was defined by a circle whose diameter was based on a multiple of a module related to the diameter of the house. The outer zone seems to respond more to topography. A circle centered in the house with a radius of 475 feet encompasses most of the ornamental grounds and yards in the inner zone. It appears to have provided an organizing device for the design of these grounds and yards as it passed through, or close to, a series of key points in the layout, namely:

- the gate to the front lawn on the entrance drive,
- the limits of the arc of the hedge on both sides of that lawn,
- the limit of the hedge dividing the flower garden from the orchard,
- the farthest point of the yard behind the house where the servants' quarters were located (slave quarters in the McMurrin era),
- the center of the carriage house, and
- the far corner of the enclosure containing the vegetable garden to the west of the carriage house.

The radius of 475 feet appears to have been based on the dimensions of the house, which, without its rear gallery or porch, fits within a circle of 47.5 feet radius. Further study should be carried out to determine the source of this landscape organization and whether it was shared by other Natchez houses.²⁵⁷

4.3 Building Form and Vernacular Tradition

The main house at Melrose exhibits the architectural form of the grand Natchez mansion that was introduced in Natchez in 1812 with the construction of Auburn, and firmly established in 1823 with the construction of Rosalie. The house also exhibits certain architectural details that are typical of Natchez and are, in some cases, direct responses to the semitropical climate of the region—the staircase placed in a lateral hallway, sliding pocket windows in a clerestory addition to the roof, jib windows, dining room punkah, spacious galleries, high ceilings, and large expanses of windows.

²⁵⁷ Robinson Fisher Associates, "Melrose Cultural Landscape Report" (National Park Service, Southeast Regional Office, Atlanta, GA, 1996.)

4.4 Basement

Melrose, like Rosalie and Choctaw, rests on a full basement, but it is unusual in having a full basement story that is only barely raised above the ground and features wells for light and ventilation. Rosalie's basement is fully raised at the front, but the house rises only two or three steps from ground level at the rear. Choctaw's basement is raised on all elevations. The raising of the basements at Rosalie and Choctaw probably relates to securing a better view of the Mississippi River from their locations near the edge of the Natchez bluffs, though a desire to emulate the classical *piano nobile* and to take advantage of ventilation may also have been equal factors. The Parsonage and Weymouth Hall also overlook the river and are built on fully raised basements. Several Natchez mansions, such as Arlington and Stanton Hall, have partial basements, and others, such as Dunleith and Auburn, have only small underground storage rooms.

The typical exterior entrance to basements that are only slightly raised and do not have direct, ground level access is through bulkhead entrances like the one at Melrose. The Melrose bulkhead is unusual in that it opens to an area beneath the rear gallery steps rather than beneath the gallery itself. The bulkhead entrance at Stanton Hall is one of many that are located at the edge of the rear gallery. Occasionally, a bulkhead is located on the side elevation of a building. The bulkhead entrances to basement rooms under many Natchez antebellum houses still survive, although the very nature of their design led to rotting of the original doors and often any wood steps beneath.

Melrose's basement is unusual in that it is accessed both from an exterior bulkhead of particularly grand size and from a sheltered enclosed stairway entered from the rear gallery and secured by a door. The access to the basement stairway is from the jalousie-screened area that occupies the end bay of the colonnade. This area was apparently used by the house slaves in carrying out their domestic duties and is screened from the remainder of the gallery and from the side yard of the house. Choctaw may be the only one of the great Natchez mansions that originally provided access within the house to the basement, but it is questionable whether the access is original, since the existing staircase is not.

4.5 Masonry and Stucco

The earlier grand Natchez mansions such as Auburn, Arlington, and Rosalie feature Flemish bond brickwork that is limited to their most public elevations. At Auburn, Flemish bond is limited to the facade. At Arlington, it appears on both the facade and rear elevation. At Rosalie, it is limited to the facade and eastern side elevation, both of which front city streets. Flemish bond brickwork remained popular for grand houses as late as 1836 at Choctaw, where it appears on all but the rear stuccoed elevation, and ca. 1850 at Shadyside, where it is confined to the facade and one public side elevation.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁸ Shadyside Site File, chain of title, HNF. Ralph North acquired the Shadyside property in 1849 and the house stylistically dates to ca. 1850.

The most stylish brick bond of the Greek Revival period was the all-stretcher bond employed at Melrose, where it appears on all but the stuccoed rear elevation. Other houses with all-stretcher bond include the William Johnson House (1841), Elward (ca. 1844), Catholic Rectory (1846), Dr. Dubs Townhouse (1852), Dixie (1853), and an 1840s or 1850s townhouse located on the northeast corner of State and South Union streets.²⁵⁹ This bond was so fashionable that it was applied as decorative painting atop the common bond brickwork on the facade of the McClure House at 609 Jefferson Street. Traces of this painting scheme survive today.

Melrose exhibits the most outstanding brickwork of any house in Mississippi and ranks with the finest examples in the nation. The units are pressed brick, of a red-brown color, laid with narrow, intricately tooled white mortar joints. The mortar is hard and appears to consist of a natural cement. The mortar is apparently just hard enough to have stood virtually untouched for a century and a half but not so hard that it interfered with the expansion and contraction of the bricks.

The mason who was responsible for the work at Melrose may have been Daniel Snyder, who is listed in the 1850 census records as a mason, aged forty-one, who was residing in Jacob Byers's household. Neither the workmanship for a brick cottage at 500 South Wall Street, built for a Daniel Snyder in the mid-to-late 1830s is as fine as Melrose, nor is that of a brick house built for a Joseph Snyder on Keims Avenue, which was demolished in the 1980s.²⁶⁰ No evidence exists to establish Daniel Snyder as the mason of Melrose other than his connection to Byers.

The same mason who built Melrose almost certainly did the outstanding brickwork at the Dr. Dubs Townhouse built in 1852. The same all-stretcher bond with finely struck joints appears only on the facade, suggesting that it must have been very expensive, since the northerly side wall built to the street was not treated the same way. The only other known houses that might also be the products of the Melrose brick mason are Shadyside (ca. 1850) and Weymouth Hall (1855), where the bricks are unfortunately covered by multiple coats of paint.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ The 1841 date for the William Johnson House is documented in Hogan and Davis, *William Johnson's Natchez: The Ante-Bellum Diary of a Free Negro*. The 1844 date for Elward is based on stylistic evidence and the 1844 acquisition of the property by Richard Elward (Adams County, Mississippi, Deed Book DD:120). The 1846 date for the Catholic Rectory is documented in a building contract with John Crothers filed in the courthouse (Adams County, Mississippi, Deed Book FF:508). The 1852 date of the Dr. Dubs Townhouse is documented in the brick where Dubs scraped "Built 1852" and "Built by C. H. Dubs/1854" on a rear addition. He advertised the house as his office and residence in *The Daily Courier* [Natchez], April 19, 1854, 1. The 1853 date for Dixie is documented in Edward Templeman's probate papers (Adams County, Mississippi, Probate Box 156). The 1840s or 1850s date for the townhouse on the northeast corner of State and South Union streets is stylistic.

²⁶⁰ 500 South Wall Street Site File, HNF and Snyder House/Keims Avenue Research File, HNF.

²⁶¹ Ralph North acquired the Shadyside property in 1849 and the house stylistically dates to ca. 1850 (Adams County, Mississippi, Deed Book GG:564). Weymouth Hall's 1855 construction date is documented in *The Natchez Daily Courier*, June 9, 1855.

Antebellum Natchez builders traditionally finished exterior walls sheltered by porticos and/or galleries in a different manner than walls exposed to the weather. Both early Federal and later Greek Revival frame cottages in Natchez feature lap siding on the unsheltered walls but stucco/plaster or tongue-and-groove flush boards on exterior walls sheltered by porticos and galleries. The Briars, Fair Oaks, The Burn, and Pleasant Hill are examples of Natchez cottage-form houses with exterior stucco/plaster. Williamsburg, Winchester House, Cyrus Marsh House, and Linton House have sheltered wall surfaces finished in tongue-and-groove flush boards.

None of the region's earliest extant brick mansions exhibit the stucco that would later be universally applied to their successors. Federal-style Gloucester, Springfield (Jefferson County), Auburn, and Arlington are not stuccoed beneath their porticos or colonnades. The sheltered portion of Gloucester, however, was painted and penciled to resemble blocks of stone when the portico was added in the 1830s. Whether this decorative painting extended across the whole facade is unknown, since evidence of the painting survives only on the front wall portion that is protected by the portico.

Federal-style Rosalie, which established the full-blown form of the grand Natchez mansion, is the earliest extant house to be finished in stucco beneath the portico and rear colonnade. Rosalie's stucco is probably original and represents an evolution from Auburn (1812) and Arlington (ca. 1818) to Choctaw (1836) and later to Melrose (1847). The treatment also appears at smaller brick houses, including Elward, Dixie, Shadyside, The Parsonage, the John Smith House, and the townhouse located at 315 North Rankin Street. Beginning in the Greek Revival period, stucco was sometimes applied to the entire exterior of a building, as seen at D'Evereux, the Banker's House, Cherokee, Edgewood, The Elms, Elmscourt, Greenleaves, Oakland, Lansdowne, Dunleith, Stanton Hall, and Magnolia Hall. Local builders and architects used stucco on both brick and frame buildings to simulate the stone that was not available in Mississippi. Magnolia Vale, built in 1840, was a frame building that was completely finished in stucco.²⁶² The Commercial Bank building is the only antebellum building in Natchez with a real stone facade, and its side walls and the banker's house extending from the rear are all finished in stucco. Local stone was scarce and of poor quality as evidenced in the deteriorated sandstone that was quarried in neighboring Franklin County and used in decorative elements on St. Mary's Cathedral (1842).²⁶³

The stucco finishes of the Greek Revival period were commonly painted and veined to resemble marble, sandstone, or brownstone, with scoring lines painted to resemble

²⁶² Andrew Brown's Magnolia Vale is dated 1840, because the *Natchez Mississippi Free Trader Extra Edition*, March 8, 1840, documented the total destruction of the existing house of Andrew Brown in the tornado of 1840. Photographs of Magnolia Vale can be seen in the Norman Collection, Thomas H. Gandy, Natchez, MS.

²⁶³ B. L. C. Wailes recorded in his diary a visit to the quarry in Franklin County, near Meadville, where the stone for the cathedral was quarried by stonemason Dixon (B. L. C. Wailes, *Diary*, April 12, 1852, Armstrong Library, Natchez).

mortar. During the first half of the Greek Revival period in Natchez (1833-1850), sandstone finishes were apparently the most popular. A late-nineteenth-century photograph of Melrose illustrates a sandstone appearance on the facade with the different blocks of the scored stucco painted varying shades and the "joints" painted white. The photograph also appears to show bold veining on the columns, as well as the stuccoed wall surface. Paint analysis indicates that this same treatment existed on the rear elevation of the house as well.²⁶⁴

Historic photographs of four Natchez houses no longer standing document similar stone finishes. Etania (ca. 1835-1840), Glenwood (1835-1840), Magnolia Vale (1840), and Moss Hill (1835-1855) in neighboring Jefferson County all had similar decorative painting on the facade.²⁶⁵ All had penciling to resemble white mortar except for Magnolia Vale, which featured penciling to resemble dark mortar and clear evidence of veining.²⁶⁶ Historic photographs of Monmouth document a similar sandstone treatment on the stucco of both the front and rear elevations. An 1859 pencil sketch of *The Elms* by architect T. K. Wharton (Fig. 26) also documents a similar decorative scheme.²⁶⁷

Historic photographs of Dunleith (1856) and nonextant Sligo (ca. 1850), and 1980 photographs of Sunnyside (1852) indicate a more pronounced marbled treatment, with the veining being more prominent than the stone blocking or tinting.²⁶⁸ By the mid-1850s, a darker brownstone stucco finish was becoming popular. Historic photographs and surviving physical evidence document brownstone finishes at Magnolia Hall (1858), Elms Court (built ca. 1836; remodeled mid-to-late 1850s), Zion Chapel A. M. E. Church (1858), and Wyolah (ca. 1858) in neighboring Jefferson County.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁴ George Fore, "Melrose Paint Analysis," in "Historic Structures Report" (National Park Service, Southeast Regional Office, Atlanta, GA, 1996).

²⁶⁵ Etania and Glenwood both exhibited the combination of Greek and Federal detailing that indicates a Natchez house was built during the mid-1830s transitional period. The date of Moss Hill is stylistic and has a broader range due to its location in rural Jefferson County.

²⁶⁶ The Historic Natchez Foundation has samples of the Moss Hill stucco with its original painted finish.

²⁶⁷ T. K. Wharton's 1859 pencil sketch hangs in *The Elms*, Natchez.

²⁶⁸ Dunleith's 1856 construction date is documented in several sources including the Andrew Brown Day Books, August 4, 1856 and April 29, 1857 (Andrew Brown Papers, UM, photocopy, HNF) and the business ledger of Robert Dixon, which has entries for wallpapering Dunleith in early 1858 (Joseph Dixon Ledger, microfilm copy, MDAH). The date of Sligo is stylistic, based on the appearance as documented in historic photographs. The date of Sunnyside is documented in the Andrew Brown Papers, Day Book, January 1852, UM, photocopy, HNF.

²⁶⁹ Elms Court's 1836 date is based on stylistic evidence and the 1836 acquisition of the property by Eliza and Katherine Evans (Adams County, Mississippi, Deed Book 11:282). The 1858 date for Zion Chapel A. M. E. Church [originally the Second Presbyterian Church] is documented in *The Daily Courier* [Natchez], March 2, 1858, 3. The ca. 1858 date for Wyolah is stylistic and based on the bracketed cornice, an Italianate detail that first appears in Natchez about 1856 at Dunleith.

4.6 Porches

The round columns of the Melrose portico and the rectangular stuccoed columns of the rear colonnaded gallery echo a similar treatment seen earlier at Belmont in 1838, where fluted Ionic columns support the portico and stuccoed rectangular piers form a colonnade across the rear. At Auburn, Arlington, Gloucester, Rosalie, Choctaw, D'Evereux, and Magnolia Hall, columns are round on both the portico and rear colonnades. The use of giant-order, rectangular-sectioned columns on the rear of Melrose probably represents an attempt to relate the rear gallery of the main house to the front gallery of the rear service buildings without the expense or difficulty of installing round columns on all three galleries.

The portico and rear gallery railings at Melrose are constructed of different materials. The portico is railed with cast iron, which first became popular in Natchez during the late 1830s, and the rear gallery with wood. The porticos of Rosalie and Arlington have balustrades only on the upper story, consisting of the rectangular-sectioned wood balusters with oval handrail that are so common on Natchez houses built prior to the 1830s. Auburn's flat, urn-shaped balusters have no precedent in Natchez and may not be original. At Choctaw in 1836, the portico railing is wood in a sheaf-of-wheat pattern fashionable in Natchez in the 1830s, and seen also at Cottage Gardens and a small cottage at 307 North Wall Street. The rear colonnaded gallery, however, is finished with the same oval handrail and rectangular-sectioned balusters seen earlier at Arlington and Rosalie. Cast-iron would later become the most regionally common portico railing for mansions built in the 1850s. Lansdowne, Magnolia Hall, Stanton Hall, Homewood, Dunleith, and Windsor (Claiborne County) all were built in the 1850s and feature cast-iron gallery railings.

The rear gallery balustrade at Melrose is typical of those constructed during the Greek Revival period used in conjunction with wood or brick piers. The rectangular-sectioned balusters echo the taper of the giant-order columns (or piers), a common treatment that appears at cottages, as well as mansions such as Mistletoe (remodeled ca. 1840), Woodstock (ca. 1856), and Sunnyside (1852), where the tapered piers were unfortunately replaced in the 1980s. The handrail of the rear gallery balustrade at Melrose is bolder than the circular handrails that are common to the earlier houses, Auburn, Arlington, Rosalie, and to the rear gallery of Choctaw as late as 1836. The profile is similar to designs pictured in Asher Benjamin's *The Practical House Carpenter*, published in 1830. Handrails with broad, shaped caps to shed water became popular in the 1840s. Jalousies are a feature of the rear gallery of Melrose and appear to be more related to screening the domestic functions of the household than for protection from summer sun and blowing rain. Screens of jalousies enclose the northern ends of both the upper and lower rear gallery, and a second screen creates an intermediate privacy wall that encloses the service stair in the end bay of the colonnade. Jalousies were common features of Natchez area galleries in the nineteenth century, but those at the ends of the upper and lower galleries at Melrose are unusual in extending to the floor rather than resting on the

handrail of the balustrade. Only a few other instances of jalousies extending to the floor, like the rear gallery of non-extant Homewood, are known to exist. Other houses like Stanton Hall, Linden, and Hope Farm have jalousies resting on handrails both in the surviving original and in historic photographs.

4.7 Roof and Roofing

The early brick mansions like Auburn, Arlington, and Rosalie originally featured roofs covered in cypress shingles, but by the 1830s, most of the larger houses were roofed in slate brought by steamboat to Natchez. Bills for shipments of slate in the 1830s can be found in the probate papers of Natchez contractors Neibert and Gemmell. The slate roof at Melrose is undoubtedly original, although it has experienced some slate replacement during previous repairs. Choctaw retained its original slate roof until 1990, and Stanton Hall until the 1980s.²⁷⁰ Some other pre-Civil War Natchez buildings retain portions, if not all, of their original slate roofs: the Cockerell House (built and remodeled 1835-1855) at 207 South Union Street; The Burn (1836); the brick law office (ca. 1845) at 116 South Wall Street; the Robert Smith House, also called Evans-Bontura, (1852) (Fig. 27) at 107 South Broadway; Magnolia Hall (1858); the G. L. C. Davis House (1858) at 305 North Rankin Street; and White Wings (built and remodeled ca. 1830-1860) at 311 North Wall Street. College records document a new slate roof was installed in the 1830s on the East Wing of Jefferson College (1819), where the original slate was consolidated on the front slope of the roof.²⁷¹

The glazed and balustraded clerestory that extends from the hipped roof of Melrose crowns the house, provides a beautiful view of the property, and serves to cool the house in hot weather. The staircase extends from the main floor to the attic with unbroken handrails, and a pulley system opens the sliding windows of the clerestory to provide escape for the hot air in the house. Wall-mounted cabinets beneath the windows contain the pulleys, which are operated from the attic floor. The absence of any roof feature on Auburn and Arlington helps establish an architectural chronology that predicted the balustraded clerestory on Melrose. The Forest, built 1816 to 1817 and burned in 1852, and Clifton, built in 1821 and destroyed in 1863, preceded Rosalie in having a simple roof balustrade. The next evolution was the balustraded clerestory, which apparently arrived in Natchez with the 1836 construction of Choctaw. At D'Evereux, which was also built in 1836, the hipped roof is surmounted by a pilastered belvedere encircled by a balustrade. Sweet Auburn (1840), Shadyside (ca. 1850), Lansdowne (1853), and Weymouth Hall (1855) all originally had balustraded clerestories. Stanton Hall (1857) features a rather ungainly, hipped-roof belvedere with arched windows and no balustrade. Sweet Auburn and Shadyside have lost their clerestories due to remodeling, but their existence is documented in historic photographs and in surviving physical evidence. At

²⁷⁰ Author.

²⁷¹ Ronald W. Miller, clerk of the works, Jefferson College restoration, interviewed by Mary W. Miller, preservation director, HNF, June 20, 1996.

Homewood, built in 1858 and burned in 1940, this roof feature reached its zenith with the balustraded clerestory crowned by an octagonal lantern.

The turned balusters of the Melrose roof balustrade are similar to designs of balusters published by Asher Benjamin in his 1830 handbook, *The Practical House Carpenter* (Fig. 28). Of all the designers who published pattern books in the United States during the nineteenth century, Benjamin was probably the most influential in Natchez. The roof balustrade at D'Evereux also features turned balusters; Choctaw's balustrade is rendered in Chinese Chippendale, a design also proposed by Asher Benjamin in his *Practical House Carpenter*; and Lansdowne features a wooden balustrade of stickwork forming X's. Like Melrose, both Choctaw and Lansdowne feature intermediate newels, or pedestals, but unlike Melrose, each newel at the two houses is topped with an acorn finial.

The chimneys that pierce the hipped roof of Melrose are finished in stucco, which may or may not be original. An unusual and regionally unique feature of the Melrose chimneys is that one of the two inside-end chimneys on the northern wall is fake and was built to make the northern wall more symmetrical with the southern wall. Unlike the rest of the chimneys, which have clay chimney pots representing the number of flues served by each chimney, the fake chimney is stuccoed on the top and has no chimney pots. The chimney pots are probably an original feature because they were popular at the time. When the house that preceded Dunleith burned in 1855, owner Charles Dahlgren blamed the fire on his wife's insistence that the chimneys be topped with clay chimney pots, which, Dahlgren maintained, attracted the lightning that caused the fire.²⁷²

4.8 Doors and Windows

The windows at Melrose contain six-over-six, double-hung sash that are typical of the size, proportion, profile, and configuration of window sash in the 1840s in Natchez. Six-over-six and eight-over-eight, double-hung sash first appeared in the mid-1830s with the introduction of the Greek Revival style. Twelve-over-twelve, nine-over-six, and six-over-nine, double-hung sash continued to be used as late as the 1840s, but usually only in dependency buildings, like those at Melrose, which feature twelve-over-twelve, double-hung sash, or in vernacular houses.

Melrose has only one "jib window," or a window set above hinged panels, which is located in the library and opens onto the rear gallery. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the origin of the word *jib* as "secret door," the obvious source for the name of a window set above moveable panels. Jib doors were possibly introduced to Natchez in the mid-1830s, when they were incorporated into the design of D'Evereux. They became so popular that they often appear as additions to houses constructed before the 1830s, like

²⁷² A letter written by Dahlgren describing the fire was published in *The Natchez Daily Democrat*, January 24, 1886.

Gloucester and The Briars. Jib windows increase the amount of ventilation and provide easy communication between rooms and porches or galleries.

The louvered blinds at Melrose are typical in their size, proportion, profile, and configuration of blinds dating to the mid-nineteenth century in Natchez, and many are probably original.²⁷³ The louvers are fixed. Blinds with moveable louvers are not documented in Natchez before the late 1850s, when they appear at Stanton Hall. Blind hinges are the typical butt hinge associated with Natchez buildings dating to the 1830s and 1840s. The locking mechanism is the type commonly seen in Natchez in this period, and features a spring-loaded locking mechanism attached at the bottom of the blind that interacts with a keeper attached to the window sill. The blinds at the entrance doorway are hinged on the innermost side only. The relationship of the portico to the facade of the house precluded blinds being hinged on both sides of the windows beneath the portico. Folding blinds like those at Melrose may be unique for antebellum Natchez but were relatively common in the late nineteenth century. Melrose followed the typical Natchez custom of having its exterior doors also fitted with louvered blinds.

The “shutter dogs” of the Melrose blind system are regionally unique for the Natchez area. Melrose does not have the wrought-iron dogs that are inserted directly into the brick or into wooden blocks set into the brick walls commonly found in the region, but its shutter dogs offer a simple and successful solution for keeping the shutters open. They consist of strips of iron, which are attached to the window sill at one end of the strip only. The unattached end rises slightly and prevents any movement of the blind, when open, but can be depressed to allow the shutters to close. This system is apparently original, as no evidence exists to indicate that any of the other more common types of shutter dogs were ever a feature of the house.

The exterior and interior doors at Melrose are molded four-paneled doors, with several short two-paneled doors used where height is a consideration. Four-panel and two-panel doors first appeared in Natchez after the introduction of the Greek Revival style in 1833, and four-panel doors are the most common door type after 1840. The doors are hung with typical mid-nineteenth-century hinges. All doors feature mortise locks, which first appeared in Natchez in the 1830s. Typical of grand houses built in Natchez after 1840, the Melrose door knobs and keyhole escutcheons are silver-plated in the most public rooms, while doors in the second story and in more private areas feature porcelain knobs and brass escutcheons. Only Stanton Hall also has silver-plated hinges, and Weymouth Hall is the only house known to have knobs of mercury glass. Houses dating to the 1830s typically have brass knobs and rim locks, although Ravenna (1836) does have mortise locks.

²⁷³ The term *blinds* was used historically and is used by architectural historians to denote what are today commonly called *shutters* on the exterior of a building

4.9 Interior Design

The floor plan of Melrose, with its short front entrance hall and large rear hallway, may be an architectural derivative of the early regional “cabinet plan” that dominated cottage architecture in the Lower Mississippi Valley and appears in variations until the early twentieth century. The early house plan had two front rooms and a back gallery closed at each end by a “cabinet room.” One of the first changes made to the early plan was the insertion of a short hall between the two front rooms. Then a room was sometimes added at each end to create two rooms at each side of a central hall, as at the Briars (1818). Still later, the plan evolved into a double-pile plan, usually with center hall but still retaining the rear cabinet room configuration at either end of a rear gallery. Finally, this floor plan transformed into a double-pile or triple-pile house with short front hall flanked by large rooms at each side, beyond which is a greatly widened rear hallway, or dining room, flanked by smaller rooms. Examples of this double-pile floor plan are found at the Presbyterian Manse (ca. 1825), Cherokee (ca. 1840), Shadyside (ca. 1850), and Sunnyside (1852). Example of triple-pile houses are Woodstock, and the McMurrans’ former residence, Holly Hedges, where it resulted from an 1820s or 1830s remodeling to create one of the city’s grandest dining rooms.

Melrose’s floor plan is atypical for houses exhibiting the form of the grand Natchez mansion, where the hallway typically extends the same width from the front to the back door of the house. Its service hallway along the northern wall, a short hall linking the dining room to the stair hall, and the compartmentalized smaller rooms of the second story, which have no precedent in Natchez, are also somewhat complicated for a house of the 1840s period. However, the placement of the staircase in a side or lateral hallway is also seen at Arlington, Rosalie, Dunleith, D’Evereux, Elms Court, Stanton Hall, and no longer standing Homewood and Ashburn. The arrangement may have related to climate and a desire to keep the central hallway uninterrupted by a staircase. These staircases, in most cases, are continuous from the first story to the attic, with unbroken handrails and intermediate landings that are sometimes lighted by a balustraded window. The scroll extension of the handrail at the base of the stair is similar to designs published for staircases in Asher Benjamin’s 1830 *The Practical House Carpenter* (Fig. 29).²⁷⁴

The basement at Melrose obviously played an important role in the domestic life of the house judging by its size, architectural finish, and the attention given to providing access. Two of the basement rooms feature fireplaces with wooden mantelpieces. The specific uses of the basement rooms are unknown, but Mary McMurren refers to the “wine cellar” in a letter to a family member.²⁷⁵ Both Dunleith and Stanton Hall originally featured coal-stoked basement furnaces, but no evidence exists to indicate that such a furnace ever

²⁷⁴ That architect Jacob Byers might have relied on a pattern book that was over a decade old is not surprising, considering that Thomas Rose took the designs for column capitals, doorway surrounds, and ceiling center pieces at 1857 Stanton Hall straight out of Minard Lafever’s *Beauties of Modern Architecture*, published over two decades earlier in 1835.

²⁷⁵ Mary Louisa McMurren to John T. McMurren Jr, August 13, 1857, Addison Papers, transcript, NATC.

existed in the basement of Melrose. The basement is floored in brick, but this floor is reported by family members to have been installed by George Malin Davis Kelly using bricks from Concord. A dirt floor in such a fine basement seems unusual, but Rosalie also featured basement rooms with dirt floors until the mid-twentieth century. The lack of original brick-paved floors in any of the Melrose dependency buildings is another indication that the basement floors were probably not brick.

The most outstanding interior architectural features of Melrose are the Ionic frontispieces that frame the doorways between the parlors and frame the doorway that defines the stair hall. They consist of fluted Ionic columns supporting a full-molded entablature. Within the frontispiece is a regionally unique combination of a panel with an oval patera superimposed above a transom with panels forming X's. The combination of the transom glazing, the oval patera, and the central tablets of the dining room window surrounds evokes the architecture of a decade earlier, when styles were in transition and Natchez buildings tended to exhibit characteristics of both the earlier Federal style and the newly popular Greek Revival. The Van Court Town House (1835), for example, has an entrance doorway with a Federal-style fanlight supported by Grecian pilasters with a Greek key design. Choctaw (1836) has a Federal portico with Roman Ionic columns, but its entrance doorway is purely Grecian. Central tablets above doorways and windows are also seen at Ravenna, the Van Court Townhouse, and Britton and Koontz Bank, which were all built in the 1830s.

The entrance hallway, the triple parlors, and the grand hallway at Melrose are all crowned by a full entablature in plaster that completely encircles the rooms and is supported by unusual pilasters that also function as doorway and window surrounds. In the grand hallway at the rear, the pilasters that frame the doorways are repeated as simple wall pilasters throughout the room. The only other house that features walls divided into panels by pilasters is the front section of Richmond (ca. 1838), where Ionic pilasters support a fully enriched Grecian entablature.

Both the black and white marble mantelpieces of Melrose are typical of those installed in Natchez Greek Revival houses in the 1830s and 1840s. That the mantelpieces are shouldered and battered only in the most public rooms is also usual for Natchez. At Shadyside (1850), the two front rooms feature shouldered and battered wood mantelpieces, but the two rear rooms have plain pilastered ones. The drawing room fireplace originally featured a cast-iron insert for burning coal, which is documented in historic photographs, but the recollections of family members and long-time employees indicate that all other fire chambers burned wood. Because Natchez was a river port, coal was readily available and many Natchez townhouses were built without wood-burning fireplaces after the 1830s.

4.10 Decorative Finishes

Melrose's interior is exceptionally well documented through surviving original furnishings, historic photographs, family correspondence, two inventories dating to 1865

and 1883, and the survival of the physical evidence of the interior finishes as documented in a recent paint analysis. Such documentation is rare. From studying all the available resources, Melrose emerges as having a mid-nineteenth-century interior that is representative of mid-nineteenth-century Natchez.

At Melrose, the first-story doors were originally grained in oak (re-grained 1976-78), and the second-story doors were grained in maple (grained in oak 1976-78). Almost every Natchez house, from cottage to mansion, shows evidence of oak-grained doors, if the houses were built or remodeled in the 1840s and 1850s. Prior to the 1830s, doors were generally grained in mahogany; after 1860, doors were grained in darker woods like walnut. Original mid-nineteenth-century Natchez oak graining survives on the sliding doors at Greenleaves (1838; redecorated 1849), the millwork in the double dining rooms at Richmond (1838), doors and cupboards at Lansdowne (1853), on the attic doors of Stanton Hall (1858), and on the insides of closet doors throughout the city.

The Dixon paint and wallpaper business ledgers and an 1858 Natchez newspaper article document John Wells as the grainer of the Stanton Hall doors.²⁷⁶ The Dr. Dubs Townhouse (1852) features the town's most unusual decorative door treatment, with bird's eye maple panels and a contrasting unknown wood on the stiles and rails.²⁷⁷ The grainer is documented as Joseph Charlesworth, who died in a yellow fever epidemic in 1855.²⁷⁸ Melrose and the Dr. Dubs Townhouse have the only known examples of maple graining.

Baseboards in Natchez tended to be marbled, grained, or painted dark in the mid-nineteenth century. Original marbled baseboards survive at Oakland (1841), Lansdowne (1853), and Wyolah Plantation (ca. 1858). Oakland's baseboards feature a red-brown, or sienna, marbling that is probably similar in color to the original painted and glazed treatment documented on the first-story baseboards in Melrose. Lansdowne's baseboards retain the original decorative painting scheme of black marble in the bedrooms, white marble in the parlor and dining room, and oak graining on the bases in the hallway. Stanton Hall's baseboards were painted in imitation of white marble.²⁷⁹ Wyolah in Jefferson County retains the original painting of its baseboards in black marble with intermediate vertical lines to make the baseboards look as if they were made of individual pieces of marble. Generally, only the widest fascia of a molded baseboard with two fasciae is grained or marbled.

²⁷⁶ *Natchez Mississippi Free Trader*, April 5, 1858.

²⁷⁷ The inside face of the original second-story closet at the Dr. Dubs Townhouse retains the original grained treatment. Other doors in the house have been restored to match the existing original.

²⁷⁸ An advertisement for grainer J. N. Charlesworth gives Dr. C. H. Dubs as a reference (*The Natchez Daily Courier*, July 8, 1854. Charlesworth's death is documented in the diary of Joseph Buck Stratton, September 22, 1855 (LLMVC/LSU, photocopy of typescript, HNF).

²⁷⁹ Ronald W. and Mary W. Miller lifted layers of later paint behind a door opening into the dining room in Stanton Hall to expose the original marbled treatment; the surface has since been repainted.

The interior of a grand Natchez house in the 1840s and 1850s would, like Melrose, probably feature an oilcloth manufactured in England on the hall floors. Advertisements for oilcloths appear in mid-nineteenth-century Natchez newspapers and are documented as having existed in the halls at Mount Repose (1824 and redecorated in mid-nineteenth century), Greenleaves (1838 and redecorated 1849), Lansdowne (1853), Weymouth Hall (1855), Magnolia Hall (1858), the Tillman House (1837 and remodeled ca. 1858) at 506 High Street.²⁸⁰ Magnolia Hall's 1860s inventory mentions an oilcloth on the dining room floor, as well. These durable floor coverings were often block-printed to imitate Brussels carpet, like the one in the rear hallway of Melrose and the one formerly at Weymouth Hall; others featured geometric patterns like the one in the front hall of Melrose and the hallway of the Tillman House.

Paint analysis documents that the interior walls of Melrose were both papered and painted. No original wallpapers survive at Melrose, although a former owner has a scrap of the original drawing room wallpaper in white and gold. Surface analysis has confirmed the early presence of wallpaper in the drawing room, entry hall, and second-story rooms of the house. The business ledgers of the Robert Dixon paint and wallpaper business document the 1858 papering of the first floor of newly built Dunleith.²⁸¹

Original wallpapers survive on the parlor walls of Lansdowne with beautifully colored figures by Zuber and a field paper by Delicourt.²⁸² Unused remnants of other papers survive in the Lansdowne attic. Greenleaves retains original nineteenth-century wallpaper on the walls of the double parlors. Roseland on Liberty Road retains its original mid-nineteenth-century oak-grained wallpaper on the dining room walls. Stanton Hall's walls were apparently not papered. Although charges appear throughout the Dixon paint and wallpaper business ledgers for graining, glazing, and painting at Stanton Hall, no references to wallpaper have been found, and historic photographs of the Stanton Hall parlors do not indicate wallpaper.

The unpapered rooms at Melrose show evidence of both painting and glazing and probably exhibited the "beautiful China and Zinc Glosses, and all kinds of zinc painting"

²⁸⁰ Advertisement for sale at establishment of T. C. Reddy, *Natchez Daily Courier*, February 13, 1856. The original oilcloth at Weymouth Hall was still on the floor in the 1970s. Ronald W. Miller traced the pattern and salvaged portions before it was removed during a ca. 1980 restoration (tracing at HNF). Magnolia Hall's hall oilcloth is documented in an 1866 inventory (Magnolia Hall Site File, HNF). D'Evereux Nobles, owner of Lansdowne, interviewed by Mary W. Miller in 1995, stated that her father had told her that Lansdowne originally featured an oilcloth on the hall floor. Virginia Morrison, owner of Greenleaves, interviewed by Mary W. Miller in 1995, stated that Greenleaves also originally had an oilcloth on the hall floor. Irene Shields Godfrey, former owner of Mount Repose, interviewed by Mary W. Miller in 1979, stated the hall oilcloth survived between the original floor and later floor installed in the twentieth century. The sample of the oilcloth (HNF) from the Tillman House, 506 High Street, contains the cutout for the newel of the staircase.

²⁸¹ Joseph Dixon Ledger, March 16, 1858, microfilm, MDAH.Papers.

²⁸² Catherine Lynn, author of *Wallpaper in America*, has identified and dated both the Zuber and Delicourt paper during a visit to Natchez and subsequent follow-up with the late Margaret Persell Marshall, deceased owner of Lansdowne.

advertised by one house, sign, and ornamental painter and paper hanger in 1854.²⁸³ Paint analysis has documented that the dining room and library at Melrose were painted and glazed in the brownish rose color that is often found as an original paint color in Natchez interiors and period paintings of nineteenth-century interiors. Other examples include the parlors at Richmond (ca. 1838) and the parlor and dining room at the Tillman House (1837 and remodeled ca. 1858).

4.11 Mechanical Systems

Melrose has the integral wood gutters that are typical of nineteenth-century Natchez. These large wood gutters collected the rainwater from the roof and fed it through downspouts into an attic tank and underground cisterns. Nineteenth-century building specifications for downspouts in Natchez call for tin downspouts; whether or not copper was ever specified is not known.

Cistern water was used in Natchez for drinking, cooking, and washing. Auburn architect Levi Weeks claimed credit for introducing the cistern system to Natchez, writing, "The town has been supplied altogether by the waters from the Miss. until of late there is [sic] 3 wells and a great number of cisterns introduced by your humble servant..."²⁸⁴

Underground cisterns were typically deep cylindrical pits with plastered sides and bottoms that were topped by a saucer dome of bricks with a neck capped by an iron lid or cover. The cistern system appears to be more elaborate and intact at Melrose than anywhere in Natchez, with multiple cisterns, original latticed cistern houses, and pumps with antebellum patent dates still surviving. Unusual survivals are the metal strainers that filtered the rainwater before it fed into the cistern. Dunleith had a plumbed bathroom with tub, shower, and flush commode, and a plumbed laundry that were fed water from a holding tank in the attic of the rear service wing. Although such a tank exists in the attic of the main house at Melrose, built a decade earlier than Dunleith, no physical evidence has yet been found to confirm that any such bathroom or laundry facility existed. Family recollections also provide no information to indicate that a plumbed bathroom was a feature of Melrose.

Melrose's mahogany dining room punkah with carved anthemion is the finest in the region and possibly the nation. Natchez has the largest collection of punkahs in America, including examples at Linden, Elgin, Elms Court, Longwood, Fair Oaks, Greenleaves, Ingleside, and Arlington (stored in kitchen). They are known to have existed at Smithland, Laurel Hill, Magnolia Hill, and Brandon Hall. Punkahs were typically suspended above dining room tables and served the dual purpose of cooling dinner guests and keeping flies off the food on the table. The Greenleaves punkah is locally unique in being suspended from the ceiling of the rear gallery. The Elms Court punkah is unusual in having metal ceiling brackets and a metal punkah frame, which is covered in painted canvas.

²⁸³ *The Natchez Daily Courier*, July 8, 1854.

²⁸⁴ Levi Weeks to Epaphras Hoyt, September 27, 1812, Levi W. Weeks and Family Papers, MDAH.

Lighting in Natchez was provided both by oil and gas in the 1850s. Natchez did not have a city gas works until 1858, and the use of gas was generally limited to townhouses that could connect to the city system.²⁸⁵ However, at least two Natchez houses, Lansdowne and Elms Court, had their own gas plants, and remnants survive at Elms Court. Melrose, like the majority of the suburban villa estates, did not have gas lighting. Interestingly, however, both Richmond and Melrose have chandeliers in their parlors or drawing rooms that were manufactured with gas pipes but had oil fonts added. The Melrose parlor or drawing room chandelier, like most in Natchez, was manufactured by Cornelius and Company [later Cornelius and Baker and Cornelius and Son] of Philadelphia. Lansdowne, Stanton Hall, and The Elms have original lighting fixtures by the Cornelius firm, and Dunleith had Cornelius fixtures, which have since been removed.²⁸⁶ The simple front hall candle fixture in the Gothic style at Melrose, since relocated, is very similar to the original front hall fixture at Richmond, which is also of Gothic design.²⁸⁷ Melrose's rear hall fixture is probably original but has no counterpart in any other Natchez house; however, it is complemented by nearly matching table lamps.

Mounted on the back wall of Melrose, and in other locations as well, are original slave bells that were wired to bell pulls or cranks inside the house. Melrose probably has Natchez's largest collection of slave bells, although a number of Natchez houses, including The Elms and Greenleaves, still retain a few. The front doorbell at Melrose is also original and features an exterior silver-plated, wall-mounted pull that activates a bell on the inside of the hallway. Several Natchez houses, including Lansdowne, The Elms, and Greenleaves, retain their original front door bell pulls.

4.12 Outbuildings

Melrose has the largest collection of surviving antebellum support buildings of any of the Natchez suburban villa estates and more than any plantation house in the area. Only Magnolia Hill and Cherry Grove in Adams County and Wyolah Plantation in neighboring Jefferson County retain significant collections of antebellum dependency buildings. These buildings were generally not as finely finished as the main house, except in the case of billiard halls, doctor's offices, and similar spaces that were used by the family in business or entertainment. As at Melrose, the dependency buildings of the suburban villas often incorporated out-of-date architectural details. For example, the matching two-story brick dependency buildings at Melrose originally had wood shingle roofs and twelve-over-twelve window sash.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁵ The act of incorporation of the Natchez Gas Light Company appeared in the *Natchez Mississippi Free Trader*, June 2, 1857. The opening of the gas works followed the next year.

²⁸⁶ The original hall fixtures from Dunleith are now at The Elms.

²⁸⁷ The Callon family relocated the original front hall fixture to the hall linking the dining room and stair hall and hung a more elaborate fixture in its place. See Melrose 1990 inventory, Melrose Site File, HNF.

²⁸⁸ Although several of the suburban villa houses had both a billiard hall and/or ten-pin [bowling] alley, no documentation exists for such structures at Melrose. Longwood and Linden are documented as

No rigid formula dictated the arrangement and placement of the support buildings of either suburban villa estates or plantations, though those at Melrose appear to have been set around the radius of a 475-foot circle. Aside from the symmetrical arrangement of the two-story service wings, cistern houses, smoke house, and privy, the arrangement of the other outbuildings appears to have been based on the lay of the land, existing landscape features, and the personal desires of the owner.

The kitchen at Melrose is one of two matching service buildings flanking the rear courtyard. Greater and lesser houses built prior to 1858 almost all feature detached service wings placed perpendicular to the main house at its rear. These include Auburn, Arlington, Monmouth, Rosalie, Van Court Town House, Quegles House (600 Washington St.), D'Evereux, Elmscourt, Greenleaves, Oakland, Linden, Shadyside, Lansdowne, Dixie, Montaigne, and Dunleith. Exceptions include houses like Choctaw and The Parsonage, where the kitchens were located in raised basements. Lansdowne (1853), like Melrose, features matching two-story brick outbuildings flanking the rear courtyard, as did Oakland (1841) and D'Evereux (1836), but only one survives at each house.

On the eve of the Civil War, builders began for the first time to attach the service wing containing the kitchen to the main house. At Magnolia Hall (1858), the kitchen wing extends from the rear of the side elevation. At Stanton Hall (1858) and the nonextant Ashburn, built just before the Civil War, the kitchen wing is perpendicular to the main house and extends from the rear. Ashburn was locally unique in wrapping its giant-order colonnade not only across the rear of the main house, but also across the facade of the attached rear wing.²⁸⁹

The two-story brick kitchen and dairy buildings at Melrose relate to similar buildings at other Natchez suburban estates. Originally their second stories provided housing for slaves and were partitioned into rooms by vertical-board walls held in place with a shoe and ceiling molding. The second story of the kitchen wing at Monmouth was originally finished in the same manner. The first story of the kitchen building, like others in the Natchez area, contained both the kitchen and a slave dining room. The floors were cement until the 1970s, a treatment that may have been original. Weymouth Hall has a cement basement floor that is documented as original in an 1855 newspaper account of the building's construction.²⁹⁰

The original function of the eastern first-story room in the service building known as the Dairy was most likely a dairy or milk room. Supporting this function are the small vents typical of antebellum dairy buildings, the built-in stuccoed basins for processing and storing milk, and the documented use of the room as a dairy during the Kelly period. The

having ten-pin alleys. Laurel Hill, The Elms, Auburn, and Gloucester had detached billiard halls, and, although all survive, only Auburn's billiard hall is substantially unaltered.

²⁸⁹ A plan, sketch drawing of the rear, and a photograph of the facade of Ashburn can be found in the Ashburn Research File, HNF.

²⁹⁰ *The Natchez Daily Courier*, June 9, 1855.

small vents are apparent in early exterior photographs of the building, and the stuccoed basins appear to be original. A young New York City couple, like the Kellys, would not likely have come to the South, installed a dairy facility like those existing at other Natchez antebellum houses in the town, country, and suburbs, and instructed former slaves on how to use it.

The dairy room in the Melrose dairy building relates to similar buildings and rooms throughout Adams County that functioned as dairies or milk rooms. Included among these are Arlington (ca. 1818), Mount Repose (1824), Magnolia Hill (ca. 1835), Oakland (ca. 1841), Mount Olive (ca. 1845), and the Cunningham House (remodeled ca. 1845) on Homochitto Street. The Melrose dairy also relates to the laundry room in the basement of Dunleith which is believed to have served as both laundry and dairy according to the Carpenter family who owned the house for almost a century.²⁹¹ However, the built-in basins in the basement of Dunleith were definitely used for washing, since they feature an incorporated fire chamber and flue for heating water.

At Magnolia Hill, a combination dairy and cistern house is located in a freestanding brick structure that was originally fronted by a lattice-enclosed porch that contained the cistern. At Mount Olive, a similar structure constitutes what was called the "milk house" by the family. The buildings at both Magnolia Hill and Mount Olive feature sash windows and a stuccoed or plastered trough along the length of one wall. At Oakland and the Cunningham House the dairy rooms are located in the partially raised basement at the rear of the house and exhibit the same trough-like structures seen at Magnolia Hill and Mount Olive. At all the houses except Melrose, these troughs resemble a short, stuccoed, or plastered brick wall of approximately two or more feet in depth, with basins recessed into the top. Melrose's double-tiered trough arrangement is the most complex of all the extant dairies or milk houses in the county. Pans or jugs holding milk products or other foodstuffs could rest in cool water in the lower tier, where they were protected from spoiling and crawling insects, at the same time that the upper tier was being used for processing milk products.

The McMurrin family undoubtedly received dairy products from their Adams County and Wilkinson County plantations, as well as from the domestic animals at Melrose. Likewise, William Johnson kept cattle on his farm outside town, but he also kept cows at his house in downtown Natchez to supply the daily milk needs of his family.²⁹² One of John Quitman's daughters described the supplies that were sent from Quitman's Springfield Plantation. She wrote that a cart came down with supplies twice a week with butter, eggs, meat, corn, oats, fowl, or anything else that the home place did not furnish in sufficient quantity. Between June 3 and 9, 1846, 51 lbs. of butter were delivered to Monmouth.²⁹³

²⁹¹ Alma K. Carpenter, interview by Mary W. Miller, Natchez, HNF, August 20, 1995.

²⁹² Hogan and Davis, 529.

²⁹³ May, 132.

The western first-story room of the Dairy building was probably intended for use as a school room or office or as a combination of the two. Family correspondence does not indicate that the McMurrin children attended school at Melrose, but the room may have served some school-room type purpose. The square footage of the room is much smaller than buildings or rooms documented for billiards use. According to his great-granddaughter, George Malin Davis once used the western first-story room as an office.²⁹⁴

The cistern houses at Melrose exhibit a high degree of integrity and relate to similar structures in the Natchez area. Although relatively unaltered with thick lattice typical of the mid-nineteenth century, both cistern houses show evidence of repair. The wood-shingle roofs of the cistern houses were replaced with stamped metal shingles, possibly before or soon after the arrival of the Kellys in 1901. Early-twentieth-century photographs showing wood-shingle roofs on all other dependency buildings show metal shingles on the cistern houses. Metal shingles became popular in Natchez about 1890. The brick cistern necks, the iron tops, and the pumps feature both mid-nineteenth century and replacement parts.

Surviving mid-nineteenth-century lattice structures are rare in Natchez. Most latticed structures were used as cistern houses rather than ornamental gazebos, and as cisterns became obsolete, the structures that screened and shaded them were allowed to deteriorate and were not repaired. Cistern houses that appear to be original to the mid-nineteenth century survive at the rear of Hope Farm and at Myrtle Terrace, although the Myrtle Terrace cistern house is not in its original location and no longer functions as a cistern house. At The Elms, a latticed gazebo, similar to the cistern houses at Melrose, is located in the front yard. An 1859 pencil sketch of The Elms documents the existing gazebo as antebellum. Photographs of historic, nonextant cistern houses include examples at The Forest, Monmouth, and Franklin Place, the plantation of Edward Turner. Latticed gazebos that were both ornamental and serviceable as shelters for wells or cisterns are documented in pattern books of the 1840s and 1850s.

The brick privy at Melrose is one of several brick outhouse structures in the Natchez area. Both Lansdowne and Longwood retain their original brick privies, each with male and female compartments. The Melrose privy is probably the most elaborate in Mississippi, with male and female compartments and seating boxes scaled for both adults and children. It also has other small compartmentlike rooms whose original uses are unknown. D'Evereux also retains an original privy building with male and female compartments, but the D'Evereux privy features wood frame construction with Grecian corner pilasters.

The brick building known as the smokehouse was apparently intended for that purpose, but its interior appearance suggests that it was little used for that purpose. The interior of

²⁹⁴ Marian Kelly Ferry, interviewed by Ronald W. Miller, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1976.

the building does not have the smoked appearance or the smell of a building once used as a smokehouse, but it may have been thoroughly cleaned when converted to a pump house during the Kelly period. The building strongly relates architecturally to the brick smokehouse at Cherry Grove Plantation and to others that survive in the region. The building has no windows, except for a small opening with louvered shutter. Smokehouses traditionally have no windows, only vents, and feature open framing for suspending meats.

The slave houses at Melrose seem finished to an uncommonly fine state, but no counterparts on antebellum estates survive for comparison. They are definitely finished to a much finer state than the slave cabins that survive at Wyolah in Jefferson County and at Canebrake in Concordia Parish, Louisiana; however, it is realistic to suppose that the slaves attached to the suburban villa mansions of Natchez had much finer houses than those who worked on the plantations. The Melrose slave houses are distinguished from most of their plantation counterparts by having double-hung window sash, plaster walls, and tongue-and-groove flooring. Although many of the two-story brick buildings that functioned as both kitchen and slave residence survive at antebellum suburban estates, the frame buildings that were also scattered about the grounds are no longer extant. Archeological evidence and the 1864 Map of the Defenses of Natchez (Fig. 30) documents at least two frame buildings, side by side, on the grounds of Monmouth, that presumably provided housing for slaves.

The slave privy is the only known surviving building of its type in Mississippi. The frame building is divided into male and female compartments like the brick privy used by the McMurrin family. The two slave houses and the slave privy suggest that the slaves who lived on Natchez antebellum suburban estates probably had better domestic amenities than many white farmers with small farms in other areas of the South. The buildings associated with slavery at Melrose represent the domestic arrangements of a very small percentage of slaves in the antebellum South, just as the mansion itself is not representative of the domestic arrangements of the vast majority of white Southerners.

The carriage house at Melrose is one of the finest surviving in the Natchez area. Only Elms Court's brick carriage house is as substantial, but it lacks the fine architectural detailing of its frame counterpart at Melrose, which is elaborated with a half-round louver and pilasters. The carriage house now rests upon a concrete slab that was added during the Kelly period. The building was jacked in place for the installation of the slab. Construction details, which include the lack of circular saw marks on the structural timber, document the building to the mid-nineteenth century, and the building occupies the same site as it did on the 1908 survey map. The stable/barn at Melrose is one of only a few surviving barns and stables in the region, and is distinguished by its survival and relative integrity rather than by its architectural finish or detail. Like the carriage house, the stable now rests upon a concrete slab that appears to date to the 1920s. The building was probably jacked in place to construct the slab, because that would have been the

simplest way to accomplish the project. Other alterations have occurred and include the installation of windows and the rearrangement of doors.

4.13 Conclusion

The high quality of the architecture, the outstanding architectural integrity, the documentation of designer, builder, and construction, the survival of original interior decorative arts, original dependency buildings, and the integrity of setting all unite to make Melrose one of the most important historic house complexes in the nation. This combination of circumstances is surely the basis of the assessment by William C. Allen, architectural historian of the United States Capitol, that "...Melrose is the best Greek Revival house in the South."²⁹⁵ The importance of the Melrose complex as a whole was also noted by Paul Goeldner of the National Park Service, when he nominated Melrose for National Historic Landmark status in 1974:

In a community of magnificent mansions, Melrose is remarkable for the perfection of its design and the integrity of its maintenance and surroundings. Its detached kitchen is still used, having never been replaced by alterations and additions to the main house. Built in 1845, its ownership has been in only two families; its furnishings have never been dispersed. The lawns and outbuildings complete a complex designed and executed as a whole and never compromised by unsympathetic accretions and encroachments.²⁹⁶

The Melrose mansion house alone is not a nationally significant expression of the Greek Revival style. The design of the house supports the newspaper obituary of Jacob Byers in its assertion that both the design and construction of Melrose were the work of Byers. Strong vernacular building traditions and the continued use of design elements that echoed the earlier Federal style indicate that Melrose was the product of a locally based master builder rather than a professional designer of buildings. Although remarkable for the high quality of its brickwork and interior finishes, Melrose is not an academic expression of the Greek Revival style.

The Greek Revival style in Natchez is distinguished more by the quantity and quality of its grand examples rather than for its allusions to academic correctness. The most academically pretentious of the Natchez Greek Revival buildings are the front section of Richmond (ca. 1838), Greenleaves (1838), the Commercial Bank and Banker's House (1838), and Trinity Episcopal Church (1822; remodeled 1838).

In his 1944 landmark publication, entitled *Greek Revival Architecture in America*, Talbot Hamlin noted that the word *revival* in Greek Revival is an "unfortunate misnomer, for

²⁹⁵ Miller and Miller, *Great Houses of Natchez*, vii.

²⁹⁶ Melrose Site File, National Register nomination, HNF.

this style was only a revival in that its decorative vocabulary was based upon classic Greek detail. In all other respects it was typically of America."²⁹⁷ Melrose is a classic expression of the Greek Revival style as defined by Hamlin:

This manner called 'Greek Revival' penetrated almost all sections of the country. It moved westward with the advancing frontier and is seen in surprising refinement and beauty in localities which were wilderness but a few years before. The designers of this period seemed to possess an innate talent for adapting the new architectural fashion to the requirements of the region, preserving traditional usages, accepting local building materials, and conforming to climatic exigencies.²⁹⁸

English-born architect T. K. Wharton, who visited Natchez in 1859, described Melrose in a diary kept during his visit. Wharton dismissed Stanton Hall as representing "immense outlay and little taste." The Elms he described as "beautiful exceedingly." His description of Melrose provides the most unbiased opinion for establishing local context:

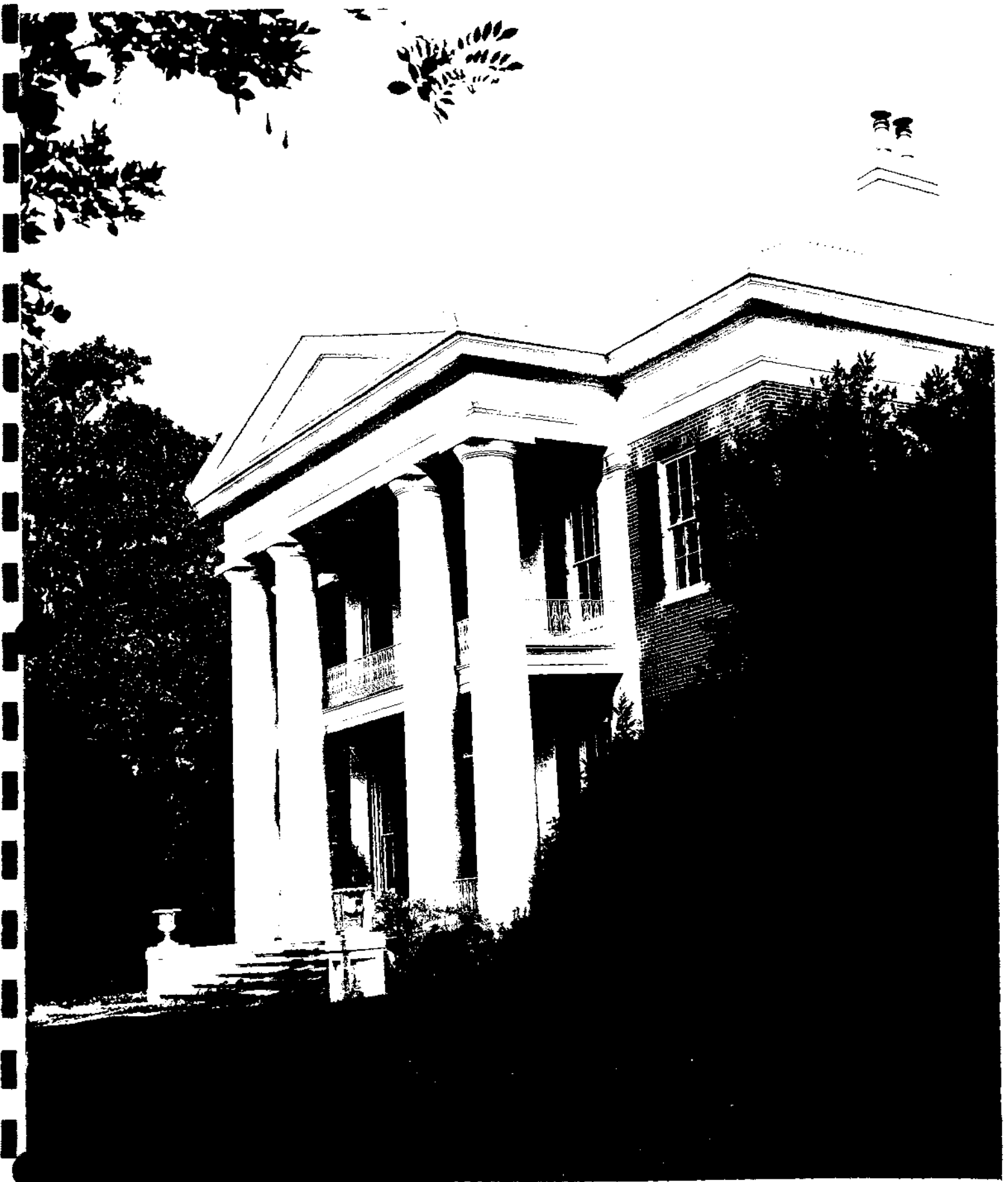
...but surpassing all, that of Mr. McMurrin, looking for all the world like an English park, ample mansion of solid design in brick with portico and pediment flanked by grand forest trees stretching way on either side, and half embracing a vast lawn in front of emerald green comprising at least 200 acres [sic] through which winds the carriage drive—The place is English all over.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁷ Talbot Hamlin, *Greek Revival Architecture in America: Being an Account of Important Trends in American Architecture and American Life prior to the War Between the States* (1944; reprint, New York: Dover Publication, Inc., 1964), xvii.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ T. K. Wharton, *Diary*, August 23, 1859, New York Public Library, New York, NY.

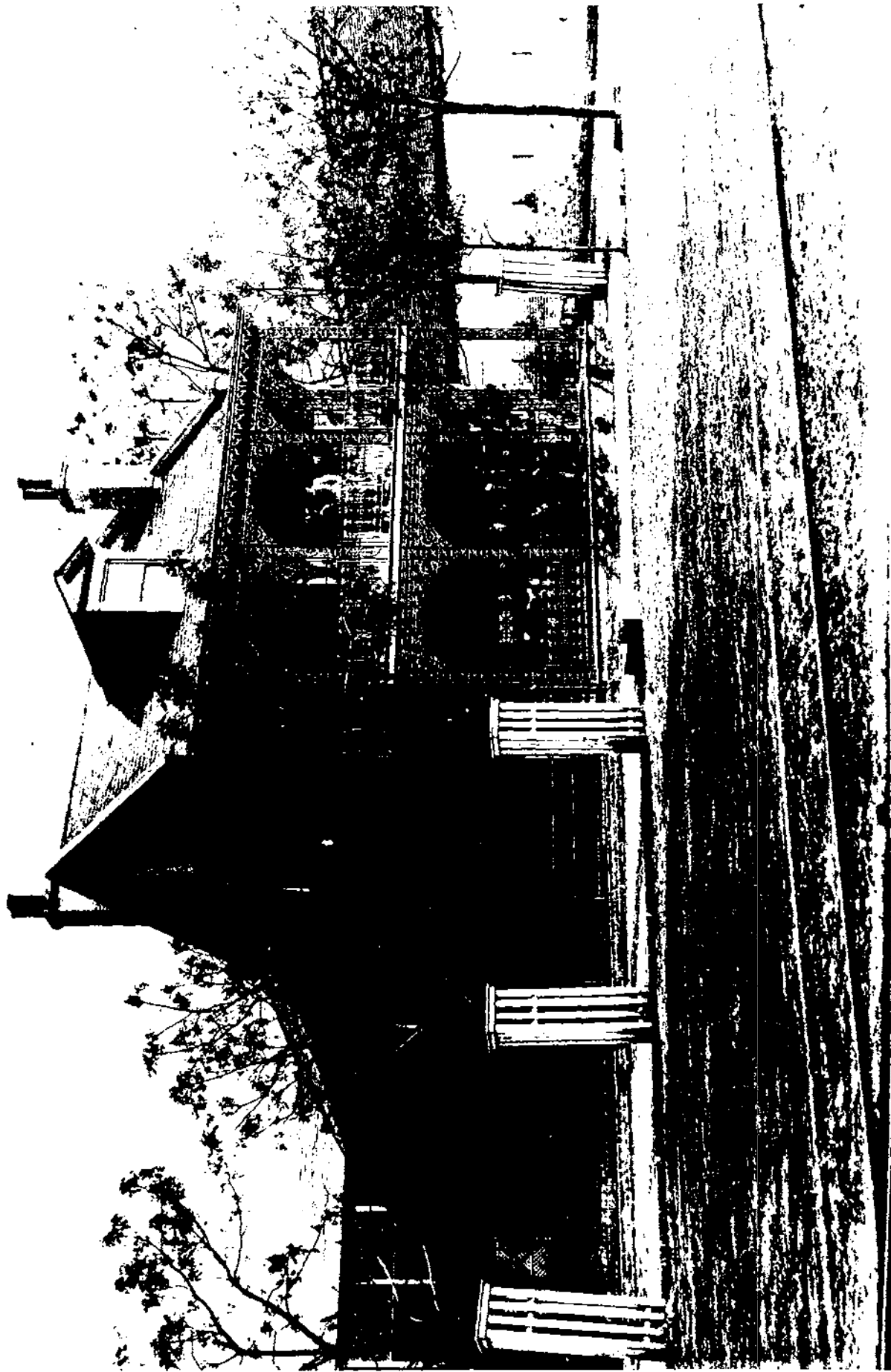




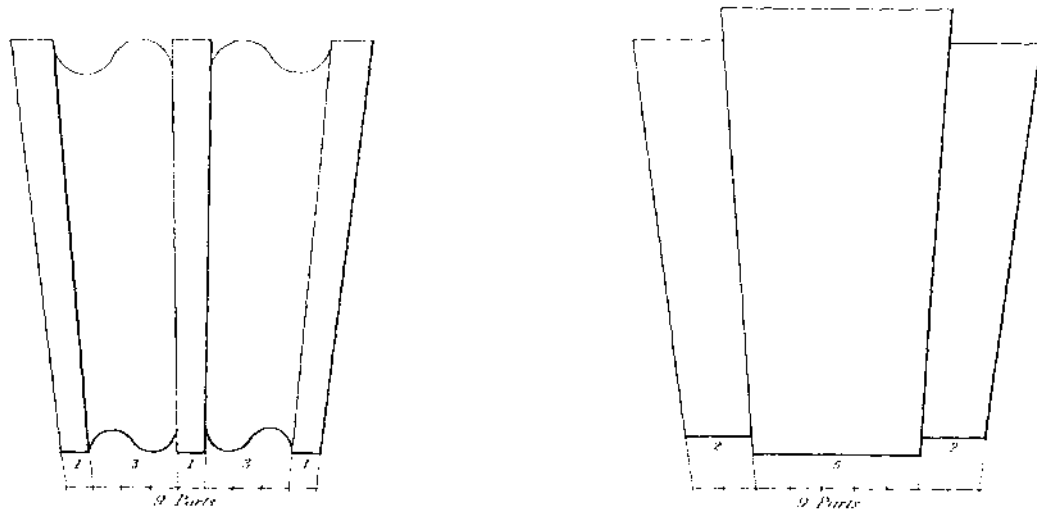
25. Front elevation of Melrose.



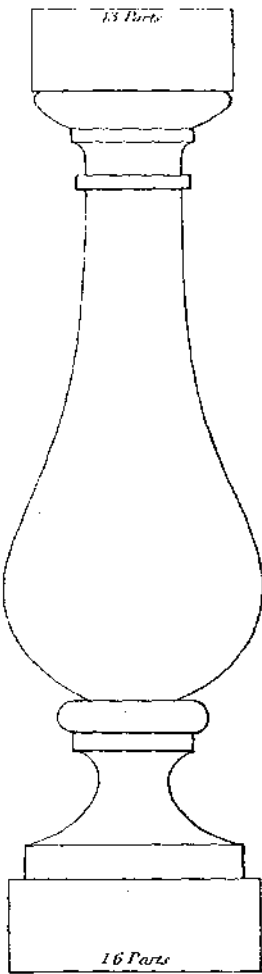
26. Pencil sketch of The Elms by Thomas K. Wharton, ca. 1859.



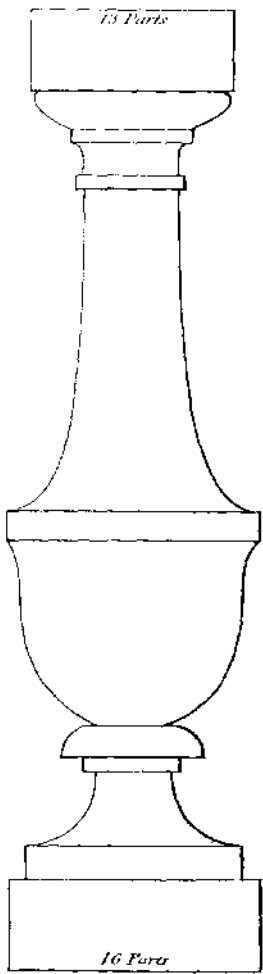
27. Robert Smith House, also known as Evansview or the Evans-Bontura House.



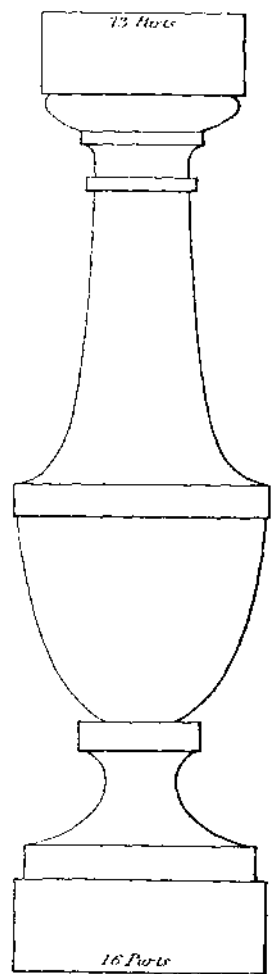
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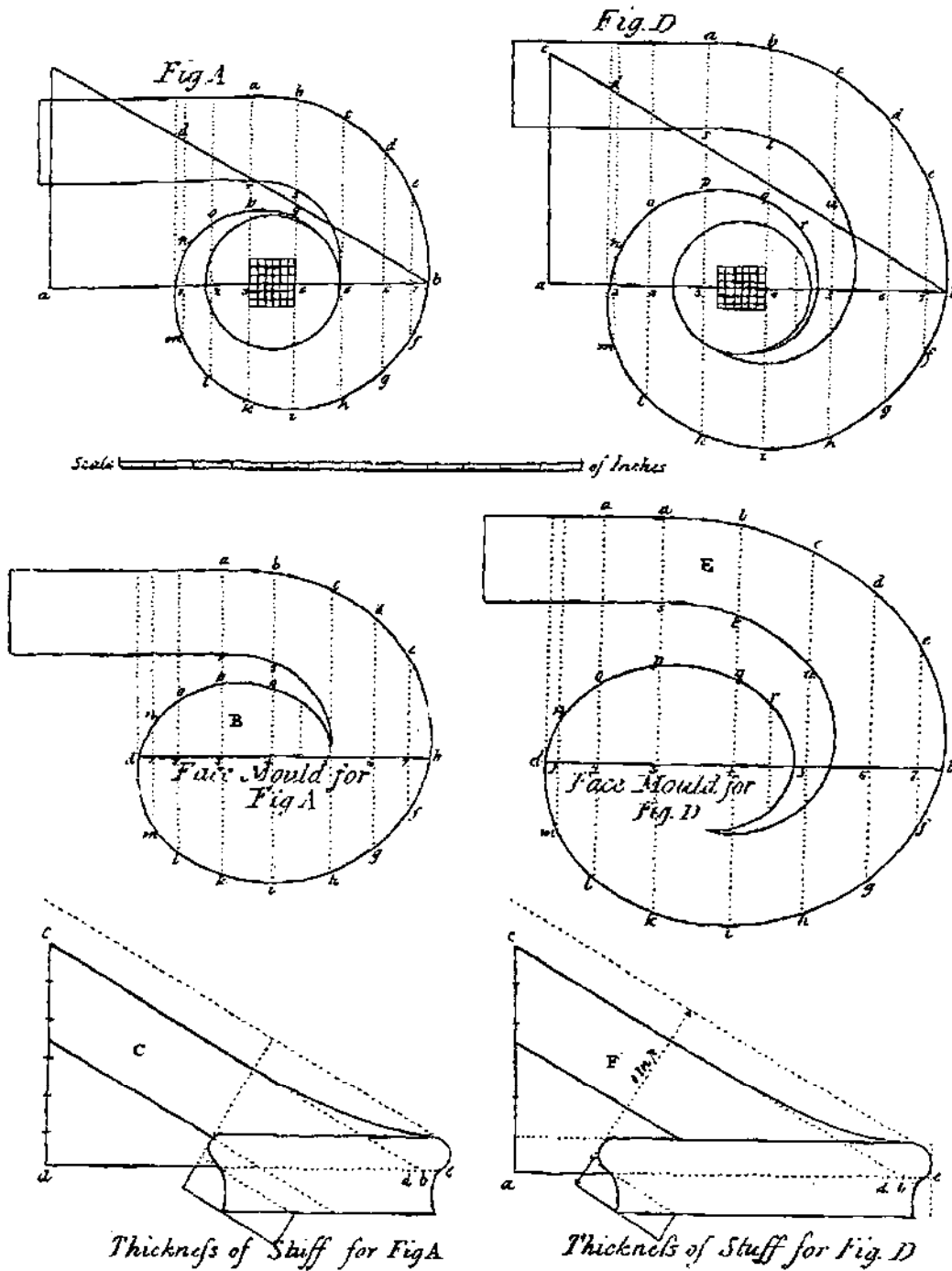
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Asher & Smith, Sc.

28. Baluster designs published by Asher Benjamin in his 1830 handbook, *The Practical House Carpenter*.

This shows how a Scroll is to be got out of the Solid



29. Scroll designs published by Asher Benjamin in his 1830 handbook, *The Practical House Carpenter*,



30. Map of the Defenses of Natchez by Capt. John M. Wilson, 1864.

**5.0 WILLIAM JOHNSON AND
THE BLACK EXPERIENCE IN NATCHEZ
(1790 to 1851)**



5.1 Introduction

Although Natchez is best known for its antebellum townhouse and villa mansions and the cotton aristocracy that built them, neither the opulent culture nor the economic system that produced and supported them would have been possible without the community's large black population. This chapter explores the lives and legacy of African Americans in Natchez, with particular emphasis on William Johnson (1809-1851), freed slave, entrepreneur, slaveholder, diarist, and builder of the William Johnson House.

Studies of black life in the antebellum period are limited due to the overwhelming rate of illiteracy of the black population in the South during that period. Information and data regarding the experiences of slaves are largely restricted to slave narratives and the writings of whites of the same period. A small body of literature is also available pertaining to the lives and insights of free African Americans, like William Johnson, which provide an opportunity to learn about antebellum life as experienced by and in the words of a black person. Johnson's diaries, published as *William Johnson's Natchez: The Ante-Bellum Diary of a Free Negro*, provide an unusually detailed account of life in Natchez, as well as glimpses of the complex character of the African-American experience in the antebellum South. Although Johnson's life was atypical, it illuminates the social, political, and economic currents that were present in the lives of free and enslaved African Americans during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Slavery, generally defined in the dictionary, is an institution whereby one person owns another and can exact from that person labor or other services. Historian Frank Tannenbaum, who wrote *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas*, maintained that slavery, as practiced in the United States, was unique in defining a slave as chattel, an unanimated inheritable property, whose master enjoyed the powers of life and death over his body.³⁰⁰ Tannenbaum also argued that a slave labor system could be viewed in two basic ways: as either an "institution" or as a system so pervasive as to constitute a "slave society."³⁰¹ Historian Michael Mullin, writing in *American Negro Slavery, a Documentary History*, succinctly described Tannenbaum's slave society: "As slavery encompassed the South it changed profoundly all of its most important institutions: the family, law, religion, politics, and even diet and architecture."³⁰² No where was the concept of the "slave society" more fully developed than Natchez, Mississippi. Historian Michael Wayne described Natchez as the "richest principality in the domain of King Cotton in the decades leading up the Civil War" and maintained that "no where in the antebellum South were the cotton economy and the slave plantation more dominant."

³⁰⁰ Carl N. Degler, *Neither Black Nor White, Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1971), 26-27.

³⁰¹ Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York, 1946), 116-119.

³⁰² Michael Mullin, *American Negro Slavery, A Documentary History* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1976), 28.

5.2 King Cotton and Black Labor

In 1717, the French government contracted with John Law's Company of the West Indies to develop the Lower Mississippi Valley into a profitable agricultural and defensive region. The Company brought 3,000 African slaves to Louisiana and developed the area that extended along the Mississippi River from New Orleans north to present-day Arkansas. According to the plan, enslaved blacks were to cultivate and process indigo and tobacco, build forts, cut timber, and maintain a thriving river traffic in corn, deerskins, Canadian furs, and salted meats in a trading network stretching from Quebec to New Orleans. Additionally, in times of war, the enslaved men would be used as soldiers to defend the Company of the Indies against Indians or other Europeans.³⁰³ Fort Rosalie in Natchez was built with forced Indian and black labor. Estimates of enslaved persons in residence at the Fort vary, but stand at a minimum of 200.³⁰⁴ While John Law's Company of the West Indies controlled the Natchez District, the number of African slaves greatly increased. In 1723, the population of the Natchez settlement was 303, including 111 slaves. By 1727, the population more than doubled to 713, including 280 slaves.³⁰⁵

Once enslaved blacks started arriving on the Mississippi frontier, they were preferred to Native Americans as the forced laborer of choice. This dubious distinction can be attributed to the same reasons offered in the literature on slavery in the South Carolina low-country and Georgia coastal region: (1) the Africans were aliens in the territory and, being unfamiliar with their surroundings, were believed to be less likely to escape; and (2) the climate and agricultural needs of tobacco and indigo were considered comparable to those of Africa.³⁰⁶ According to historian Robert Liston, the Spanish introduced slavery to the Americas, and they thought they had hit upon the perfect solution to help them tame the New World: African Slaves. "The Africans were big and strong," wrote Liston and, "They came from hot tropical lands and were accustomed to heat. They could not run away and melt into the populace, as whites and Indians could. As black men in a white and copper world, they were clearly identifiable."³⁰⁷ Slavery in the New World differed from the slavery practiced in the ancient world in one very important way; it was imposed only on people of color.³⁰⁸

The Spanish and French in Colonial America appear to have been more accepting of blacks than the English settlers. Racism tended to be lessened in regions where the

³⁰³ Ronald L. F. Davis, *The Black Experience in Natchez 1720-1880*, Special History Study, Natchez National Historical Park (Eastern National Park and Monument Association, 1994), 1.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 4.

³⁰⁵ James, 8.

³⁰⁶ Beverly M. John, "Culture and Social Change: The Values and Behavior of the African-American Community in the South Carolina and Georgia Coastal Region in the Antebellum and Postbellum Period," (Ph. D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1991).

³⁰⁷ Robert Liston, *Slavery in America, The History of Slavery* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970), 26-27.

³⁰⁸ Degler, 25.

influence of the Roman Catholic Church was strong. The Spanish, French, and Portuguese sometimes intermarried with the blacks. The rapid rate of intermarriage of free citizens and slaves in Brazil following emancipation in 1889 is an example.³⁰⁹ Carl Degler's *Neither Black Nor White* offers the most complete comparison of slavery in the United States and Brazil. Degler notes that Brazil never developed the full-blown racial defense of slavery that characterized the defense of slavery in the American South.³¹⁰ However, Degler disagreed with his predecessor, historian Frank Tannenbaum, who wrote that the United States alone defined a slave as mere chattel, and argued that Brazil and the United States had striking similarities in the legal definition of a slave. According to Degler, the text of nineteenth-century law in the American South defined a slave as chattel property, but judicial interpretations of the law always recognized that a slave was both a human being and a piece of property. In 1818, a court in Mississippi observed that "Slavery is condemned by reason and the laws of nature." Later, in 1821, a Mississippi court wrote, "In some respects, slaves may be considered as chattels, but in others they are regarded as men."³¹¹

Recorded laws regarding slavery provide some insight into the institution of slavery, but they should be regarded with skepticism. Some laws were adopted to ensure humane treatment of slaves, but not all slaves benefited from them. The reverse was also true as travel writer Joseph Holt Ingraham noted about Natchez in 1835: "Restrictions upon slaves are very rigorous in law, but not in fact."³¹² Historian J. F. H. Claiborne, writing almost two decades after the Civil War, offered an economic generalization about slavery and the treatment of slaves: "Aside from considerations of humanity, that species of property [slaves] was so much capital, and the more care taken of it, the longer it lasted and the more it paid."³¹³

A recent Stanford University dissertation by Ariela Julie Gross, "Pandora's Box: Slavery, Character, and Southern Culture in the Courtroom, 1800-1860," examines in detail the law and culture of slavery through trials of civil disputes involving slaves in southern courtrooms, particularly in Adams County, Mississippi. Gross acknowledges the opinions of jurists who wrote "that slaves had the 'double character of person and property' under the law, which generally meant that slaves were persons when accused of a crime, and property the rest of the time." According to Gross, however, in the mundane civil disputes of the Southern courtroom:

[The] parties in the courtroom brought into question, and gave legal meaning, to the "character" as well as the resilient behavior of enslaved people who persisted in acting like people. Despite courts' efforts to treat slaves the same way they treated horses under the law of contracts and

³⁰⁹ Liston, 29-30.

³¹⁰ Degler, xi.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

³¹² Ingraham, 2: 258.

³¹³ Claiborne, 145.

torts, slaves' moral agency intruded into the courtroom in a variety of ways: through the testimony of witnesses about slaves' resistant actions; through witnesses' repetition of slaves' own statements; and through evidence of slaves' ability to manipulate whites through trickery.³¹⁴

Slavery increased dramatically in the Natchez region after settlers abandoned first tobacco and later indigo for cotton in the early 1790s. Cotton had already become the money crop in 1795, when the cotton gin was introduced to Mississippi. According to Louis Ruchames, "Of greatest import for the course of pro- and anti-slavery feeling, hence of racial thought in the United States, were the invention of the cotton gin and technological developments in the cotton textile industry in Europe as well as America."³¹⁵ These technological developments resulted in a vastly increased demand for cotton, a commensurate increase in cotton production, and a heightened demand for slave labor on southern cotton plantations. Between 1790 and 1808, when foreign slave trade was outlawed, more than 100,000 slaves were brought into the United States.³¹⁶

The Spanish court records and the early territorial court records of Adams County provide a substantial amount of information about the slave trade in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Records of slave sales often include place of birth or country of origin and indicate that most slaves sold in Natchez during the Spanish and early territorial periods were from Africa (in general), Guinea, and Jamaica and in that order. Sometimes records of slave sales noted African nation of origin, like Hibo, Hibon, Macoa, and Mandengo, and some records noted slaves from the islands of the Bahamas and St. Kitts. Mississippi historian J. F. H. Claiborne recounted the horrors of the colonial slave trade. In 1721, a ship of war arrived "with one hundred and twenty [slaves] having lost one hundred and eighty on the voyage. Three other vessels followed. They were half starved on the passage and put on short allowance after their arrival, there being a great scarcity of provisions in the colony."³¹⁷

The correspondence of Natchez planter William Dunbar documents how slaves were acquired during the early territorial period and also details the knowledge of African geography and biases about national characteristics held by Natchez planters. In a letter dated February 1, 1807, Dunbar requested agents in Charleston, South Carolina, to purchase a quantity of slaves equal to £3,000 sterling. Dunbar indicated that slaves from the Niger River region were most desirable and slaves from the Ibo nation were disliked in Mississippi. Africans of the Bornon, Houssa, Zanzara, Zegzeg, Kapina, and Tombootoo nations were also favored.³¹⁸

³¹⁴ Gross, 6-7.

³¹⁵ Louis Ruchames, *Racial Thought in America*, Vol. 1 (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1969), 238.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Claiborne, 38.

³¹⁸ Erin Rowland, *Life, Letters, and Papers of William Dunbar*, 351-353.

One of the most dramatic stories of African enslavement was played out in Natchez. Abd Rahman Ibrahima (Fig. 31), the son of Sori, King of the Fulbe Empire, was born in 1762 near Timbuctu in Guinea. Defeated in battle by a rival African tribe in 1788, he was captured and sold to slave traders, brought to Natchez, and purchased by planter Thomas Foster. Whether or not Foster and his family believed Ibrahima's claims of royal birth is unknown, but they named him *Prince*. In 1807, at the marketplace in Washington, Mississippi, Ibrahima was recognized by John Cox, an Irish doctor who had lived among Ibrahima's people after his life had been saved by King Sori. Cox was unsuccessful in attempts to purchase Ibrahima's freedom, but he did succeed in making him a local celebrity by substantiating his royal background. Eventually in the 1820s, local newspaper publisher Andrew Marshalk launched a campaign to free Ibrahima and return him to Africa. Finally freed by his master, Ibrahima raised money from the Natchez community to buy the freedom of his wife. He left Natchez and traveled through the eastern states attempting to raise money to free his entire family. He eventually made the long voyage to African, only to die on the African coast before making the final inland journey to his native land.³¹⁹

During the colonial and early territorial periods, slave sales were held at Natchez Under-the-Hill and on streets throughout the town, but, by the early 1790s, most slave transactions began to take place at the Forks-of-the-Road slave markets on the edge of town.³²⁰ After the War of 1812, the Forks-of-the-Road and Algiers (across from New Orleans) became the two busiest slave markets in the entire South.³²¹ Ordinances passed between 1833 and 1835 that restricted the marketing of slaves encouraged the growth of the markets at the Forks-of-the-Road. Travel writer Joseph Holt Ingraham remarked in his 1835 publication that "till recently, they were publicly sold, the marts being on nearly every street."³²²

In the 1830s, the City of Natchez passed at least three ordinances that restricted the public marketing of slaves in the city limits. In 1833, city officials enacted an ordinance that made it illegal for "any person to keep within the city of Natchez, negroes brought to this State as merchandise, for sale, nor shall any such negroes be offered for sale in said city, said commodity being considered, by this board, a nuisance, and dangerous to the health of the citizens." The ordinance applied only to "those persons commonly called negro traders" and exempted Natchez citizens. The ordinance was also not intended to prevent "any person from offering one or more negroes for sale at public auction, for any one day," but it did restrict people from offering any slave "for more than one day at any one time."³²³ In 1835, the Natchez Board of Selectmen enacted ordinances to prohibit the exhibition of slaves as merchandise on street corners and in front of stores within the city

³¹⁹ Terry Alford, *Prince Among Slaves: The True Story of an African Prince Sold into Slavery in the American South* (New York: 1977).

³²⁰ James, 46.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 197.

³²² Ingraham, 2:236.

³²³ *Code of the Ordinances of the City of Natchez, Now in Force* (Natchez: Giles M. Hillyer, City Printer, 1854), 151-152.

limits.³²⁴ These ordinances did not totally prohibit the sale of slaves within the city limits, but they did prohibit the public exhibition that had been an almost daily occurrence in downtown Natchez. Slave sales continued to take place in the city limits, but such sales occurred inside auction houses like Jacob Soria's on Main Street, where slaves were often sold with other foreclosed property.

John McMurrin of Melrose discussed the Natchez 1833 ordinance restricting slave traders from operating in the city limits in a speech he delivered at a Millard Filmore rally in 1856. McMurrin compared the Natchez ordinance and its purpose to a similar ordinance in the District of Columbia and to a provision in the Constitution of Mississippi:

The question of the abolition of Slavery in the District of Columbia, was settled by a law prohibiting shambles or depots by negro traders in the District, and prohibiting the introduction of slaves within the District for sale as merchandise. The same, as the city ordinance of Natchez, which has removed these depots outside the city limits; and the same as the provision in the Constitution of the State at its adoption, that after a certain date no slaves could be brought into this state as merchandise. The people of the District thus remained in the enjoyment of their negro property, just as the people of Mississippi.³²⁵

Franklin, Armfield and Company of Alexandria, Virginia, the primary firm engaged in the interstate slave trade, maintained its southwestern headquarters at the Forks-of-the-Road. Isaac Franklin was "probably the richest slave trader in the Old South" and personally managed his company's affairs at Natchez during most of the period 1819 to 1836. Historian D. Clayton James wrote that Franklin "supplied this country [Natchez] with two thirds of the slaves brought into it...[and] amassed a fortune of more than a million dollars by this traffic alone."³²⁶

Joseph Holt Ingraham's book titled *The South-West by a Yankee*, published in 1835, provided the only firsthand description of the slave markets at the Forks-of-the-Road:

There are two extensive markets for slaves, opposite to each other, on the road to Washington [Mississippi]. A mile from Natchez we came to a cluster of rough wooden buildings, in the angle of two roads.... Entering through a wide gate into a narrow court-yard, partially enclosed by low buildings, a scene of novel character was at once presented. A line of Negroes extended in a semicircle around the right side of the yard. There were in all about forty. Each was dressed in the usual uniform of slaves, when in market, consisting of a fashionably shaped, black fur hat,

³²⁴ Minutes of Selectmen, May 13, 1835, Natchez City Hall and *Code of the Ordinances of the City of Natchez, Now in Force*, 1854, 151.

³²⁵ *Natchez Daily Courier*, October 23, 1856.

³²⁶ James, 197.

roundabout and trousers of coarse corduroy velvet, precisely such as are worn by Irish laborers, when they first 'come over the water,' good vests, strong shoes, and white cotton shirts, completed their equipment.³²⁷

The only known slave narrative that includes information about the Forks-of-the-Road Slave market is the autobiography of Isaac Stier:

When dey got to Natchez de slaves was put in de pen 'tached to de slave market. It stood at de forks of St. Catherine an' de Liberty road. Here dey was fed an' washed an' rubbed down lak race horses. Den dey was dressed up an' put through de paces that would show off dey muscles. My daddy was sol' as a twelve year old, but he always said he was nigher twenty."³²⁸

The Forks-of-the-Road was located about one mile from the fort and near the suburban villa estates of D'Evereux, Linden, and Monmouth. During the Civil War, the slave markets at the Forks-of-the-Road served as one of two contraband barracks, or refugee camps for newly freed slaves. According to Mary Conway Shields Dunbar, old black men, women, and children were quartered at the contraband barracks Under-the-Hill and able bodied black men, including a "Negro regiment" were quartered at the Forks-of-the-Road. She noted that sometimes twenty a day would die in the contrabands barracks and many were buried in "General Quitman's nearby enclosure."³²⁹ Today the Forks-of-the-Road is still recognizable and marks the junction where D'Evereux Drive and Liberty Road converge into St. Catherine Street. Nothing remains of the slave markets, however, and extensive grading and paving in the area indicate that the potential for historical archeology is poor.

Although planters during the Spanish and early territorial period bought African-born slaves to satisfy their growing demands, they generally preferred American-born slaves who were already accustomed to slavery. After the federal ban of 1808, planters also feared that possession of African-born slaves could make them vulnerable to charges of illegal importation. Newspaper advertisements for the sale of slaves during the territorial period often included the information that the slaves were born in America. An 1807 newspaper advertisement for the sale of slaves described them as "likely American-born Negroes."³³⁰

³²⁷ Ingraham, 2:192-202.

³²⁸ Isaac Stier autobiography, in George P. Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977), Mississippi Narratives, Part 5, Vol. 10, Supp. Series 1, 2057 as quoted in Ariela Julie Gross, "Pandora's Box: Slavery, Character, and Southern Culture in the Courtroom, 1800-1860" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1996), 201-202.

³²⁹ Elizabeth Dunbar Murray, *My Mother Used to Say, Memoirs of Mary Conway Shields Dunbar* (Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1959), 183.

³³⁰ *Natchez Mississippi Messenger*, April (date illegible), 1810.

After 1808, the process of regeneration proved too slow to supply the demand for slaves for the expanding cotton economy of the Natchez region. According to Ingraham, "Virginia, where the lands were worn out, and slaves were numerous, and almost useless, afforded [Natchez area planters] facilities for purchasing; emigrants from that and other slave-holding states also brought great numbers [slaves] with them."³³¹ In 1810, William Rochel advertised that he had "twenty likely Virginia-born slaves now in a flat bottom boat lying in the river at Natchez," and that he wished to trade some of the slaves for a small farm.³³² By the 1830s, almost two-thirds of Natchez-area slaves had been born in Virginia.³³³ Virginia and Mississippi dominate as places of birth for African Americans in the Adams County census records in 1870.

Traders brought slaves from the eastern states to Mississippi both by land and by sea. Alexandria and Norfolk, Virginia, were the principal shipping points, with New Orleans the destination. After 1811, the slave traders traveled upriver by steamboat to Natchez, the only permanent slave market in Mississippi during the territorial period.³³⁴ Shipping slaves was more expensive than transporting slaves by land, which planters rationalized, helped slaves gradually adjust to the different climate.³³⁵ Although a slave trader's regular business might transpire in Virginia, New Orleans, and Natchez, slaves were also sold along the road if it was to the trader's financial advantage.³³⁶

Not all Mississippi planters bought slaves from traders; some traveled to the eastern states themselves and were able to buy their slaves at considerable savings.³³⁷ Often immigrants from other slave-holding states brought their slaves with them when they moved to the Mississippi Territory. Leonard Covington, who lived at Propinquity in Adams County, immigrated to the territory from Maryland in 1809 and brought with him thirty-one slaves.³³⁸

Slaves were also bought and sold within the state of Mississippi and the City of Natchez. According to historian Charles Sydnor in *Slavery in Mississippi*: "In Mississippi the supply of slaves seldom equaled the demand, and it therefore follows that most of the Mississippi slaves who were sold passed into the hands of other citizens of the same State."³³⁹ Also, large numbers of slaves were sold or transferred in Natchez and the rest of the state by sheriffs, trustees, executors, and administrators to satisfy debts and agreements, liquidate businesses, settle estates, or fulfill marriage contracts. The marriage contract executed upon the occasion of the marriage of John Quitman and Eliza

³³¹ Ingraham, 2:223.

³³² *Natchez Weekly Chronicle*, April 2, 1810.

³³³ Ingraham, 2:237.

³³⁴ James, 46.

³³⁵ Ingraham, 2: 238-244.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁸ Charles Sackett Sydnor, *Slaves in Mississippi* (1933; reprint, Gloucester, MA, Peter Smith, 1965), 144-147.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 133.

Turner included slaves that would remain the property of the Turner family in the event that Eliza died childless before her husband.³⁴⁰ Adams County deed records also document that slaves, like cotton, were sometimes traded for property. The number of slave transactions in the Natchez area increased substantially during hard times like the depression that followed the Panic of 1837.³⁴¹

5.3 Divisions of Status Among the Black Population

Antebellum accounts by white people, including letters, diaries, and travel accounts, indicate that a class structure existed among the enslaved population of the South. Like most class societies, internarratives between classes surely occurred between slave classes on the same or neighboring plantations. Some social division among the slave population of Mississippi appears to have begun to take shape during the colonial period and was fully established during the territorial period. Joseph Holt Ingraham described three distinct classes of slaves: (1) domestic slaves, or "house servants," who included nurses, coachmen, gardeners, footmen, cooks, and waiting-maids; (2) "town slaves," who encompassed domestic servants, as well as slaves trained in specific occupations, such as blacksmiths, cabinetmakers, and barbers; and (3) "field hands," agricultural laborers on the large plantations.³⁴²

The majority of slaves were field hands, the lowest social stratum. Ingraham noted that the field hands were the "most degraded class of slaves; and they are not only regarded as such by the whites, but by the two other classes, who look upon them as infinitely beneath them."³⁴³ Support for the concept that slaves themselves recognized class divisions is found in a conversation that Ingraham recorded as occurring between two slaves observing a slave sale at an auction house on Main Street:

You know dat nigger, they gwine to sell, George?
No, he field nigger, I nebber has no a'quaintance wid dat class.
Well, nor no oder gentlmens would . . .³⁴⁴

The surviving records of marriages between slaves during the antebellum period also support the existence of a class system among slaves, a system that was probably consciously and unconsciously fostered by slave owners. Numerous references to marriages of house servants occur in the diary of Presbyterian minister, Dr. Joseph Buck Stratton. William Johnson records the marriage of a house servant, described as a cook, to a town slave, described as "Mr Browns E[n]gineer."³⁴⁵ Mary Louisa McMurrin

³⁴⁰ May, 26-27.

³⁴¹ Sydnor, 133.

³⁴² Ingraham, 2:247-256. Such distinctions may have been more prevalent in the view of slave owners than the slaves themselves.

³⁴³ Ingraham, 2:256.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 2:30.

³⁴⁵ Hogan and Davis, November 23, 1843.

recorded the marriage of two second-generation house servants. In speaking of their house slaves, slave owners themselves rarely referred to them as “slaves”; they chose instead to refer to them as “servants.” This euphemistic term survives today in Natchez in unconscious references to specific buildings that were associated with house servants. Plantations and suburban villas with long histories of single family ownership usually have buildings or rooms that the family today refers to as the “servants’ quarters” or perhaps the “servants’ dining room.”

More is known about the lives of house and town slaves than about those who worked in the cotton fields, because the planters themselves typically had very little contact with them. In the decades leading to the Civil War, more and more field hands were supervised by overseers managing plantations for absentee planters, who often owned several plantations and lived, for the most part, near town and away from the source of their growing wealth³⁴⁶ In the 1850s, seventy-three percent of the enslaved people in Adams County lived on plantations of fifty or more slaves, and the majority of slaves owned by the wealthiest Natchez area planters did not even live in Adams County.³⁴⁷ Many lived across the Mississippi River on plantations in the fertile flatlands of Louisiana, upriver or downriver in Mississippi, or as far away as Texas and Arkansas. These people were, according to Ingraham, “secluded in the solitude of an extensive plantation, which is their world, beyond whose horizon they know nothing.”³⁴⁸ The most extensive discussion of the plantation overseer is found in historian William Scarborough’s *Overseer: Plantation Management in the Old South*.³⁴⁹

Few domestic buildings associated with plantation slavery survive today in Mississippi. In neighboring Jefferson County, two slave cabins survive at Wyolah Plantation, and their close proximity to the main residence indicates that they were probably the residences of house servants.³⁵⁰ However, even as residences of house servants rather than field hands, they represent rare survivals of detached residential buildings occupied by slaves on a working plantation. In Concordia Parish, Louisiana, on Lake St. John, a small number of slave cabins and a rare overseer’s house dating from ca. 1860 can be found on Canebrake Plantation, originally owned by Natchez-area planter Gerard Brandon of Brandon Hall. Arranged in two rows behind the overseer’s house are several cabins, which were described as “double” slave cabins in the specifications of builder William Scothorn. Scothorn’s day book suggests that the typical slave cabin of the period was “a 20 x 19 x 10-foot high, two room structure, floored with pine or cypress

³⁴⁶ Davis, *The Black Experience in Natchez 1720-1880*. The life of typical plantation slaves is described in the chapter, “Characteristics of Natchez Slavery.”

³⁴⁷ Peter M. Bergman and Mort N. Bergman, *The Chronological History of the Negro in America* (New York: The New American Library, 1969), 222.

³⁴⁸ Ingraham, 2:54.

³⁴⁹ William Kaufman Scarborough, *Overseer: Plantation Management in the Old South* (1966; reprint, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984).

³⁵⁰ Wyolah site file, Jefferson County, National Register nomination and site map, HNF.

planks...[with] at least two windows in each room and a fireplace or chimney of brick."³⁵¹ The windows of the surviving Canebrake cabins indicate that the cabins originally did not have glazed sash but were simply closed with batten shutters. The floors are plank, and the walls are finished only in layers of newspaper. A double slave cabin provided two rooms with one slave family traditionally occupying each room.

Town slaves, the second level of slave society, made significant contributions to the life of the town and enjoyed a higher degree of personal freedom than field hands. They included skilled craftsmen, like blacksmiths and carpenters, whose skills made them more valuable. Skilled slave craftsmen are documented throughout the deed, will, probate, and inventory records of Adams County. Plantations also had skilled craftsmen. Bisland family tradition documents a slave cabinetmaker at Mount Repose, and descendants of the McCaleb family of non-extant Peachland Plantation own several pieces of furniture that family tradition attributes to a slave craftsman who worked on the plantation.³⁵² References to plantation slave carpenters are numerous in letters, diaries, and other antebellum accounts.

The accomplishments of these slave craftsmen were generally accorded to their owners and most of their names are unknown. In 1851, James Hardie, the town's most accomplished and prolific architect/builder, bought a slave named Eastern Shore Bill, age thirty, who was the engineer and smith at Brown Cozzen's Natchez sawmill.³⁵³ Another slave whose accomplishments were recorded by his own name was John Jackson. According to nineteenth-century historian Horace Fulkerson, John Jackson was the principal draftsman for the antebellum contracting firm of the Weldon Brothers of Natchez, considered to be the state's largest contracting firm in the 1850s. Jackson assisted in drawing the plans for the Warren County Courthouse in Vicksburg, a National Historic Landmark.³⁵⁴

At least one slave occupied a high position in a Natchez business. Andrew Brown, who operated a lumber mill at Natchez Under-the-Hill, owned a slave named Simon Gray who assumed a position of great responsibility in Brown's business affairs. In 1838, Gray was directing rafting crews engaged in bringing logs from the Yazoo River basin to the Natchez sawmill. Eventually, Gray became a flatboat captain, a position he held until the Civil War. From 1845 until 1862, Gray served as the company's chief boatman with white men under his command. By 1853, Gray was free in all but the legal sense of the word, because Brown paid Gray a salary of \$20.00 per month and a bonus of \$5.00 for each trip to New Orleans. He was also allowed to purchase his own boat for work on his

³⁵¹ Florence LeClerq Eisele, "Ante-bellum Slave Dwellings on Plantations of the Southern United States," unpublished manuscript that includes drawings from William Scothorn's Day Book, Center for American History, University of Texas, photocopy, HNF.

³⁵² Irene Shields Godfrey, interview by Mary W. Miller, at Mount Repose, 1978 and Glen McNeely, great-granddaughter of James F. McCaleb, interview by Mary W. Miller, at Shadyside, Natchez, 1978.

³⁵³ Adams County, Office of the Chancery Clerk, Deed Book HH:661.

³⁵⁴ Howard S. Fulkerson, *Random Recollections of Early Days in Mississippi* (Vicksburg: 1885), n.p.

own behalf.³⁵⁵ Undoubtedly, other slaves also achieved responsible positions in their owners' businesses.

Antebellum accounts document that town slaves socialized with each other, with house servants from suburban villas, and, to a lesser extent, with house servants on plantations. William Johnson records parties held for slaves, including "darkey balls," wedding parties, and social events at the mansions of slave owners and at hotels.³⁵⁶ Town slaves and suburban slaves both enjoyed a considerable degree of freedom in their movement around town. In writing to his wife about a possible slave insurrection in 1861, William Ker noted "that this trouble ought to be a sad lesson to those people about Natchez, who have always allowed their servants to run wild."³⁵⁷ The notion that town slaves enjoyed a great deal of freedom is documented in William Johnson's diary. Frequently William Johnson would have to fetch his slave Steven from the town jail after a night of drunken carousing.³⁵⁸

Town slaves lived in detached dependency buildings, second stories, and basement rooms on the property of both commercial buildings and residences in downtown Natchez. Included among the surviving detached dependency buildings are the two-story kitchen buildings behind the Dr. Dubs Townhouse (1852), the Van Court Townhouse (1835), and the McDaniel Townhouse (1852) at 600 Jefferson Street. In all three of these examples, the kitchen room are below and the slave quarters are on the second stories. At houses like Magnolia Hall and Stanton Hall, the slaves lived in the second story of attached kitchen wings. Town slaves also occupied small frame dwellings on the grounds of townhouses with generous lots, but these have almost disappeared from downtown Natchez. A one-story two-room frame dependency survives behind the John Smith House, and the remnants of another frame building, since converted into a garage, is located at The Elms. The existence of other small frame buildings, that were possibly residential buildings for town slaves, are documented in deed book maps, surveys, and Sanborn Insurance Maps.

House servants, like those who lived at the suburban villas of Natchez, represented approximately twenty percent of the Adams County enslaved population and, along with the slaves associated with the mansion townhouses, probably constituted the highest level of slave society.³⁵⁹ Nonetheless, remnants of the slave-bell systems that survive at houses like Stanton Hall, Greenleaves, The Elms, and Melrose are tangible reminders that these favored house servants were at the beck and call of their owners. The slave bell system at

³⁵⁵ John Hebron Moore, *Andrew Brown and Cypress Lumbering in the Old Southwest* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 83-92.

³⁵⁶ Hogan and Davis, May 2, 1839, January 8, 1841, and November 23, 1843.

³⁵⁷ Winthrop Jordan, *Tumult and Silence at Second Creek, An Inquiry into a Civil War Slave Conspiracy* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 321.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, March 6, 1841, 321-322.

³⁵⁹ Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll, The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 328.

Melrose is still intact and consists of bell cranks and pulls in each major room with brass bells mounted on the rear wall of the house and in the basement.

John Quitman described the lifestyle of the nabobs and their slaves at Natchez soon after his arrival from the North in 1822:

Cordial hospitality is one of the characteristics of the Southern people. Their very servants catch the feeling of their owners, and anticipate one's wants. Your coffee in the morning before sunrise, little stews and sudorifies at night, and warm footbaths if you have a cold; bouquets of fresh flowers and mint-juleps sent to your apartment; ...everything free and easy, and cheerful and cordial.³⁶⁰

Alice Austen McMurren, Maryland-born wife of John T. McMurren Jr., wrote her father shortly after her arrival at Melrose and described the estate and its slaves:

"Melrose is beautiful—very elegant one of the handsomest [sic] place [sic] I have ever seen North or South—and everything in such perfect order...ten servants in the house and you would never know of their being there excepting that they are always ready for orders...."³⁶¹

Alice Austen McMurren continued the discussion of Melrose in a second letter: "Ten servants apart from coachman & footman, yet you would never know there was one in it, so quiet, respectful and well ordered."³⁶²

A letter written in 1863 by a Union officer also provides insight into the lives of the house servants of the wealthy Natchez nabobs. General Thomas Kilby Smith described planter Frank Surget as having had some difficulty with his slave cook a few years ago because "there was no French opera in Natchez."³⁶³ Occasional references among contemporary accounts also indicate that the house servants of the Natchez nabobs could behave in as haughty a manner as their rich owners.

Information about the lives and number of slaves at Natchez suburban villa estates can be gleaned from a review of the McMurren correspondence and tax roll information. In 1848, when the family moved into the house, they owned seventeen slaves; by 1861, they

³⁶⁰ John A. Quitman to Frederick Quitman, August 12, 1822, as quoted in Davis, *The Black Experience in Natchez 1720-1880*, 46.

³⁶¹ Alice Austen McMurren to George Austen, no date [in envelope labeled "First letters from South after Alie's Marriage 1856], Addison Papers, transcript, NATC.

³⁶² Alice Austen McMurren to Pattie Gilbert, November 11 [1856], Addison Papers, transcript, NATC.

³⁶³ General Thomas Kilby Smith to his wife, July 19, 1863, Huntington Library, Pasadena, California, typescript, HNF.

owned twenty-five slaves.³⁶⁴ Family letters also mention the names of various slaves, as well as make reference to their health, their roles in the household, and social functions held for them.

Quitman family correspondence noted the death in 1844 of a slave named Laura, who was buried in a slave cemetery on the grounds of Melrose. The cemetery was ready before the main house was completed.³⁶⁵ In 1851, Mary Louisa McMurren wrote her sister and mentioned that slaves Marice [sic], Marcellus [sic], Charlotte, and Rachel were sick.³⁶⁶ Marcellas [sic] is described as the second waiter in a subsequent letter from Alice Austen McMurren to her father.³⁶⁷ In 1856 in a letter to her future daughter-in-law, Mary Louisa McMurren described the wedding of two of the family slaves, Patrick and Mime:

“First we were preparing for the marriage of two of our young servants—two we have reared and trained in the family—the children of old and favourite servants. They were married last Thursday, in our presence, and behaved extremely well with perfect dignity and propriety. They then retired and passed the evening with some invited friends, and had a fine supper, as happy and merry a company as one would wish to see. Would Mrs. Stowe could have viewed the scene, perhaps it might have changed some of their [Northerners] erroneous opinions.”³⁶⁸

In a letter written not long after to Eliza Quitman, Mary Louisa McMurren added some more information about the wedding: “A portion of the servants were here a few evenings since, to attend the wedding of Patrick & Mime. Viola was bridesmaid. They were married in our presence, behaved with perfect propriety, and they all seemed very merry and happy over their games and supper afterwards.”³⁶⁹ No other mention of Viola, who may have belonged to the Quitman family, has been located.

In an 1858 letter, Alice provided descriptions of Melrose slaves and their activities in the kitchen: “Saw Mamie making her nice baked custards...there is such a nice way Rachel has of preparing chicken.” Alice included in the letter the directions for preparing the chicken. The McMurren correspondence indicates that the McMurren family probably treated their slaves with kindness in a paternalistic manner, and no deprecating references are ever made in their correspondence about the behavior of their slaves. The absence of such references distinguishes the McMurren family correspondence from the correspondence of many of

³⁶⁴ Adams County Personal Tax Rolls, 1848 and 1861 (MF-1) RG29, MDAH, Jackson, MS, quoted in Thomas Rosenblum, note 271.

³⁶⁵ Eliza Quitman to John Quitman, May 12 1844, Quitman Papers, Subseries 1.1, Folder 36, SHC/UNC, transcript, NATC.

³⁶⁶ Mary Louisa McMurren to Frances Conner, April 28, 1851, Conner Papers, Series 1, Folder 1:10, LLMVC/LSU, transcript, NATC.

³⁶⁷ Alice Austen McMurren to George Austen, November 13 [1856], Addison Papers, transcript, NATC.

³⁶⁸ Mary Louisa McMurren to Alice Austen, August 4, 1856, Addison Papers, transcript, NATC.

³⁶⁹ Mary Louisa McMurren to Eliza Quitman, August 11, 1856, Quitman Papers, Subseries 1.1, Folder 89, SHC/UNC, transcript, NATC.

the other planting families in Natchez, including their Quitman relatives. One letter is particularly telling about the relationship of the McMurrans and their slaves. In April 1864, Mary Louisa McMurren wrote her son and daughter-in-law to describe the death of Mary Elizabeth McMurren Conner. In the letter, she notes that not only she but Mamey [sic], Helen, Rachel, Eliza, and Emily sat by her dying daughter's bedside.³⁷⁰ Apparently the McMurrans were not deserted by many, if any, of their female slaves after the Union army's arrival in the summer of 1863.

At Melrose, three types of slave housing survive, as well as the dependency buildings where they labored. Slaves may have lived in the southeast basement room, which is heated by a fireplace, originally had a plastered ceiling, and featured floors finished in cement. The incorporation of the basement in the slave-bell system supports this assumption, although the bell system may have simply been used to summon slaves from one area of duty to another. Slaves also lived in the second stories of the nearly matching two-story dependency buildings that stand at the rear of the house and flank the courtyard, as well as in two detached one-story frame cabins some distance from the main house. The detached frame cabins featured simple vertical-board partition walls rather than stud walls that were lathed and plastered.

Unlike the typical cabins of field hands, the Melrose cabins had glazed and shuttered windows, plastered walls and ceiling (in at least one cabin), and tongue-and-groove flooring. Since the fireplaces in the Melrose cabins appear to have served both for cooking and heating, it is possible that a family lived in each one of the single rooms. A possibly unique survival at Melrose is the frame privy, located behind the two slave cabins, with male and female compartments like the grander brick privy flanking the courtyard behind the main house.

Numerous letters, diaries, and travel accounts of the antebellum period record incidents of terrible cruelty inflicted upon slaves. Slaves who were confined to jail for running away from their masters or for committing other offenses like stealing often found themselves in the local guardhouse (jail) or working on the "chain gang." Joseph Ingraham described seeing a chain gang where each "negro carried slung over his shoulder a polished iron ball, apparently a twenty-four pounder, suspended by a heavy ox chain five or six feet in length and secured to the right ankle by a massive ring."³⁷¹ Particularly exposed to this kind of abuse were the field hands who labored on large plantations, often under the supervision of an overseer rather than the master.

The whip was the symbol of authority for all slaves, whether in town, on a suburban villa estate, or secluded on an extensive plantation. Accounts of slave whipping are often brutal, and slaves sometimes died from the effects of such punishment. Whipping was

³⁷⁰ Mary Louisa McMurren to Mr. and Mrs. John T. McMurren Jr., April 7, 1864, Addison Papers, transcript, NATC.

³⁷¹ Ingraham, 2:185-189.

common in everyday society, and was a punishment that was legally proscribed to slaves, but not to free blacks or whites, by Natchez city ordinances regulating the behavior of "Slaves, Free Negroes and Mulattoes."³⁷² Unlicensed preaching to slaves by free men, white or black, warranted a fine of fifty dollars. However, if the offending preacher was a slave, the law specified that he was to be "publicly whipped, not exceeding thirty-nine stripes."³⁷³

Reading accounts of whippings is almost unbearable today, but nineteenth-century Natchez was a violent society. Whippings were part of everyday life and were administered to children by their parents, to pupils by their schoolmasters, often to wives by their husbands, and even to lawyers on Natchez streets. William Johnson, himself a freed slave, records episodes of having "whipped" his slaves, particularly Steven who drank, was frequently in trouble, and was eventually sold.³⁷⁴ Johnson also whipped his sons and his apprentices. In 1841, Johnson recorded an episode where prominent white attorney Ralph North "Gave Judge Rawlings a Terrible Flogging with a Large Lether Strap and the worst of it is that he stood and Took it and remarked that he would do as Midderhoff [Natchez attorney] did—I will Stand and take it Like a man."³⁷⁵

Historical documents, including William Johnson's diary, support the belief of most historians that few generalizations can be made about slavery. Cruelty was a reality of slavery and so also was benevolent paternalism. Slaves also had varying ability to exert control in a slave environment.

5.4 White Attitudes Toward Slavery

Territorial Mississippians occasionally admitted the evils of slavery and rarely attempted to justify it. In 1818, shortly after Mississippi's admission to the Union, Congressman George Poindexter addressed Congress on the issue of slavery:

It is not with us a matter of choice whether we will have slaves among us or not; we found them here, and we are obliged to maintain and employ them. It would be a blessing, could we get rid of them; but the wisest and best men among us have been unable to devise a plan for doing it.³⁷⁶

By the time of the Civil War, however, 55.3 percent of Mississippi's entire population was black and most white Mississippians had become adept at defending slavery.³⁷⁷ Although their views on slavery and their treatment of slaves might vary, antebellum white Southerners were generally in accord on one issue—that the Negro race, as it was

³⁷² *Code of the Ordinances of the City of Natchez, Now in Force*, 1854.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁴ Hogan & Davis, entries dated January 8, 1836 and December 30 and 31, 1843.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, entry dated July 14, 1841.

³⁷⁶ Sydnor, 239.

³⁷⁷ Bergman and Bergman, 222.

then termed, was an inferior one. Numerous entries in the antebellum diary and autobiography of Natchez physician William Holcombe provide in-depth insight into his belief in the inferiority of people of African descent and his self-serving rationalization for slavery. His written defense of slavery included a suggestion that the institution was a necessary passage from hunter life to agricultural life and cited the Hebrews, Greeks, and others as examples of cultures which had condoned slavery.³⁷⁸

One of the South's best known defenders of slavery, Dr. Samuel Cartwright, practiced medicine in Natchez before he moved to New Orleans and became famous as a medical propagandist, using slavery as a medical justification for slavery. In his medical handbook for slave owners, *Disease and Peculiarities of the Negro Race*, Cartwright expounded at length on what he perceived as weaknesses of the race and provided recommendations on how members of the race should be treated. Black people, Cartwright contended, re-breathed their own air, unlike whites: "The natural effect of the practice is imperfect atmospherization of the blood—one of the heaviest chains that binds the negro to slavery."³⁷⁹

On January 8, 1866, the editor of the *Natchez Democrat* wrote, "the child is already born who will behold the last Negro in the state of Mississippi."³⁸⁰ This bold prediction did not reflect a belief that blacks would leave the state en masse after emancipation. Rather, it was a continuation of the 'logic' that had justified black enslavement for generations: the argument that blacks were incapable of providing for themselves, and that slavery was in effect a 'benevolent' institution. The editorial in the *Democrat* continued, "With no one to provide...and brought into competition with the superior intelligence, tack, and muscle of free white labor, they [the ex-slaves] will surely and speedily perish."³⁸¹ These 'concerns' seem especially ironic today in Mississippi, which has the nation's highest percentage of African Americans.

The rapid natural growth of the slave population in the United States, the economic dependence of the antebellum Cotton South on slave labor, and the fact that slaves outnumbered whites in many rural areas of the South combined to produce a widespread fear of insurrection among whites. The conviction of white Southerners that their bondpeople were basically contented had always been belied by the number of runaways, malingering and sabotage by slaves, and occasional acts of violence against whites. Motivated by the news of recently suppressed conspiracies in the South, Mississippi Territorial Governor Winthrop Sergeant urged the legislature in January 1801 to enlarge the militia. He warned that "each passing day witnessed an addition to the number of slaves and therefore, to the number of our most inveterate enemies also." Governor Sergeant insinuated that local slaveholders had recently experienced difficulties

³⁷⁸ William Holcombe, autobiography and diary, SHC/UNC, photocopy of typescript, HNF.

³⁷⁹ Cartwright, "Diseases and Peculiarities of the Negro Race," *DeBows Review* 11 (1851):65, 209, 331, 504.

³⁸⁰ Davis, *The Black Experience in Natchez 1720-1880*, 168.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

in controlling their slaves and concluded that, "In a war with any European, or even Indian power, they [the slaves] might be irresistibly stimulated to vengeance."³⁸²

The next governor, William C. C. Claiborne, had similar concerns. In 1802, he "attempted vainly to curb the importation of adult male slaves, succeeded in strengthening the militia and in bringing about the establishment of Fort Dearborn at the town of Washington about six miles east of Natchez."³⁸³ Twentieth-century historian Winthrop D. Jordan noted that:

Fear of Negro slave rebellion, expressed as early as 1672 in Virginia, was ever-present in the West Indies, the plantation colonies on the continent, and even, with less good reason, in some areas of the North. In some areas it was a gnawing, gut-wringing fear, intermittently heightened by undeniable instances of servile discontent. Every planter knew that the fundamental purpose of the slave laws was prevention and deterrence of slave insurrection.³⁸⁴

Fear of insurrection reached a feverish pitch after Nat Turner led a slave uprising in Virginia in 1831 in which sixty slaves and fifty-five whites ultimately died. This was the most serious slave uprising in the nation's history, and most historians credit the Turner rebellion with killing abolition sentiments in the South. Not long after it, Natchez planter Stephen Duncan wrote to Thomas Butler: "I don't credit the story of the extension of the [Nat Turner] Virginia insurrection, tho' I have great apprehension that we will one day have our throats cut in this county. We have here 5 blacks to one white; and within 4 hours march of Natchez there are 2200 able male slaves. It behooves us to be vigilant—but silent."

Mississippi reacted to the Nat Turner uprising by enacting new state laws with the purpose of reducing the likelihood of insurrection. Particularly targeted by these laws were the growing number of free blacks in the state who were thought likely to harbor runaways and sow seeds of insurrection. One such law enacted in late 1831 required all free negroes under fifty and over sixteen to be removed from the state unless they had special permission to remain. Fear of insurrection coupled with the increasing number of slaves being brought into the state caused alarm on the part of state legislators who, in 1832, revised the state constitution to prohibit the introduction of slaves into the state for sale as merchandise after May 1, 1833. Even though the importation of slaves into Mississippi for sale was prohibited by the state constitution between 1833 and 1837, the legislature had established no penalties and had even enacted a tax on the slave trade. As

³⁸² Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers, 1963), 45.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 46.

³⁸⁴ Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), 110-111.

fear of insurrection subsided and the expanding cotton economy increased the need for more slaves, the state again legalized the slave trade in between 1844 and 1846.³⁸⁵

Growing sectional differences between the North and the South over the slavery issue were temporarily quieted with the enactment of the Missouri Compromise in 1850, but the quiet was short-lived and shattered by the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. John McMurren spoke about the growing dissension in a speech he made at a Millard Fillmore rally in 1856. He described the public mind as being “agitated with but one all-engrossing subject—slavery—that most delicate and dangerous of all questions to the domestic peace of the country, and from which had sprung, of late years, all our sectional strife and bitterness.”³⁸⁶ McMurren, like attorney William T. Martin, nabob Adam L. Bingaman, and newspaper editor Giles Hillyer, affiliated with the Know-Nothing party of Millard Fillmore in the hope of reunifying the North and the South.³⁸⁷ Mary Louisa McMurren noted in a letter that John McMurren thought Fillmore was the only man who could “save the ship of Union, at this period.”³⁸⁸ She also mentioned that Dr. Stephen Duncan, Mr. Sam Duncan, Levin R. Marshall, and John P. Walworth would be representing the Natchez region at the national convention to select Fillmore as a candidate.³⁸⁹ None the less, Secessionist John Quitman’s conservative Democratic candidate, James Buchanan, was elected to the presidency.

Abolitionist John Brown’s 1859 raid on the United States arsenal at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, as part of a plan to liberate Southern slaves through armed intervention, heightened fears of insurrection and increased secessionist feeling among Southern whites. In his memoirs, Confederate veteran Frank Montgomery, a native of Adams County, described his own reaction to John Brown’s raid:

Until the John Brown raid I had never for a moment lost my loyalty to the Union, but after that I became a secessionist; not because of the attempt of this fanatic to bring on a war between the races in the south, these things were to be expected, and were to be met and defeated as was done in his case. But the manner in which his death was received in the north, for he was looked upon as a martyr to the cause of freedom and was almost deified by many, convinced me as it did thousands of other union men in the state, that if our liberties were to be preserved and the rights of the states held sacred, we must endeavor to defend them out of and not in the union.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁵ Walter Nesbit Taylor and George H. Ethridge, *Mississippi, a History* (Jackson: The Historical Record Association, n.d.), 195-196 and Sydnor, 162-169.

³⁸⁶ John T. McMurren, speech as reported in the *Natchez Daily Courier*, October 23, 1856.

³⁸⁷ *Natchez Daily Courier*, October 21, 1856.

³⁸⁸ Mary Louisa McMurren to John T. McMurren, August 29, 1856, Addison Papers, transcript, NATC.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁰ Frank A. Montgomery, *Reminiscences of a Mississippian in Peace and War* (Cincinnati: The Robert Clarke Company Press, 1901), 35-36.

Frightening rumors about John Brown's raid multiplied throughout the South. The *Natchez Daily Courier* reported on the supposed discovery of a map in John Brown's trunk that marked places where other raids were supposed to occur, including Southwest Mississippi.³⁹¹ An entry on November 3, 1859, in the diary of Susan Sillers Darden, a Jefferson County planter's wife, indicates that she believed the rumor about the map uncovered during John Brown's raid that delineated "different places in different States...marked with a Cross." Included among the places marked, according to Darden, were several places in Southwest Mississippi.³⁹² Alice Austen McMurrin's father in Maryland, apparently in response to a letter of reassurance from his daughter, expressed relief that the news of "the affair of Harper's Ferry has had no effect upon your feeling of comfort and safety at River Side." He further noted that "Politicians will keep the thing alive at heart until after the Presidency question is settled for the next four years."³⁹³ Whether or not Alice Austen McMurrin's letter expressed true sentiments or simply reflects an adult child's attempt to reassure a worried parent is unknown. However, the diary of one Natchez area planter's wife documents considerable unease and belief in the published rumor that a raid was planned for Southwest Mississippi.³⁹⁴

Historian Donald Brooks Kelly in an article entitled, "Harper's Ferry: Prelude to Crisis in Mississippi," described the importance of Harper's Ferry in creating "an intellectual atmosphere in the Lower South wherein reason rapidly lost force to passion, order gave way to violence, and conciliation yielded to increasing irascibility and misunderstanding."³⁹⁵ This "intellectual atmosphere" manifested itself in a major incident in Natchez in late summer and early fall of 1861. Historian Winthrop Jordan focused attention on this Natchez incident in his book, *Tumult and Silence at Second Creek, An Inquiry into a Civil War Slave Conspiracy*.³⁹⁶ The Second Creek community consisted of plantations that bordered the banks of Second Creek as it meandered south of Natchez toward the Homochitto River. Included among the Second Creek plantations were Cherry Grove, Woodstock, Egypt, Oakland, Ormonde, Laurel Hill, Fair Oaks,

³⁹¹ *Natchez Daily Courier*, November 1, 1859.

³⁹² Susan Sillers Darden, diary, November 3, 1859, MDAH, typescript copy, Everette Truly (great grandson of Susan Sillers Darden), Natchez.

³⁹³ George Austen to Alice Austen McMurrin, no date [late 1859 or early 1860], Addison Papers, transcript, NATC.

³⁹⁴ Susan Sillers Darden, diary, November 3, 1859, MDAH, typescript copy, Everette Truly (great-grandson of Susan Sillers Darden), Natchez.

³⁹⁵ Donald Brooks Kelly, "Harper's Ferry: Prelude to Crisis in Mississippi," *Journal of Mississippi History* 27 (1965): 371.

³⁹⁶ Not all historians would agree that the Second Creek episode represents a slave conspiracy subtitled in Jordan's book, but all would probably concur that the incident documented in the book portrays the fear of insurrection on the part of Natchez area planters at the outset of the Civil War. Winthrop Jordan delivered a lecture at the 1994 Historic Natchez Conference. Historians of Natchez who attended the conference discussed *Tumult and Silence at Second Creek* and concurred that the book better reflects the fear of insurrection on the part of Natchez planters than it represents a bona fide slave conspiracy. Those who discussed the book included Joyce Broussard, Ronald L. F. Davis, Todd Herring, Alma Carpenter, Mary W. Miller, and Ronald W. Miller. Todd Herring wrote a review of the book published in the *Journal of Mississippi History*, 45 (1993): 246-247.

White Apple and many others (see information on Adams County plantation communities in the appendix).

The episode began with the overhearing of a conversation between slaves that hinted at insurrection. Whether a slave conspiracy, a case of planter paranoia, or both, the Second Creek incident definitely reflects the visions of freedom that were growing among the slaves of the Natchez region at the beginning of the Civil War. Some planters who heard the testimony of the slaves involved in the incident believed the conspiracy theory; others thought that the slaves who were discussing killing their masters, raping their mistresses, and seizing the big houses were fantasizing about life after the North whipped the South.

William J. Minor recorded wavering opinions about the “insurrection” at Second Creek in his diary. He first wrote that he came to the conclusion that the action of the slaves accused of insurrection seemed to be “dependent upon the ‘whipping’ of the southern people by the people of the North, when they thought, they would be made free, then they were to rise and kill their masters etc and the leaders were to take possession of the big house....”³⁹⁷ Later, as planters began hanging some of the slaves involved, Minor expressed belief that a plan of insurrection had been hatched. After the deaths of both her husband and son, the widow of planter William J. Minor testified that her husband believed that the testimony of the slaves was not strong enough and that the confessions were made only after extreme cruelty was inflicted upon the confessors.³⁹⁸

The primary record of the supposed slave conspiracy and the subsequent hangings is found in the papers of attorney and planter Lemuel P. Conner, who married Mary Louisa McMurrin’s sister Fanny Turner. The Conners lived both at their suburban villa residence adjacent to Melrose and on their Louisiana plantation, Innisfail. Although the vigilante arrests and subsequent trials of the slaves were conducted outside the law, Conner felt compelled to record at least part of the testimony of the accused slaves. At least twenty-seven slaves were probably hanged, some at Cherry Grove and Brighton Plantations in Adams County.³⁹⁹

5.5 The Place of the Free Black in Antebellum Society

An ever-present contradiction to the argument that blacks were unable to take care of themselves were the free African Americans living in the South. Historian John H. Franklin notes in *From Slavery to Freedom* that, “in the South, the existence of a large group of free Negroes proved to be a source of constant embarrassment to the slaveholders, for it tended to undermine the very foundation on which slavery was

³⁹⁷ Jordan, *Tumult and Silence at Second Creek*, 317.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 268-348.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 60-98 and 268-348.

built.”⁴⁰⁰ The large number of free blacks also made some Southerners uneasy, since they feared that free blacks might aid and abet insurrection.

The most extensive study of free blacks in the antebellum South was undertaken by Ira Berlin, whose *Slaves Without Masters, The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* continues to be a definitive publication on the subject. Population figures supplied by Berlin confirm there were 186,446 free blacks in the United States by 1810. The majority of these free blacks (94,085) lived in the upper South, in states like Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, and North Carolina. A much smaller number (14,180) lived in the lower South, the majority of them in Louisiana, which had 7,585 free blacks. Mississippi by contrast had only 240 free blacks, most of whom lived in Natchez, then the only substantial town in the state of Mississippi.⁴⁰¹

A significant population of free African Americans had begun to emerge in the Natchez area during the territorial period and the number increased during the statehood period. According to historian D. Clayton James, Natchez and Adams County had, by 1840, 283 free Negroes, “nearly half of all the free African Americans in Mississippi.”⁴⁰² While the slave population in Mississippi grew dramatically and steadily between 1800 and 1860, the number of free blacks reached its zenith at 1,366 in 1840 and declined to 930 in 1850 and 773 in 1860.⁴⁰³ The decline in the growth of the free black population in Mississippi paralleled patterns in the South as a whole and was due in part to the exodus of free blacks to the North and Africa, as well as smaller migrations to Canada, the West Indies, and Europe.⁴⁰⁴ It also directly paralleled the adoption of stricter Mississippi laws regarding manumission, which was also true in other Southern states.

Nat Turner’s 1831 insurrection severely disrupted abolition movements in the South and led to the adoption of more restrictive laws regarding slavery and free blacks throughout the South. Increased restrictions regarding manumission probably prompted the organization of the Mississippi Colonization Society in 1831. Organized by Natchez area planters, the group was affiliated with the American Colonization Society, which sponsored the formation of the country of Liberia on the west coast of Africa. Members Stephen Duncan, John Ker, and James Railey of Adams County also served as officers of the national organization. Although the charters of both the national organization and the Mississippi chapter expressed as their purpose the resettlement of free African Americans

⁴⁰⁰ John H. Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 157.

⁴⁰¹ Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters, The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 46.

⁴⁰² James, 153. According to Ira Berlin, Mississippi had 1,366 free blacks in 1840, which would make the free black population in Natchez less than a fourth of the state’s total. Berlin, 136-137.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 136-137 and 396-399

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 171.

in Africa, the historical record proves that the Natchez members of the Mississippi Colonization Society were more focused on using Liberia as a vehicle to free slaves.⁴⁰⁵

Before its demise in the early 1840s, the Mississippi Colonization Society had relocated 571 Mississippi African Americans to Liberia. Most of these relocations resulted from wills that specified manumission and relocation to Africa. The Mississippi Colonization Society ceased to exist after the Mississippi legislature enacted a law in 1842 forbidding the manumission of slaves by will, even if conditional on the slave leaving the state forever. The organization also became increasingly unpopular on the local level as abolition fever mounted in the North.⁴⁰⁶

By 1860, the nation's total free black population was 488,070, with over half of that number living in the South. The majority, 224,963, lived in the upper South and only 36,955 in the lower South.⁴⁰⁷ Cities were the chief harbors for free blacks, because they afforded more opportunity for economic advancement and a richer social life with other free blacks. Free blacks tended to shun the rich agricultural interior, particularly in the lower South. By 1860, one-third of free blacks lived in cities, and the free blacks in the lower South were the most urban caste in America.⁴⁰⁸ Southern cities tended to have more free black women than free black men due to sexual liaisons between black women and white men. The North, on the other hand, tended to have an excess of free black men.⁴⁰⁹

Judging by census records and other documents such as will and probate records, many of the prominent free African Americans in Natchez were mulattos who received their start in life through inheritances from the white owners who fathered them. Records in Adams County indicate that stable relationships between white male landowners and black women, slave and free, were more common and more openly acknowledged during the colonial and territorial periods, when men greatly outnumbered women, than during statehood. According to historian Ira Berlin, the free black population of the Lower Mississippi Valley and the Gulf was more likely to be the product of extramarital unions between blacks and whites than was the free black population of the eastern states. Berlin credits the French and Spanish colonial regimes of the eighteenth century with being more tolerate of miscegenation than the eighteenth-century Englishmen who governed the East Coast.⁴¹⁰ This is confirmed in the 1860 census with three-fourths of free blacks in the lower South listed as being of mixed blood and only one-third of free blacks in the upper South. Mulattoes comprised ninety percent of the free black caste in port cities in the lower South in 1860.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁵ Sydnor, 206-211.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 216-217, 237.

⁴⁰⁷ Berlin, 136.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 173-175.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 108-109.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, 180.

One of the more interesting cases of miscegenation in Natchez dating to the territorial period involved wealthy landowner and planter William Barland. In his 1811 will, Barland bequeathed a life interest in his estate to his companion, Elizabeth, whose freedom he had earlier bought. He confirmed that he had twelve children by Elizabeth and that they were his only children. Barland left his entire estate to his twelve free mulatto children, with a life estate for Elizabeth.⁴¹² Some of the Barland descendants became members of the free black aristocracy of antebellum Natchez and others lived as white. Ed Barland, an African American who worked at Melrose in the first half of the twentieth century, may have been one of William Barland's many descendants.⁴¹³

An understanding of the concept and philosophical underpinnings of the institution of chattel slavery is key to any discussion of black life in the antebellum United States. The institution of African slavery was based on the belief of whites that blacks as a race were inferior and would work productively only under white direction. These racial beliefs had profound implications for all Americans of color, regardless of their nominal status as slave or free. The slavery system defined blacks as property without the entitlements of citizenship or humanity. Any extension of privileges to blacks, whether slave or free, was entirely at the sufferance of the dominant white race. Although different status categories were recognized at various periods, these distinctions existed within the overall system that defined slavery as the natural condition of African Americans.

The implications of this unconscious/conscious, white/black duality are profound for the study of black life in the antebellum period. The largest portion of the black population, the enslaved community, was overwhelmingly illiterate. Aside from the limited numbers of slave narratives and the writings of antebellum whites, knowledge of slavery as experienced by the enslaved is rarely available. Perhaps the most notable example is the work of Frederick Douglass (1817-1895), who escaped from slavery in 1838 and later published *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) and *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855). Another example is Solomon Northrup's *Twelve Years a Slave*, published in 1853 and later reprinted by Louisiana State University Press. Northrup's narrative supports the documented disparity of the slave experience. Northrup (1817-1895) had one master who was terribly cruel and another who was so kind that Northrup indicated that he would gladly have sent North for his family and worked beside him for the rest of his life.

More widely available than knowledge of slavery as experienced by slaves is a small body of literature on the lives of free blacks as experienced by free blacks. The lives and insights of these free blacks provide the opportunity to learn about antebellum life as it was experienced by a black person, both slave and free.

⁴¹² Adams County, Office of the Chancery Clerk, Will Book 1:132-138.

⁴¹³ Marian Kelly Ferry recalled in a 1976 interview that Ed Barland was descended from a white man.

Free black status in the antebellum American South was fraught with contradictions. Although they had many more opportunities than their enslaved brethren, freed slaves were very much subject to the prevailing sentiments of the white population described previously. There was a clear relationship between the prevailing attitude of whites toward enslaved blacks and the extent to which free blacks could exercise their legal rights. Historian John Hope Franklin explains:

The perpetuation of relations between the whites and blacks of the South was predicated upon the indisputable control of the latter by the former. Free Negroes, regardless of what their rights were theoretically, could not be an exception. It became necessary, therefore, for Southerners to carry on a campaign of vilification against free Negroes in order to keep them in their place.⁴¹⁴

In the heat of this campaign, one antagonist went so far as to describe free Negroes as “an incubus upon the land.”⁴¹⁵

Among both blacks and whites, even those born free, freedom for African Americans was considered a gift, not an entitlement. Free black behavior was always circumscribed by a sense of indebtedness to the white society. Once each decade between the 1830s and the 1850s, the Mississippi state legislature reinforced the legal prerequisites for free black status: (1) no freedom was recognized unless conferred by the state legislature upon application of the owner; (2) no residence was permitted in the state without sponsorship and a character reference from a prominent white citizen; (3) no business activity was allowed without a municipal or county license; and (4) trade in slaves was forbidden.⁴¹⁶ Historian Ronald F. L. Davis provides a catalogue of the other restrictions that free blacks in Mississippi suffered: “[They] could not vote, hold public office, testify against whites, serve on juries in litigation involving whites, move around without written and certified proof of their freedom on their persons, trade with whom they wished according to the dictates of the market, carry or keep weapons without a license or operate taverns or grocery stores.”⁴¹⁷

Louisiana laws regarding free African Americans were less restrictive than Mississippi laws. In Louisiana, free blacks could testify in court and not all of them had to carry proof of freedom or register with local authorities. According to historian Ira Levin, “No other Southern state had as large a class of free Negro planters as Louisiana, and no other Southern city had as active and as educated a free Negro professional elite as New Orleans.... No where else in the South did whites treat free Negro liberty with such respect. The free people of color of the Gulf ports [New Orleans, Mobile, and Pensacola]

⁴¹⁴ Franklin, 157.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Davis, *The Black Experience of Natchez*, 51.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 47.

were an exception within the South's anomalous caste."⁴¹⁸ Free blacks gained added respect in New Orleans from their service in free Negro battalions that defended the city at the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812. In 1830, when Louisiana enacted a free black registration law, the state exempted free blacks who were free prior to 1812. As late as 1856, wrote Berlin, "the Louisiana Supreme Court affirmed that "in the eye of Louisiana law, there is...all the difference between a free man of color and a slave, that there is between a white man and a slave."⁴¹⁹

Although laws governing free blacks in Mississippi were strict, Natchez may have been influenced in its treatment of free blacks by its cultural and commercial ties to New Orleans. In describing slavery in Natchez, travel writer Joseph Ingraham noted: "Restrictions upon slaves are very rigorous in law, but not in fact."⁴²⁰ Despite a stronger Anglo-Saxon heritage, Natchez had more in common culturally with New Orleans than with most of the rest of Mississippi. Unlike New Orleans, Savannah, and Charleston, however, Natchez's small population probably encouraged greater commercial and social interaction between free blacks and whites and restricted the development of a large, relatively independent free black society, just as it encouraged the full integration of Jews into the social and commercial life of the town. Correlations could probably be developed between the Natchez antebellum free-black society and postbellum Jewish society, but further investigation needs to be undertaken.

The tenuous nature of free black status meant that slave owners changed their minds about manumission according to mood, and even former owners might exercise dominion over former chattel. A codicil to planter John Minor's will, which had originally declared an intent to free one of his slaves, declared, "Whereas since making of my last will my said Negro man named Spencer has acted unfaithfully and I have sold him, I do hereby... direct...that said Negro Spencer be and remain a slave for life."⁴²¹ An entry in William Johnson's diary for January 14, 1836, details an incident involving a free woman of color once owned by a Dr. Lattimore, whose "back was very much whipped" for unknown reasons. Johnson noted outrage at the treatment: "It was thought Dr. Lattimore made her walk in the streets this way."⁴²²

William Johnson's diary documents his own concerns about his status as a free African American in Natchez. In 1831, the state passed a law requiring free men to leave Mississippi unless they filed petitions with the signatures of reputable white citizens with the county Board of Police. The enactment of this law was undoubtedly spurred by the Nat Turner rebellion. In 1841, a campaign against free African Americans, termed "The Inquisition" by Johnson, was launched to enforce the law of 1831. The white aristocracy of

⁴¹⁸ Berlin, 129.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 128-131.

⁴²⁰ Ingraham, 2: 258.

⁴²¹ Davis, *The Black Experience in Natchez 1720-1880*, 53.

⁴²² Hogan and Davis, 93.

the Natchez community was not identified with the campaign and assisted respectable free African Americans who scurried to get signatures on petitions to conform to the law.⁴²³

Former slave and post-Civil War politician John R. Lynch noted that typically relations between African Americans and the upper class of Natchez were always easier than with poor and middle class whites.⁴²⁴ Many members of the Natchez aristocracy had a long familiarity with slavery and African Americans and were not as fearful of a growing number of free blacks. William Ker's letter, written after the Second Creek incident that resulted in the hanging of approximately twenty-seven slaves, refers to the liberal practices of Natchez slaveholders. By contrast, the lower classes had little personal association with blacks and feared labor competition from large numbers of free blacks. These currents came to the forefront during the Reconstruction period and reached their climax with segregation in the twentieth century.

5.6 Free Black Society in Natchez

Between 1820 and 1840, the number of free blacks in antebellum Natchez rarely exceeded 200 or dropped below 69. Between 1840 and 1860, the free black population in Natchez hovered around 200. By 1860, about eighty percent of the 200 had been born in Natchez and lived in thirty-eight households.⁴²⁵ Their households were sprinkled throughout the town without any clustering. William Johnson lived across the street from nabob William Newton Mercer's townhouse, and free black Nelson Fitzhugh lived on the same block with banker George W. Koontz (Greenleaves) and minister Joseph Buck Stratton (Presbyterian Manse). This distribution of free blacks among white landowners also appears to have been typical of other Southern cities like Charleston and Savannah. Historian Ira Berlin noted, "At times, the indiscriminate distributions of free Negro and white residences threw the two castes together in striking combinations."⁴²⁶ Some cities, like New Orleans, became notorious for their racial mixing. Berlin writes, "the intersection of Bourbon and Orleans Streets was 'distinguished for the equality which reigns between black and white—all was hail fellow well met, no matter what the complexion.'"⁴²⁷

Some free blacks did not live independently, but resided in white households, probably with their employers. In 1830, one-fourth of the free blacks in thirty-one Virginia counties lived with white employers. The same was true of Adams County, Mississippi, with one-fourth of the county's free blacks residing in white households.⁴²⁸

⁴²³ James, 178-180.

⁴²⁴ John R. Lynch, *Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John R. Lynch* (Chicago, 1970) and Robert Stephen Newbery, "John Royal Lynch: A Political Biography," (master's thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1970).

⁴²⁵ Davis, *The Black Experience in Natchez 1720-1880*, 47.

⁴²⁶ Berlin, 253-255.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 262.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, 252.

Free blacks were employed primarily in service occupations. Hiram Revels came to Natchez at the close of the Civil War to pastor Zion Chapel African American Episcopal Church, but he had earlier, like William Johnson, been employed as a barber in North Carolina. Few held positions central to either the cotton business, the slave trade, or any other business pivotal to the Natchez economy. The notable exception in Natchez was slave Simon Gray who lived like a free black and was a flatboat captain for Andrew Brown's sawmill. Free black Nelson Fitzhugh also held a responsible position as a clerk in a retail store.⁴²⁹ The five largest categories of adult male occupations were carpenters (23%), draymen (20%), servants (20%), laborers (17%) and barbers (11%). Women were principally seamstresses, dressmakers, and washerwomen.⁴³⁰ William Johnson, a barber, clearly fit this profile and, though he managed to rise within it to become a success by either white or black standards, the political, racial, and economic parameters of free black life played a central part in his life.

By the time of the Civil War, some distinctions of class had emerged within the free black population, just as with slaves. Blassingame and Berry have termed the upper stratum of free blacks the "Southern Free Negro Elite," and note that:

Wealthy free Negroes drew distinctions between themselves and poorer free Negroes and slaves. William Johnson...carefully cultivated the habits of white gentility. He bred horses, hunted, provided music lessons for his daughters, subscribed to New York journals, hired an overseer, bought a farm, and worked it with slaves, free Negro apprentices and white tenant laborers.⁴³¹

According to Berlin, the free people of color of the lower South had long stood further apart from slaves and closer to whites than the free blacks of the upper South. In 1864, a Union officer wrote a superior from New Orleans that the free people of color "with all their admirable qualities, have not forgotten that they were, themselves, slave holders." An upcountry visitor to Charleston noted that the old free Negro elite disassociated themselves from the "parvenu free." These social differences between free blacks and slaves continue to endure among their descendants in the South from Reconstruction to the present.⁴³² Robert Stanton, minister of Natchez's Zion Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church in the 1970s and 1980s, noted that such social differences still existed in Natchez as late as 1980. Stanton recorded in an interview a conversation he had with a visitor for a special service one Sunday morning. He welcomed the visitor and noted that he had not seen her before. She replied that she did not think she would feel welcome because her skin was too dark.⁴³³ Zion Chapel African Methodist Church was, for many

⁴²⁹ *The Natchez Weekly Courier*, November 12, 1866.

⁴³⁰ Davis, *The Black Experience in Natchez 1720-1880*, 50.

⁴³¹ Berry and Blassingame, 37.

⁴³² Berlin, 387-390.

⁴³³ Reverend Robert Stanton, interviewed by Mississippi Educational Television and Mary W. Miller, in Natchez, 1982.

years, the most socially prestigious church of the African-American community in Natchez. Many of its founding members were free blacks, the mulatto offspring of the planting elite of Natchez, and house servants.⁴³⁴

5.7 William Johnson

William Johnson (Fig. 32) was born in 1809, the probable offspring and property of a white man named William Johnson and his enslaved mulatto mistress, Amy Johnson. The various emancipations of Johnson family members reflect Mississippi and Louisiana's changing laws regarding the freedom of slaves. In 1814, William Johnson the elder went across the Mississippi River to the Concordia Parish Courthouse in Louisiana filed a notice of intent to free "his female slave Amy." In accordance with Louisiana law, which was at that time more liberal than Mississippi law, the notice of intent was posted publicly for forty days and Amy became a free woman. In obtaining her freedom, the elder Johnson pledged that Amy was able to support herself, that for the past four years she had been honest, that she had not attempted to escape, and that she had committed no crimes. Johnson also obliged himself to maintain her should she "be in want owing to sickness, old age, insanity, or any other proven infirmity."⁴³⁵

Four years later in 1818, the elder William Johnson freed Amy's daughter, described as a "mulatto girl named Delia aged about thirteen years." Changing laws in Louisiana prevented the elder Johnson from securing Delia's manumission as easily as he had secured her mother's freedom four years earlier. Instead, he had his agent George Ralston take Delia to Philadelphia to arrange the manumission. Delia returned to Natchez with her freedom.⁴³⁶

In 1820, the elder Johnson addressed the issue of obtaining freedom for Amy's son William, aged about nine. Changing laws regarding manumission forced him to petition the Mississippi Legislature. In the petition, the elder Johnson made an eloquent appeal. He asked that he be allowed to give that "Liberty to a human being which all are entitled to as a Birthright, & extend the hand of humanity to a rational Creature, on whom unfortunately Complexion Custom and even Law in This Land of freedom, has conspired to rivet the fetters of slavery." The legislature passed the bill, and it was then sent to Governor George Poindexter of Natchez, who signed it the same day on February 10.⁴³⁷

William Johnson and his family were, in many ways, typical of the free blacks of the lower South. Johnson was a mulatto, he lived in an urban environment, and he was employed as a barber, a service profession common to free blacks. Both his mother and mother-in-law headed free black households that were probably the result of their liaisons with white men. The Johnson family socialized with other free black families and looked with disdain upon

⁴³⁴ Zion Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church Site File, chain of title and narrative history, HNF.

⁴³⁵ Hogan and Davis, 15.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*

socializing with slaves. Like most other free blacks in the lower South after the Civil War, the Johnson family seemed to hold themselves somewhat aloof after the Civil War. Four of William Johnson's five daughters never married. At least one son married a former slave, who was also the daughter of a valued house servant at Dunleith and the sister of noted Reconstruction politician John R. Lynch. William Johnson is distinguished from most other free blacks, however, in his business success and his prodigal record keeping. His diary, published in 1951, and his personal and business records provide the most complete account of the life of a free black in the antebellum South.

In the year William was emancipated, his sister Adelia married a twenty-year-old, Philadelphia-born free Negro barber named James Miller. Johnson apprenticed under his brother-in-law during his early adolescence. The apprentice system was a major avenue for the development of skills and an entrepreneurial spirit among the free black population, particularly in urban, heavily trafficked port cities like Natchez. Johnson's relationship and proximity to James Miller enabled him to acquire not only barbering skills but also the unwritten etiquette of successful dealings with whites. In 1827, forty-four prominent white male citizens of Natchez successfully petitioned the Mississippi state legislature to remove all civil restrictions on Miller's activities as a free man of color, except his rights to vote and serve in the militia and on juries.⁴³⁸

Despite his white support in Natchez, James Miller relocated to New Orleans in 1830 and sold the unexpired portion of his Main Street barbershop lease, adjacent properties, and furnishings to his twenty-one-year-old brother-in-law.⁴³⁹ For two years previous, William Johnson had been operating a smaller barber shop in Port Gibson, located about forty miles north of Natchez.⁴⁴⁰

For the next five years, William Johnson lived the life of a single, free man-of-color with a well established business in Natchez. During the period, he courted a number of free women-of-color, and enjoyed the typical recreational activities of the day like gambling, attending theatrical performances, and taking excursions to New Orleans, Philadelphia, and New York.⁴⁴¹

In 1831, Johnson began courting a free mulatto from Natchez named Ann Battles, whom he married on April 25, 1835. At the time of the marriage, Johnson held property worth \$2,700 and four slaves. During their sixteen-year marriage, the Johnsons had ten children, the last of whom was born one month before Johnson's death in 1851.⁴⁴² Nine of the children lived to adulthood. Diary entries suggest that Johnson was an affectionate and generous father. Johnson's oldest daughter Anna attended school in 1850 in New

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 19-20.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 23.

Orleans, where she lived with her aunt Delia Miller.⁴⁴³ Johnson family papers record payments for tutors, and two of Johnson's sons attended school in New Orleans in the 1850s.⁴⁴⁴

In addition to his principal barber shop located in a building he owned on Main Street, Johnson operated two other establishments in property that he rented. Johnson operated a shop at different locations at Natchez Under-the-Hill from 1838 until his death in 1851. He also operated a shop on South Wall Street from 1840-1843. Both the Under-the-Hill and Wall Street barber shops were operated by either free Negro employees or an enslaved male named Charles.⁴⁴⁵ Johnson's apprentices and employees were all African Americans, both free Negroes and trustworthy slaves. Johnson's free apprentices included William Winston, William Nix, "French William," Edward Hoggatt, and various members of the Burns family.⁴⁴⁶ Two of Johnson's slave barbers were Jim and Charles, a slave rented by Johnson from a Major Young.⁴⁴⁷

Johnson's clientele was apparently all white. Diary entries indicate that a large proportion of the customers were also members of the Natchez elite and that many were credit customers. Lending money became a business sideline for Johnson, and, by 1834, he was actively engaged in lending money to whites. His greatest money-lending activity occurred in the years 1836-1837, during which time he lent \$4,700 to white borrowers, but it dwindled in the 1840s. Johnson's largest single loan was \$1,000 to the firm of Gemmell and Taylor, builders. His accounts even include a loan to former Governor George Poindexter.⁴⁴⁸ Johnson rarely failed to collect money that was owed him, because he carefully selected his customers and because he was persistent in pressuring his debtors, even to the extent of taking a debtor to court. According to his biographers, he would sometimes transfer a note to a white man who could bring stronger pressure to bear on the signer of the note.⁴⁴⁹

Johnson socialized with white men on hunting trips and at the race track, but his daily relationships with white men were not unlike those that existed between blacks and whites in the South until the Civil Rights Movement. Johnson had to sit in the balcony reserved for slaves and free blacks at theatrical performances, and he rarely ate with white man except on hunting occasions. He neither entertained white man in his house on State Street nor was entertained by them in their homes.

Between 1836 and 1841, Johnson erected several buildings. He first built a new frame house on his mother-in-law's property on State Street. After this house burned in 1839,

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 700.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 63.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 26.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 27-28.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 29-30.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 30.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 31.

Johnson rebuilt on the site. The new brick building that he completed in 1841 became his family's home (Fig. 33). In 1838-1839, Johnson built a new two-and-a-half-story brick building on his Main Street property for his business. Johnson hired local contractors to supervise construction of the first State Street house and the building on Main Street, but he himself supervised construction on his State Street residence, now known as the William Johnson House.⁴⁵⁰ Johnson's slaves performed the unskilled labor, but the brickwork, carpentry, plastering, and painting was largely performed by white artisans.⁴⁵¹ The William Johnson House is a simply finished two-and-a-half-story Greek Revival building designed for combined residential and commercial use. The first story features the double-leaf shop doors that were common to commercial buildings of the period. The William Johnson House is similar to other extant buildings at Natchez Under-the-Hill and on North Martin Luther King Street (formerly North Pine Street) and to many non-extant buildings documented in historic photographs of downtown Natchez. The William Johnson House is also similar to the adjacent McCallum House which shares a common wall. Although Johnson's diary records no specific commercial tenants except a dancing master, this does not preclude the possibility of other tenants.

The ownership of land was considered a major prerequisite to nineteenth-century financial stability and status. Like his white contemporaries, Johnson also developed interest in acquiring a farm or small plantation. In 1835, he purchased a tract of slightly more than 160 acres but quickly sold it when he had the opportunity to almost double his investment.⁴⁵² Between 1845 and 1846, William Johnson paid a little less than \$4,000 for a 750-acre plantation known as "Hard Scrabble."⁴⁵³

When Johnson visited his plantation, "he himself often arose before daybreak and paced his hands in two or three hours labor before daybreak." He also employed a white man as a combination tenant, overseer, and chief laborer, and hired an occasional white laborer. During harvesting season, Johnson frequently augmented his labor force with his sons, one or two of his barbers, relatives from New Orleans, and two or three of his black friends.⁴⁵⁴

Johnson's ownership of slaves seems incongruous today, more than a century after emancipation, but Johnson must be judged in the context of his own time. Johnson was not the only African American to own slaves; other prosperous free blacks in Natchez and throughout the South were sometimes slave owners. Johnson owned as many as fifteen slaves during his lifetime. Like most of his white aristocratic acquaintances, Johnson followed a certain code of ethics in relation to his treatment of his slaves. He occasionally hired out their labor, he disciplined primarily for misconduct, and he did not separate family groups. His diary records episodes of whipping his slaves, but he also

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 32-34.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

whipped his free black apprentices and his own children when they misbehaved.⁴⁵⁵ He once even gave his mother a few flicks with the whip to bring her to her senses in the midst of one of her frequent hysterical fits.⁴⁵⁶

William Johnson does not voice his own opinions about slavery in his diary. The lack of antislavery sentiments in his diary, however, should not be interpreted as an endorsement of the institution. Most likely, Johnson simply accepted the existence of slavery in the same way that many African Americans later accepted segregation. Johnson may have speculated or dreamed about a slave-free society or even a society where the color of a man's skin was unimportant. If Johnson had such thoughts, his tentative position in society would probably have made him reluctant to record them in his diary. Perhaps a more interesting point to ponder is why William Johnson never left Natchez for a new life in the North. He traveled in the North and had the financial means to relocate his family, but he chose instead to remain in the town of his birth. Perhaps he shared the sentiments of a Liberia-bound free black, who had seen "the legal slavery of the South and the social slavery of the North" and knew that he could never be a free man in the United States.⁴⁵⁷

William Johnson never affiliated with any particular religious denomination. His children, however, were baptized in New Orleans in the Catholic Church. These baptisms probably meant less about religion and more about providing records of their legitimacy and free status.⁴⁵⁸ A white Methodist minister officiated at Johnson's funeral. Johnson contributed to civic causes like militia and fire company celebrations, a fund to assist distressed passengers from a steamboat explosion, and a fund for firing a cannon on the bluff to celebrate the annexation of Texas. He also made occasional donations to destitute persons.⁴⁵⁹

In the late 1840s, William Johnson became involved in a long-term land dispute with Baylor Winn concerning the boundary between their farm lands. Court-ordered surveys proved Johnson to be correct, and Johnson subsequently sued Winn. On May 2, 1851, before the case came to trial, Johnson proposed a settlement for the sake of peace. Both men subsequently signed an agreement about the boundary. However, on June 16, 1851, as Johnson was returning to town from his farm, Baylor Winn shot him in the back.⁴⁶⁰

According to newspaper accounts of the day, Johnson and a young mulatto boy in his company were both shot. The wounded boy was able to ride for help and recovered, but William Johnson died at 2:00 a.m. the following morning. He named Baylor Winn as his murderer on his deathbed.⁴⁶¹ The *Natchez Courier* made the murder first-page news and

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 52.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 45.

⁴⁵⁷ Berlin, 168.

⁴⁵⁸ Hogan and Davis, 50.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 40.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 57-58.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 58.

lamented the death of an "excellent and most inoffensive man" who held a "respected position on account of his character, intelligence and deportment."⁴⁶²

The trial of Baylor Winn was more complex than the usual murder case, since it focused primarily on the racial status of the accused murderer. Race was the central issue, since Mississippi law barred the court testimony of a black man against a white man. Consequently, Johnson's deathbed testimony was inadmissible and so was the testimony of the mulatto boy who was also wounded.⁴⁶³

Baylor Winn's first two trials were not based on the murder charge, but on the question of whether or not Winn was a mulatto. Baylor Winn's defense relied solely upon proving that the defendant did not have any black ancestry. Winn himself claimed to have white and Indian blood, and his defense attorneys produced witnesses from Virginia, the state of Winn's birth, to testify that his ancestry was white and Indian. Winn's first trial ended in a mistrial. Charging that public opinion in Natchez and Adams County was enflamed against their client, Winn's attorneys sought a change of venue for the second trial, which was held in neighboring Jefferson County. Natchez attorney William T. Martin, at the request of the Johnson family, assisted the prosecution as a special prosecutor. The second trial again failed to prove that Winn had black ancestry. After surviving still a third attempt to take him to trial, Baylor Winn was released. Despite William Johnson's position in the Natchez community, his murderer went free solely because William Johnson was a mulatto and his murderer proved himself white.⁴⁶⁴

William Johnson died intestate. Inventories taken at his death show that he owned fifteen slaves, property on Main and State (property adjacent to his residence) Streets in Natchez, and his recently acquired acreage south of town.⁴⁶⁵ His State Street residence remained in the name of his mother-in-law, who was the owner of the land. William Johnson was survived by his wife and nine children. Johnson's tenth child, a son Phillip, died in infancy. After Johnson's death, his widow Ann Johnson headed the Johnson family. In 1854, she built a new brick commercial building on the site of her late husband's barber shop on Main Street.⁴⁶⁶ Two of her sons, William and Byron, continued to work as barbers after the death of her husband.

During the Civil War, the family's prosperity began to dissipate. Daughter Katherine Johnson noted the family's diminishing resources in 1865 and commented that brother William and his family were a "heavy weight on [family] income."⁴⁶⁷ Ann Johnson died in 1866, the same year that her son William R. Johnson Jr. was committed to an insane

⁴⁶² *The Natchez Courier*, June 20, 1851.

⁴⁶³ Hogan and Davis, 58-60.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 60-62.

⁴⁶⁵ Adams County, Office of the Chancery Clerk, Probate Real Estate Record Book 2, 232-239.

⁴⁶⁶ Hogan and Davis, 63.

⁴⁶⁷ William Johnson and Family Memorial Papers, Vol. 31, LLMVC/LSU.

asylum in New Orleans.⁴⁶⁸ Letters from Natchez nabob Adam L. Bingaman, then living in New Orleans, to Byron Johnson in 1866 indicate that Bingaman was trying to look after William, who escaped from the asylum at least three times that year. By 1867, the Johnson children were renting out the upstairs of the kitchen building to boarders.⁴⁶⁹ Son Byron apparently assumed the role of head of household after his mother's death and brother's commitment. Byron, like his late father, turned his attention to planting and bought plantation land in Concordia Parish.

In 1872, Byron Johnson, like his father, was murdered. He was ambushed at the rear of the Main Street barber shop by several individuals. Once again, the local newspaper extolled the virtues of a Johnson family member in an obituary:

"Byron emulated the example of his father, in whose worthy memory he ever felt a just degree of pride.... Byron easily attained to an enviable position in the estimation of all who knew him...he attended closely to his business, eschewing political strife, though he was often urged to enter it, and had the intelligence, energy and ability to win place and distinction, had he chosen to be a public man since the enfranchisement of his race.... He was temperate, generous, public-spirited, moral."⁴⁷⁰

William T. Martin again served the Johnson family as a special prosecutor, and this time the murderers, who inarguably had black ancestry, were convicted. One of those charged with Byron's murderer was a member of the Fitzhugh family, another prominent free African-American family living in Natchez during the antebellum period. Another was the former slave butler for Alfred Vidal Davis of Dunleith in Natchez.

After the death of her brother, Anna L. Johnson, the oldest daughter, assumed the mantle of head of household. With Byron dead and William Jr. in a New Orleans mental institution, Richard and Clarence Johnson continued living in the State Street house with their sisters. Clarence Johnson became a blacksmith and married Catherine Lynch, the sister of prominent African-American Congressman John R. Lynch, formerly a Natchez house slave.⁴⁷¹

In the 1870 census, two barbers, Juanito and Carlito Garrus, are listed as residing in the William Johnson House. Juanito Garrus married Eugenia, one of the five Johnson daughters.⁴⁷² Juanito died in Natchez in 1906 at the age of 69.⁴⁷³ The date of Eugenia's

⁴⁶⁸ City of Natchez Sexton Records, Armstrong Library and Hogan and Davis, 63.

⁴⁶⁹ Anna Johnson's Day Book, William Johnson and Family Memorial Papers, Vol. 45, LLMVC/LSU.

⁴⁷⁰ *The Natchez Democrat*, January 17, 1872.

⁴⁷¹ John R. Lynch to William R. Johnston, September 9, 1934, William Johnson and Family Memorial Papers, Series I, Folder 4, LLMVC/LSU.

⁴⁷² Hogan and Davis, 512.

⁴⁷³ Natchez Sexton Records, Armstrong Library.

death is unknown, although she was still living in Natchez in 1896.⁴⁷⁴ The Garrus family residence still stands at 17 Reynolds Street.⁴⁷⁵ The remaining four daughters of William Johnson, Anna, Katherine, Josephine, and Alice, never married

In 1873, Katherine Johnson lamented, "I believe that to all our other ills and troubles is to be added that of poverty, for every year we grow poorer and poorer..."⁴⁷⁶ In a letter to her sister [unnamed but probably Anna] that was written on March 12 [probably 1871], Katherine expressed feminist sentiments in describing the condition of her sister and herself as "chained to the rock of adversity—bound there, by masculine mismanagement & indolence, not a little mixed with meanness."⁴⁷⁷ Also, in 1873, Harriet Battles, mother-in-law of William Johnson, died and subsequently willed the Johnson family residence, which was built on her property, to her five granddaughters.⁴⁷⁸ At some point in the late nineteenth century, the family began using the name Johnston instead of Johnson. At least three of William Johnson's daughters taught school during the postbellum period.

By 1900, occupancy at the Johnson family residence on State Street reached an all-time high. Fourteen people with two heads of household are listed. In addition to four Johnson daughters, son Clarence and wife Catherine Lynch Johnston were living there with their four children. Also living in the household were two teachers, a paymaster, and a barber. Son Richard Johnson was also an occasional resident. The large number of residents probably relates to the construction of a new kitchen building in 1897 and the partitioning of the single-room first-story interior.

The respect of the Natchez community for the Johnson family did not end with the death of Byron in 1872. In 1897, W. G. Benbrook, mayor of Natchez, wrote to Anna Johnson and asked her for a letter of introduction for his son, who was opening a medical practice in Saint Joseph, Louisiana.⁴⁷⁹

In 1901, Katherine Johnston bequeathed her interest in the property to her three surviving sisters.⁴⁸⁰ In 1910, Dr. William R. Johnston, son of Clarence Johnston, returned to Natchez to practice medicine.⁴⁸¹ Clarence Johnston died in 1911, Anna died in 1922, and Alice and Josephine deeded their interest in the State Street residence in 1924 to their

⁴⁷⁴ Adams County, Office of the Chancery Clerk, Deed Book 3-G, 546-547.

⁴⁷⁵ Duncan Morgan, local African-American historian, interviewed by Mary Warren Miller, preservation director, HNF, February 2, 1996.

⁴⁷⁶ Dena Sanford, "William Johnson House" (draft report, Historic American Building Survey, National Park Service, 1992), 28.

⁴⁷⁷ William Johnson and Family Memorial Papers, Series II, folder 23, LLMVC/LSU.

⁴⁷⁸ Natchez Sexton Records, Armstrong Library and Adams County, Office of the Chancery Clerk, Will Book 4, 63-64.

⁴⁷⁹ Davis, *The Black Experience in Natchez 1720-1880*, 195.

⁴⁸⁰ Adams County, Office of the Chancery Clerk, Will Book 5, 305.

⁴⁸¹ "Index to Physicians, Pharmacists & Dentists, Starting 1808," ed. Robert Shumway, computer print-out, HNF, 69.

nephew Dr. William R. Johnston and his wife Sallie, with the stipulation that the sisters could reside there until their deaths.⁴⁸² The last Johnston family members to reside in the William Johnson House were Dr. and Mrs. William R. Johnston. Dr. William R. Johnston died in 1939; his widow, in 1975. In 1976, the Johnston heirs, a niece and nephew of Sallie Johnson, sold the house to the Preservation Society of Ellicott Hill.

The national importance of the William Johnson House was recognized in 1991, when the property was acquired by the National Park Service. The site of William Johnson's barber shop on Main Street, which was demolished for construction of a federal post office in 1904, will soon become the headquarters of the Natchez Association for the Preservation of African American Culture.

5.8 Other Free African Americans in Natchez

William Johnson has captured the attention of most historians, but other free African Americans in antebellum Natchez are also worthy of study. Although manumission of slaves had occurred since the eighteenth century, only one building possibly associated with the free black population before statehood has survived. The Kyle House at the intersection of High and North Rankin was probably built before 1818 by Christopher H. Kyle for his slave Nancy.⁴⁸³ In 1827, when Kyle made his will, he left the house to her and directed his executors to arrange for her freedom and that of her three children by taking them to a non-slave state and bringing them back to Natchez. In addition to the house, Kyle bequeathed \$1,000 to Nancy and her daughter Caroline Kyle.⁴⁸⁴

William Johnson's best friend and most frequent companion was Robert McCary, who was freed by will in 1815. McCary was the son and slave of a white cabinetmaker named James McCary. In his will, James McCary provided for the freedom of his son Bob and daughter Kitty, who were to be manumitted and educated in Pennsylvania. He bequeathed them real estate in downtown Natchez and also slaves who were apparently their half-siblings.⁴⁸⁵ McCary worked as a teacher who taught free African-American children and, like Johnson, was a successful barber. The two endorsed one another in business deals and spent much of their leisure time together. They played cards, visited the race track, hunted, shared Sunday walks, and had long discussions at the dinner table.⁴⁸⁶ Robert McCary's son William married Lavinia, the niece of William Johnson.⁴⁸⁷

Almost as successful as William Johnson was Robert Smith, who was born free in Maryland and arrived in Natchez in the mid-1830s. Smith operated a hack or taxi

⁴⁸² Adams County, Office of the Chancery Clerk, Deed Book J:456.

⁴⁸³ Mary W. Miller, "Comprehensive Plan for Historic Preservation for the Territorial Period in Mississippi," architecture section, Kyle House, draft report, n.d., HNF.

⁴⁸⁴ Adams County, Office of the Chancery Clerk, Will Book 1:419 and Chancery Court Suit 6006.

⁴⁸⁵ Adams County, Office of the Chancery Clerk, Will Book 1:88-90 and probate box 27.

⁴⁸⁶ Hogan and Davis, 43.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 769.

business, owned slaves, and built a Greek Revival townhouse (Robert Smith House; also known as Bontura-Evansview) that still stands at 107 South Broadway Street.⁴⁸⁸ Like the Johnson House, the Robert Smith House is a two-and-a-half-story house with dormered gable roof. However, the Robert Smith House has no commercial first story. At the rear of the house is a dependency building with carriage openings on the first story, and the horses were stabled at the rear of the house.

Smith died in 1858 and was honored with a lengthy obituary in the local newspaper: "...by his [Robert Smith's] industry, probity of life, correctness of demeanor and Christian-like character, had won the favor and respect of the entire community."⁴⁸⁹ Despite the respect of the Natchez community, Smith's widow filed a petition to the probate court that suggests the uncertainty that remained a daily part of the lives of free African Americans in Natchez. This petition requested permission to sell the family residence because:

the legislature of this state are about to pass a law compelling all free persons of color to leave the state within a certain time, and that her eldest son Randolph Smith is now residing in the City of Valparaisa, Peru [sic; this city is located in Chile], engaged in the iron foundry business, [and that] she is very anxious for the family to emigrate there.⁴⁹⁰

Another prominent free African-American family were the Fitzhughs. The head of the family was Nelson Fitzhugh, who was born in Virginia about 1808 and was approximately the same age as Johnson, McCary, and Smith. The 1850 census records indicate that Nelson Fitzhugh owned \$1,000 in real estate.⁴⁹¹ Fitzhugh worked as a clerk in a mercantile establishment in downtown Natchez, and his daughter Catherine married Robert McCary Jr.⁴⁹² In 1866 Nelson Fitzhugh became the object of vicious editorial attacks by the *Natchez Weekly Courier* after he wrote a letter critical of the South that was published in a northern periodical. His daughter Catherine McCary later wrote an apology for her father that was also published in the paper.⁴⁹³ In 1872, Nelson Fitzhugh's son William was among the four men arrested for the murder of Byron Johnson.⁴⁹⁴ The Fitzhugh house is no longer extant, but it stood on the northwest corner of the intersection of Martin Luther King Street (formerly Pine Street) and is documented in a historic photograph.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁸⁸ Robert Smith House Site File, National Register nomination, chain of title, and research notes by Mary W. Miller, HNF.

⁴⁸⁹ *The Natchez Courier*, June 2, 1858.

⁴⁹⁰ Adams County, Office of the Chancery Clerk, Probate Box 122.

⁴⁹¹ U. S. Bureau of the Census, Population Schedules, 1850, 2.

⁴⁹² Joseph Buck Stratton, diary, January 24, 1856, photocopy of typescript, HNF, 167.

⁴⁹³ *The Natchez Weekly Courier Supplement*, November 10, 1866 and *The Natchez Weekly Courier*, November 12, 1866.

⁴⁹⁴ *Natchez Weekly Courier*, January 17, 1872.

⁴⁹⁵ Mary Britton Conner photograph album, Norman and Gandy Collections, Dr. and Mrs. Thomas H. Gandy, Natchez.

Other prominent free African-American households included the Barlands (discussed earlier in this chapter), the Ruckers, the Winstons, and the Hoggatt family. All are worthy of further study.

5.9 Conclusion

Any clear understanding of free black status in the antebellum South demands the contextual discussions with which this chapter began. However, it is imperative to remember that each context is simultaneously independent and interdependent. Although free black status was a reality separate and apart from enslavement, non-white people of any category were vulnerable to both the power structure, as well as the waxing and waning of local and regional politics. The discussion of white anxiety over increasingly large free and enslaved black populations demonstrates this phenomenon of race as status. Free and enslaved blacks had more in common than free blacks and free whites.

Despite the commonality of free and enslaved African Americans, William Johnson's diary clearly documents the disdain that upper level free African Americans exhibited for socializing with slaves. That four of William Johnson's five daughters never married is probably a reflection of their father's views toward such socializing.

An African-American sociologist offers one entry in Johnson's diary as an indication that some free blacks may have adhered to traditional African and/or African-American cultural traditions. On August 7, 1837, John described one of his mother's typical fits: "The Old woman gets in one of way [sic]; threw Salt all on the floor at the door, Quarrells and makes all maner of fuss for nothing at all, I made Sharlot her Girl go and scour it up but would not Say a word to the Old Lady about it." In throwing salt on the floor, Amy Johnson might have been practicing an African-American ritual to repel evil spirits. The value of salt as substance to repel evil spirits is a widely held belief within traditional African-American culture.⁴⁹⁶ However, William Johnson's mother Amy was a constant problem with her outbursts in front of both the family and the community at large. Johnson once noted: "The old woman is on a regular spree for quarrelling to day all day—oh Lord, was any One on this Earth So perpetually tormented as I am."⁴⁹⁷

The life of William Johnson testifies to the opportunities that light skin color, white endorsement, and individual savvy could provide for a black man in a racially charged environment. However exceptional his status, even within the context of the free-black experience in America, Johnson could not escape from race, and his cultural orientation was not totally disparate from that of his enslaved brethren. The diary reader's task is to know the contexts within which the diarist operated and to read and appreciate his experiences as privileged insight, both for what is stated and what is not.

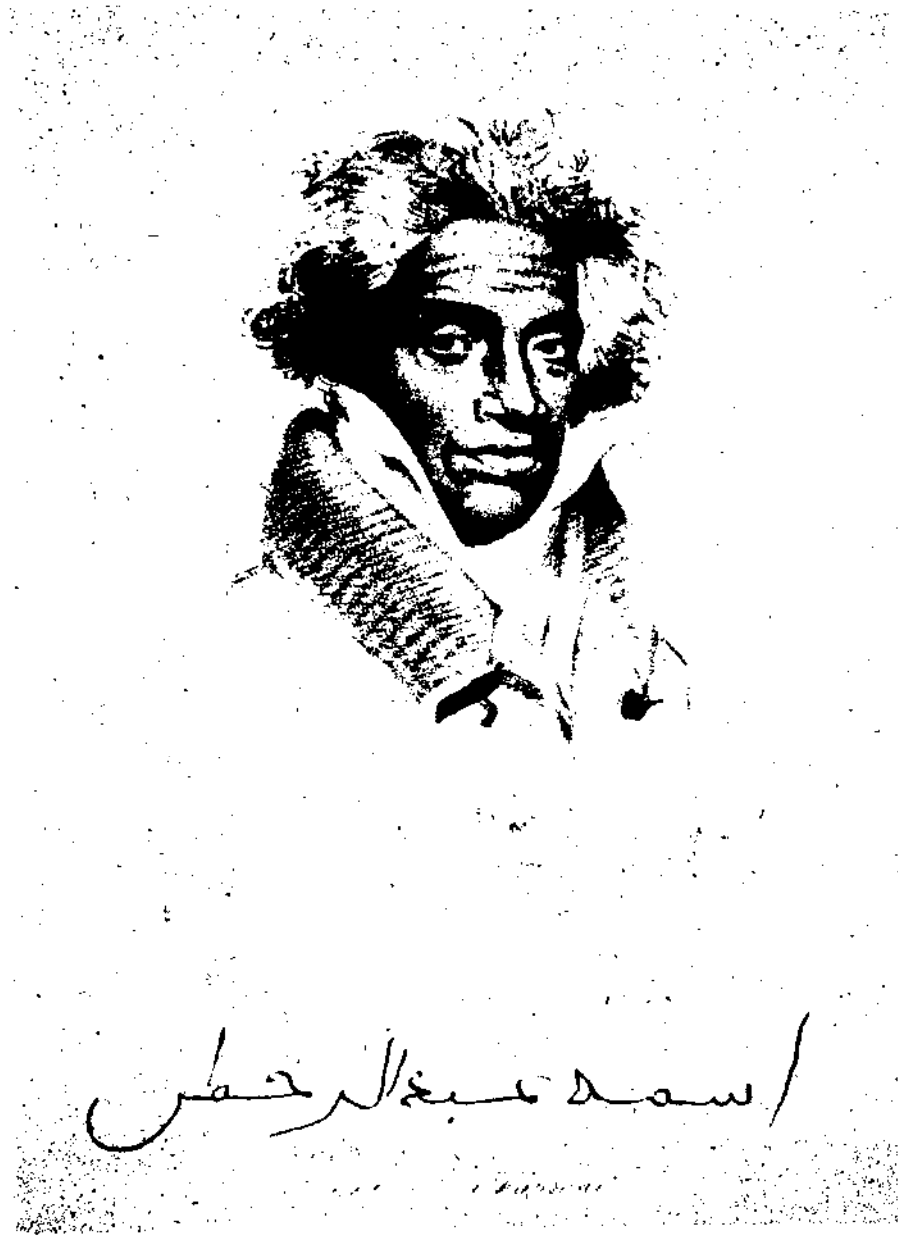
⁴⁹⁶ Hogan and Davis, 187, and Johns, 230.

⁴⁹⁷ Hogan and Davis, entry dated November 23, 1837.

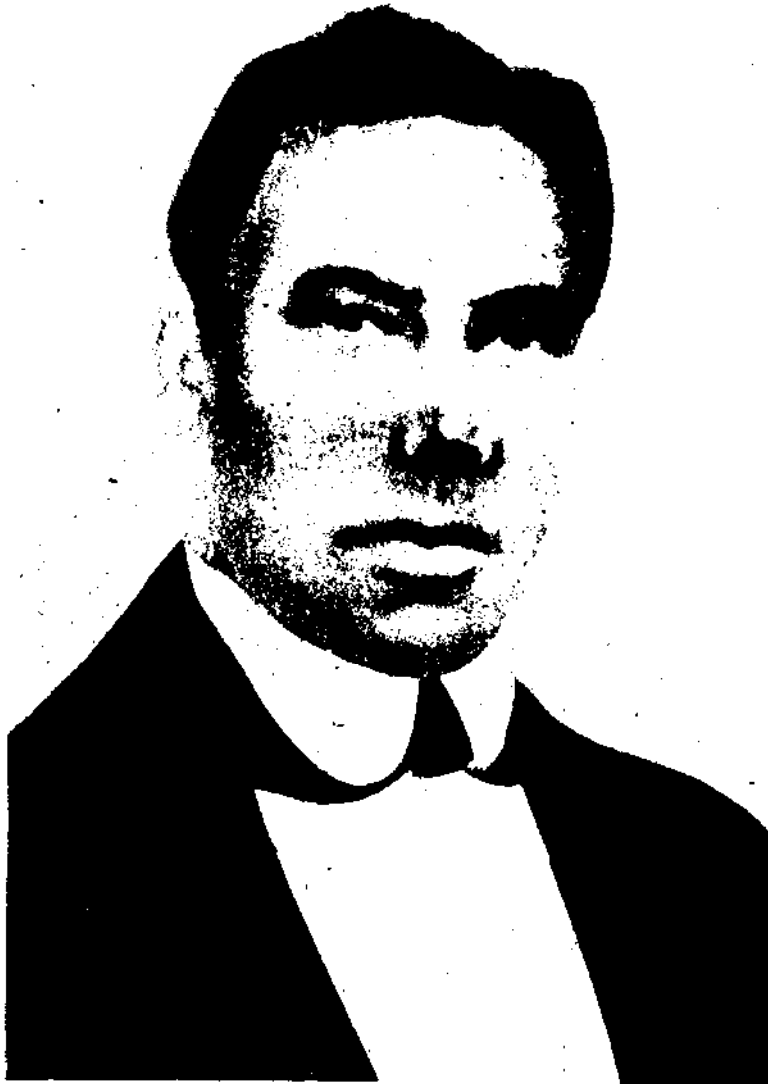
The life of William Johnson as related in his diary, personal papers, newspaper articles, and courthouse documents typifies the free Negro of the lower South as described in the conclusion of Ira Berlin's landmark study, *Masters Without Slaves*:

Free Negroes were an even more anomalous group than their name suggests. Drawn from the slave elite, they were generally older and more urban than whites or slaves. A largely mulatto caste with ties of blood and kinship with black and white, they were clearly distinct from both. But the characteristics that distinguished free Negroes from whites and slaves were magnified in the free people of color of the lower South. As a general rule, lower South free Negroes were not only more urban and light-skinned, but better educated, more skilled, and more closely connected with whites than those of the upper South. The South, in short, spawned two distinct groups of free Negroes. Their differences as well as their similarities reflected and influenced white racial attitudes. Those attitudes determined, in large measure, the free Negro's place in Southern society. The South, was, after all, a white man's country.⁴⁹⁸

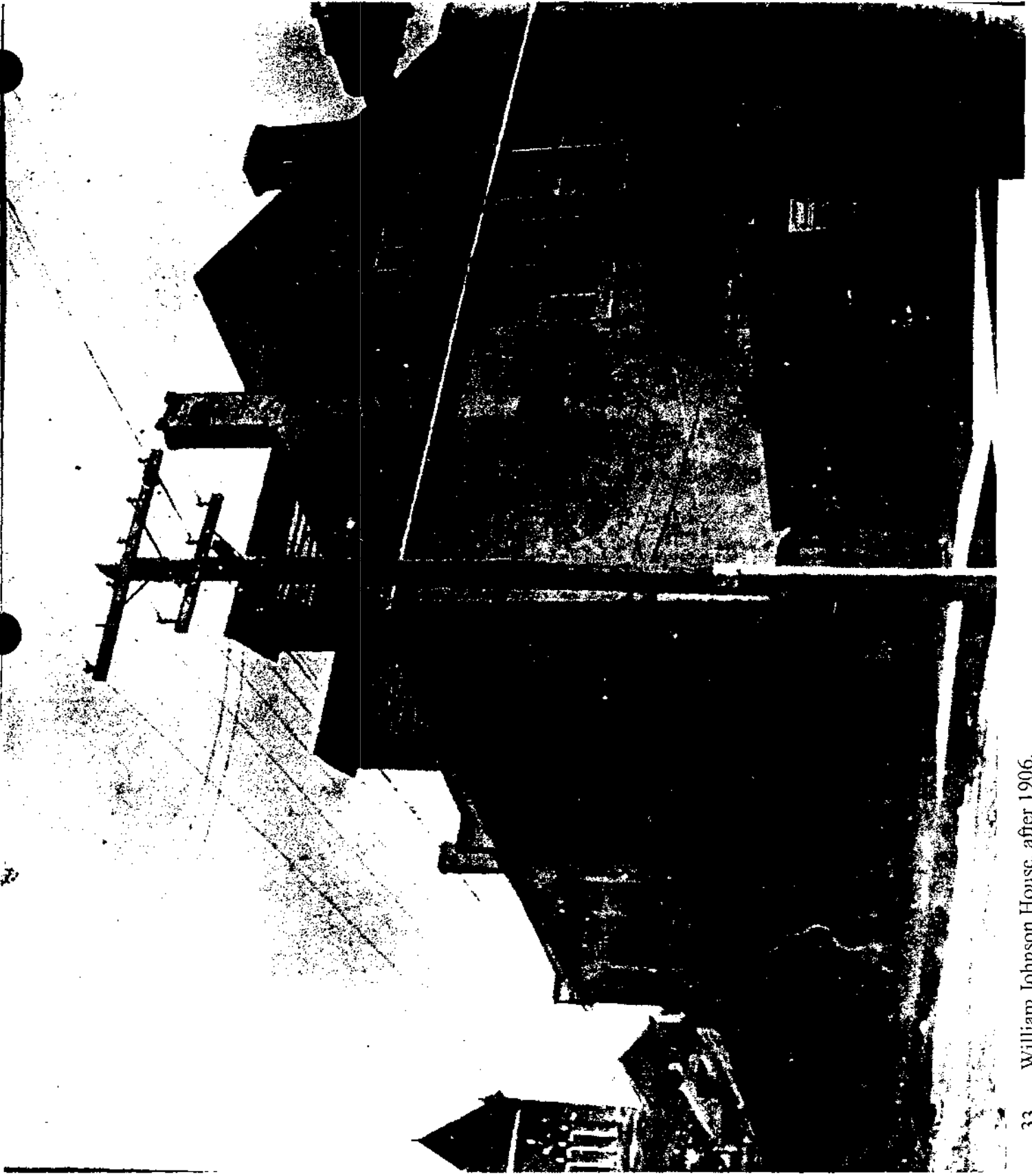
⁴⁹⁸ Berlin, 181.



31. Sketch of Abd Rahman Ibrahima (1762 - 1829) by Henry Inman.



32. Photograph identified as William Johnson by his family.



33. William Johnson House, after 1906.



**6.0 THE CIVIL WAR, RECONSTRUCTION, AND
REBUILDING IN NATCHEZ (1861 to 1945)**



6.1 Secessionist Politics and the Eve of the Civil War

Throughout the 1850s, sectional differences centering on the institution of slavery and its expansion into the western territories grew. Abolitionist agitation in the North, the open flouting of the fugitive slave law in some northern communities, the Supreme Court's opinion in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* that Congress had no authority to ban slavery from the territories, and open warfare between slavery and antislavery forces in the Kansas Territory all added to the climate of distrust between the North and South. The Democratic Party became increasingly splintered, and the emergence of the new Republican Party, based solely in the North and committed to a "free soil" doctrine, aroused deep suspicion in the South.

John McMurren spoke about the growing dissension between the North and the South in a speech he made at a Millard Fillmore rally in 1856. He described the public mind as being "agitated with but one all-engrossing subject—slavery—that most delicate and dangerous of all questions to the domestic peace of the country, and from which had sprung, of late years, all our sectional strife and bitterness."⁴⁹⁹ Mary Louisa McMurren noted in a letter that John McMurren thought Fillmore was the only man who could "save the ship of Union, at this period."⁵⁰⁰

As noted in Chapter 5, John Brown's 1859 raid on Harper's Ferry alarmed Southerners and created secessionists among many in the South who might otherwise have remained loyal to the Union. The reaction of the North to the death of John Brown, who was regarded by many as a "martyr to the cause of freedom" convinced many in the South that the Union should not be preserved.⁵⁰¹

In 1860, disunion fever began to sweep the South. Unlike their counterparts in Charleston and other Southern cities, the majority of the Natchez planters supported the Union and were opposed to secession. Stephen Duncan of Auburn strongly expressed his loyalty in the *Natchez Courier* in 1860, Duncan described secession as a "monstrous idea" and stated: "If the Union is to be dissolved, I for one, would be for selling out my possessions immediately."⁵⁰² The diary of scholar and planter B. L. C. Wailes contains sentiments similar to those expressed by Duncan: "The spirit of anarchy is abroad in the land and we are drifting to a state of anarchy, disorder, and ruin."⁵⁰³ John McMurren's desire to preserve the Union is documented in his 1856 support for Millard Fillmore, regarded by McMurren as the only candidate who could save the Union.⁵⁰⁴ In an 1861 letter, Alice Austen McMurren described John T McMurren as a "strong Unionist as long

⁴⁹⁹ John T. McMurren, speech as reported in the *Natchez Daily Courier*, October 23, 1856.

⁵⁰⁰ Mary Louisa McMurren to John T. McMurren, August 29, 1856, Addison Papers, transcript, NATC.

⁵⁰¹ Frank A. Montgomery, *Reminiscences of a Mississippian in Peace and War* (Cincinnati: The Robert Clarke Company Press, 1901), 35–36.

⁵⁰² James, 290.

⁵⁰³ Benjamin L. C. Wailes, diary, December 20, 1860, typescript, Armstrong Library, Natchez.

⁵⁰⁴ Mary Louisa McMurren to John T. McMurren, August 29, 1856, Addison Papers, transcript, NATC.

as their [sic] was hope.”⁵⁰⁵ Planter James Surget later remarked to a Union general and his wife: “I know it is contrary to the general impression, but the large slaveholder was against secession.”⁵⁰⁶

Some Natchez nabobs, however, supported disunion; prominent among these were Douglas Walworth and George Malin Davis, who became the second owner of Melrose in 1865. Davis chaired the December 1860 county meeting where delegates were chosen for the state secession convention in Jackson. In his diary, B. L. C. Wailes described George Malin Davis as a “‘fire-eater’ and secessionist.”⁵⁰⁷ Despite Davis’s leadership, the secessionists were defeated by the unionists, and Natchez sent pro-Union delegates to the state secession convention.

When the state secession convention convened in Jackson in January 1861, the Adams County delegates could not hold back the surging tide of rebellion.⁵⁰⁸ On February 22, 1861, B. L. C. Wailes noted, “This is the anniversary of the birth of the immortal Washington. May a kind providence save us from the madness and folly of the people who seem determined to prove themselves incapable of self government.”⁵⁰⁹ In failing health and having seen his son depart to fight in the Confederate army, Wailes penned an assessment of his condition in 1862, not long before his death: “In the unhappy state of our Country I may have already lived too long.”⁵¹⁰ John Quitman of Monmouth had died earlier in 1858, without experiencing the disunion he had abetted. A Mexican War hero, governor, and congressman, Quitman, perhaps more than any other Mississippi politician, promoted the idea of an independent nation or confederacy of Southern states. Quitman’s confederacy of Southern states would have included the Caribbean Islands.⁵¹¹

Historians still grapple with explanations for the pro-Union sentiments of most of the Natchez nabobs, who numbered among the nation’s largest slaveholders. Some scholars have presumed that many of the Natchez planters were pro-Union, because they had been born in the North. However, two of the most ardent Natchez Unionists, John Minor and Haller Nutt, as well as others, were born in the Natchez area, while the most rabid secessionist, John Quitman, was born in Rhinebeck, New York. Some historians have speculated that the longer an area of the South was settled, the more likely its aristocracy was to hold strong secessionist feelings. However, equally important may have been the economic and social ties that Natchez planters had to the North.⁵¹² Studies should be

⁵⁰⁵ Alice Austen McMurrin to Mr. and Mrs. George Austen, June 17, 1861, Addison Papers, transcript, NATC History Files.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 234.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, December 4, 1860.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, February 22, 1861.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, March 2, 1862.

⁵¹¹ James, 283-285.

⁵¹² Retired Professor Morton Rothstein of the University of California at Davis and Professor William K. Scarborough of the University of Southern Mississippi are the two published scholars who have delved the deepest into the Natchez nabobs. Lectures on the Natchez nabobs were delivered by Rothstein at

undertaken to see how the allegiances of Natchez area planters compare with those of their counterparts in longer established areas of the South, cities like Charleston and Savannah, in regard to financial investments in the North. What can be said with certainty about the political sympathies of Natchez before and during the Civil War, is that it was a town divided. Even the town's two newspapers took opposing views during the secession crisis.

6.2 The Civil War

Once the Civil War began, most of the planter class gave belated support to the cause of Southern independence. Alice McMurrin, wife of John McMurrin Jr. of Melrose, wrote in her diary, "In May, John left for Pensacola, the war spirit caught, but never approving of secession...."⁵¹³ Anti-secessionist B. L. C. Wailles watched his son depart Natchez by steamboat for service in the Confederate army and wrote in his diary, "Thus parting from our youngest born in the very spring of his life.... He goes to join the brave hearts who are rushing to our defense and to protect our home."⁵¹⁴ Natchez attorney and planter William T. Martin, a Confederate general, probably best summed up the feelings of many of the Natchez planter elite when he testified before the Southern Claims Commission in 1877:

I made the last Union speech, I presume, that was made in the state of Mississippi.... My belief was that, some time or other, slavery would be the cause of war, and I wanted to postpone the evil day. I had been a colonizationist, and I hoped some means would be devised to rid us of slavery, because I never had any great fondness for the institution although I had been the owner of slaves from my youth up.... After that last speech...I came to Washington City and spent about a month here to see whether the war was inevitable, and if there was no way of avoiding it, and if such was the case I made up my mind we had better make the best fight we could and go to work and get ready for it...and I went into it with all my heart and soul.⁵¹⁵

Vicksburg had already surpassed Natchez in commercial importance by the time of the Civil War, and the Confederate army chose to fortify Vicksburg instead of Natchez. Vicksburg, like Natchez, was a river port located on a defensible high bluff overlooking the Mississippi River, but, unlike Natchez, it had railroad connections. Natchez was left defenseless during the Civil War except for a home guard of men too old or infirm to serve in the army.

the 1994 Historic Natchez Conference and Scarborough at the 1996 Historic Natchez Conference. Both lectures stimulated discussion among scholars present at both conferences about the pro-Union positions of most of the Natchez nabobs.

⁵¹³ Alice Austen McMurrin, journal, Melrose site file, typescript, HNF, 4.

⁵¹⁴ Wailles, March 1, 1862.

⁵¹⁵ William T. Martin, testimony before the Commissioners of Claims, taken at Washington, DC, December 12, 1877, typescript copy, Historic Natchez Foundation.

Natchez first encountered Union forces in May 1862, when Union warships came upriver to Natchez. The mayor of Natchez communicated his acceptance of terms of surrender to the commander of the *U. S. Iroquois*.⁵¹⁶ The following September, Natchez witnessed its only military conflict when the Union gunboat *The Essex* docked at Natchez for supplies. The "Silver Greys," the Natchez home guard, became excited, fired on the boat, and killed one sailor and wounded several others. In retaliation, the gunboat shelled the city.⁵¹⁷ Seven-year-old Rosalie Beekman, whose father was a merchant at Natchez Under-the-Hill, was the only victim of the bombardment, as noted on her tombstone in the Natchez City Cemetery.⁵¹⁸

Alice McMurrin, then living at Melrose with her husband's family, described the bombardment in her diary:

In August 1862, the bombardment of Natchez took place. John was on the Plantation [Riverside] and I was sitting quietly by my window just after dinner when the report of heavy guns and some balls went crashing through the branches in the little woods between Aunt Fanny's (Roselawn) and Melrose. And then another and another and so it went on.... It continued until sun down. It was brought on by the madness of a few private citizens firing on a boat crew sent ashore for ice and molesting nothing. The valiant Douglas Walworth leading the Huns.⁵¹⁹

On July 4, 1863, Vicksburg surrendered to General Grant after a seige of forty-four days. Shortly afterward, Union forces took control of Natchez without resistance. Many of the city's mansions became officers' quarters and hospitals. The homes of people known to be strong Confederates appear to have been especially targeted. Margarette Martin, wife of Confederate General William T. Martin, described the damage inflicted on her home, Montaigne, by the occupying Union soldiers: "In the house, every mantel piece has been pulled down, the walls cut with sabres and defaced in various ways, every chandelier taken down and broken up. The cords on every window sash cut and taken away. The glass all broken."⁵²⁰ Secessionist George Malin Davis, second owner of Melrose, was also routed from Choctaw (The Neibert-Fisk House) when General Brayman appropriated it for his Natchez headquarters.⁵²¹

⁵¹⁶ Davis, *The Black Experience in Natchez 1720-1880*, 133.

⁵¹⁷ Alice Austen McMurrin, journal, 5 and Thomas Reber, *Proud Old Natchez* (Natchez; Thomas Reber, 1909), 39-41.

⁵¹⁸ Rosalie Beekman, tombstone, Old Jewish Section, Natchez City Cemetery.

⁵¹⁹ Alice Austen McMurrin, journal, 5.

⁵²⁰ Margarette Martin to William T. Martin, January 10, 1864, (Elizabeth Dunbar Murray, *Early Romances of Historic Natchez* [Natchez: The Natchez Printing and Stationary Company, 1950], 81.)

⁵²¹ Melanie Mayer Frank, "John Mayer and his Wife, Jeanette Reis," Aunt Sister's Book (New York, New York: n. p., 1929), photocopy, HNF, 11.

Margarette Martin also described the reaction of Natchez to the Union occupation in a letter to her husband:

Natchez is nobly sustaining its reputation for being a good old Union Town. You remember you suggested the Federals would be entertained in Natchez? Well, they have been entertained, by some, in great style.... There was a dinner party on a gun boat last week.... You know young ladies like to have beaux and there are none here now except those wearing the cloth, brass buttons and riding stylish looking borrowed horses. Borrowed as you borrowed the mules on your last raid. For two Sundays past Mrs. M. has had in her pew, with herself and daughters, two sons of the famous General Thomas.⁵²²

Some members of the Natchez planter elite remained loyal to the Union throughout the Civil War. The families of Haller Nutt of Longwood, who died during the war, and John Minor of Oakland, who died not long after, received reparations for losses sustained during the war. Testimony delivered before the Southern Claims Commission described John Minor's Oakland as, "a perfect hotel for officers, Generals & all" after the Union occupation of Natchez in 1863.⁵²³ The testimony of Julia Nutt indicates that her family was also hospitable to the occupying army.⁵²⁴ In a biography of General Walter Quintin Gresham who was one of the commanders of the occupation of Natchez, his wife Matilda Gresham provided information about the Union sympathies of members of the planter elite. Among the Unionists encountered by the Greshams were the Levin R. Marshall family at Richmond, the Haller Nutt family at Longwood, the Sargent family at Gloucester, the Merrill family at Elms Court, the Winchester family, and members of the Surget family.⁵²⁵

Shortly after arriving in Natchez, the Union army began construction of a large earthworks fortification in the northern suburbs of the city. Named Fort McPherson (Fig. 34), it encompassed several of the suburban villa estates, including The Burn, The Towers, Cottage Gardens, Melmont, The Wigwam, Airlie, and Riverview. Although no evidence of the fort remains today, an 1864 army engineer's map documents its boundaries, and it appears on a perspective view in a print of Natchez.⁵²⁶

Destroyed in the construction of the fort was Clifton, the home of Frank Surget. Matilda Gresham, wife of Union General Walter Gresham, described the destruction of the mansion as "an unnecessary, if not a wanton act." Major Stephen Power wrote in 1897 that it was

⁵²² Margarette Martin to William T. Martin, August 26, 1863 (Murray, 78-79).

⁵²³ Oakland site file, National Register nomination, HNF.

⁵²⁴ Longwood Site file, typescript of Julia Nutt's testimony before the Southern Claims Commission, HNF.

⁵²⁵ Matilda Gresham, *Life of Walter Quintin Gresham* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1919), 239- 264.

⁵²⁶ National Archives and Record Service, "Map of the Defences [sic] of Natchez and Vicinity," Record Group 77, Drawer 138, sheet 39, photograph, HNF and panorama print of Natchez depicting Fort McPherson, Slide File, Map Views, HNF.

rumored that Surget had neglected to invite the engineer in charge of building the fortification to a dinner party of Union officers: "In referring to it he [Surget] once said, 'It was assuredly not an intentional affront. I would have asked the devil himself to dinner if it would have saved Clifton.'"⁵²⁷

Unlike Vicksburg, Natchez was not strategically important to the Confederate army; however, the city was very useful to the occupying Union forces as a "refugee camp for freedmen, as a garrison for black soldiers, and as a stopping point on the river between Memphis and New Orleans."⁵²⁸ The city also served as a supply base and provided hospital facilities for Union wounded.⁵²⁹ The letters of the wife of Confederate General William T. Martin and the testimony of Julia Nutt before the Southern Claims Court document the plundering of the Natchez area by Union troops in search of supplies. Margarete Martin noted in a letter that Union soldiers had even removed the sash cord from the windows of her house.⁵³⁰

With the Union occupation of Natchez came thousands of slaves, who fled from plantations far and wide into the town. Many of the able-bodied new freedmen enlisted in the Union army. Others lived in refugee barracks, referred to as contraband barracks. The barracks were located at Natchez Under-the-Hill north of Magnolia Vale and at the slave markets at the Forks of the Road.⁵³¹ According to Mary Conway Shields Dunbar, old black men, women, and children were quartered Under-the-Hill and able bodied black men, including a "Negro regiment" were quartered at the Forks of the Road. She noted that sometimes twenty a day would die in the contrabands barracks and many were buried in "General Quitman's nearby enclosure."⁵³²

Of the 5,000 Union soldiers stationed in Natchez during the summer of 1864, 3,150 were black.⁵³³ Nathan (Nathaniel) Wright, the grandfather of Natchez-born writer Richard Wright (Fig. 35), author of *Native Son* and *Black Boy*, was one of many former Adams County slaves who enlisted in the army.⁵³⁴ One former Natchez slave, Wilson Brown,

⁵²⁷ Power, 1:10.

⁵²⁸ Davis, *The Black Experience in Natchez 1720-1880*, 147.

⁵²⁹ United States Marine Hospital (later Charity Hospital) Site File, National Register nomination, HNF and Fort McPherson Research File, notes on hospital use of The Burn, Airlie, and The Towers within the boundaries of Fort McPherson, HNF.

⁵³⁰ Margarete Martin to William T. Martin, August 26, 1863 (Murray, 78-79) and Longwood Site file, photocopy of typescript of Julia Nutt's testimony before the Southern Claims Commission, HNF

⁵³¹ Map of the Defences of Natchez and Vicinity, HNF. The slave barracks are labeled on the map.

⁵³² Murray, 183.

⁵³³ Davis, *The Black Experience in Natchez 1720-1880*, 147. Historian Thom Rosenblum of the Natchez National Historical Park cites "Departmental Returns" that provide the figures of 5,706 Union soldiers stationed at Natchez during the summer of 1864, with 3,720 being black. The varying figures are a reflection of the varying resources cited.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, 156 and Michel Fabre, *The Unfinished Quest of Richard Wright* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 1. Nathan Wright's name appears on a muster roll published by Davis, which includes the information that he was owned by John Rucker. Tradition among Wright family members living in Natchez is that the Wright family came from the Rucker property in Adams

won the Congressional Medal of Honor for his valor at the Battle of Mobile Bay in 1864.⁵³⁵ Union soldiers, white as well as black, occasionally played havoc with the property of the planting class and the planters themselves. George Washington Sargent, son of territorial governor Winthrop Sargent, was murdered at Gloucester, the family residence, by Union soldiers who came to rob him.⁵³⁶ John McMurrin of Melrose was wounded in December 1864 when fired upon by a black Union soldier stationed at the picket line near Melrose.⁵³⁷

The death rate among Union soldiers at Natchez was very high. Of 3,270 black soldiers stationed in Natchez for the duration of the war, approximately 830 died from disease.⁵³⁸ Former slaves housed in the refugee camps known as the "contraband barracks" fared even worse. The largest such camp was located at Natchez Under-the-Hill, north of the suburban estate Magnolia Vale. The contraband barracks at Natchez Under-the-Hill housed as many as 4,000 refugees during the summer of 1863 and, by fall of that same year, 2,000 had died.⁵³⁹

Buried at the Natchez National Cemetery, an 11-acre national cemetery established in 1867 and administered by the Veteran's Administration, are 5,000 Union soldiers. Included among them is medal of honor winner, former slave Wilson Brown. A few African Americans served with the Confederate army, primarily as servants, and later drew pensions from Mississippi for their Confederate service. When one black Confederate veteran, John Brannon, died in the early twentieth century, the Natchez chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy was prominent at his funeral.⁵⁴⁰ Two hundred and thirty-four Natchez men died in the Confederate army.⁵⁴¹ Many are buried in the Natchez City Cemetery, which was established in 1824, and encompasses about one hundred acres in the northern suburbs of the city. Both the Natchez City Cemetery and the nearby Natchez National Cemetery are listed as contributing resources in the Cemetery Bluff Historic District listed in the National Register in 1980.⁵⁴²

County. Richard Wright's biographer, Michel Fabre, cites Nathaniel Wright as the grandfather of Richard Wright.

⁵³⁵ Wilson Brown tombstone, Natchez National Cemetery, Natchez and Wilson Brown research file, *The Natchez Democrat*, January 10, 1982, photocopy, HNF.

⁵³⁶ Gloucester site file, court-martial transcript, photocopy, HNF.

⁵³⁷ Alice Austen McMurrin, journal, 20-21.

⁵³⁸ Davis, *The Black Experience in Natchez 1720-1880*, 157. Historian Thom Rosenblum of the Natchez National Historical Park cites "Departmental Returns" that provide the figure of 3,910 black Union soldiers stationed at Natchez during the Civil War. The varying figures are a reflection of the varying resources cited.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁵⁴⁰ "John Brannon," *Natchez Democrat*, December 5, 1922.

⁵⁴¹ Power, 1:59.

⁵⁴² Cemetery Bluff Historic District Site File, National Register nomination, HNF.

6.3 Reconstruction and Race Relations

The Civil War and two successive crop failures in 1866 and 1867 caused the economic collapse of the Natchez planter class. Much of the cotton grown before and after the war was burned by the Confederate army to keep it from falling into the hands of the Union army. Approximately \$80 million worth of cotton was destroyed in New Orleans alone as the Union army advanced on the city. Much of this cotton belonged to Natchez planters, who had placed it in the hands of cotton commission merchants. As a result, the credit system that fueled the cotton expansion took its toll, since many planters were unable to pay their debts with the sale of cotton.⁵⁴³

The McMurrin family was unusual in experiencing some good fortune with cotton during the Civil War years. Alice McMurrin recorded in her diary the 1864 sale of cotton that had been hidden during the Civil War:

“While in New York letters arrived from Natchez saying cotton sold! Debts paid! This at a point when funds were running low. John out of employment and with no prospect of any and often my heart felt anxious!.... This cotton was a portion of a crop of 1860 and which at the time of the general burning we were permitted by the Provost Marshal to put among the Riverside Hills and to haul it away when the river went down (but we hid it and never moved it until sent to market). There for four years it remained unmolested!”⁵⁴⁴

The McMurrin family experience contrasted sharply with that of most of the Natchez planting families during the Civil War. In December 1863, architect Samuel Sloan replied to a letter written by Natchez planter Haller Nutt and expressed “regret to learn of the destruction and havoc that has been made upon your properties.” Sloan also referenced a newspaper account: “A few days after the receipt of your letter, I read in the *New York Herald* an account of your losses as collected by their correspondent upon a visit to Natchez. He named the principal sufferers among which your name was first on the list. He made out your losses at one and one-half million dollars and set you down as the heaviest loser among the planters.”⁵⁴⁵

Few were immediately able to resume planting at the end of the war. Some died and others had been wounded. Their work animals and other equipment had been confiscated by both the Union and Confederate armies, which also sometimes damaged or destroyed plantation fences and buildings. Their lands were also overgrown, eroded, or flooded due to

⁵⁴³ David G. Sansing, Sim C. Callon, and Carolyn Vance Smith, *Natchez An Illustrated History* (Natchez: Plantation Publishing Company, 1992), 127.

⁵⁴⁴ Alice Austen McMurrin, diary, November 1, 1864, Addison Papers, transcript, NATC.

⁵⁴⁵ Samuel Sloan to Haller Nutt, December 2, 1863, quoted in *The Building of Longwood*, ed. Ina Mae Ogletree McAdams (Austin, Texas: Ina Mae Ogletree McAdams, 1972), 93.

destruction of the levees. Julia Nutt described the devastation of her family's plantations after the arrival of Union troops in 1863:

"...the plantations that at the advent of this army were like smiling gardens of Paradise, were left almost a wilderness. Not a living thing was left behind except dogs and a few negroes.... I visited the plantations soon afterwards and saw it all. The gin houses were burnt; houses torn to pieces; fencing burnt; all farming implements gone; all stock; household articles and everything on the premises that was of any value or consideration."⁵⁴⁶

Some of the richest Natchez nabobs, including Stephen Duncan and Levin R. Marshall, left Natchez and relocated to the North.⁵⁴⁷ Even Confederate general Charles Dahlgren relocated to Brooklyn, New York after the Civil War.⁵⁴⁸ John and Mary Louisa McMurrin also considered moving to the North. Alice McMurrin noted in her diary in September 1865 that "Ma [Mary Louisa] McMurrin writes Melrose will be given up the 1st of January, 1866. Where they will go this winter I know not. Probably not come North until the spring then doubtless as a permanent home." However, John McMurrin was still living in Natchez at the time of his unexpected death in late December 1866.

The two historians who have probed the deepest and published books and articles about Natchez after the Civil War are Michael Wayne and Ronald L. F. Davis. Both sought to answer the question posed by Davis in *Good and Faithful Labor: From Slavery to Sharecropping in the Natchez District 1860-1890*: "whether the antebellum planter elite endured as a group or class of landowners in the generations after the war."⁵⁴⁹ Studying the 1860 and 1870 census records, Davis determined that less than 25% of Adams County's antebellum planter families survived as holders of plantation estates in 1870. In Concordia Parish, Louisiana, the primary planting province of the Natchez planter, only 54% of the land was still owned by antebellum landowners a generation after the Civil War. According to Davis, "For every planter family surviving in 1870, two or three had disappeared. For every plantation in [Concordia Parish] that remained in the same family, another had been sold, lost, or willed away."⁵⁵⁰

Michael Wayne, in *The Reshaping of Plantation Society, The Natchez District, 1860-1880* and in a subsequent article published ten years later, "The Reshaping of Plantation Society

⁵⁴⁶ Julia Nutt, deposition submitted to the Southern Claims Court, quoted in *The Building of Longwood*, ed. Ina Mae Ogletree McAdams, 113.

⁵⁴⁷ Auburn Site File, National Register nomination, HNF and Joseph Buck Stratton, diary, September 12, 1870 (notice of Levin R. Marshall's death in Pelham, New York), LLMVC, photocopy of typescript, HNF.

⁵⁴⁸ "Death of General Dahlgren," *The Natchez Daily Democrat*, December 27, 1888.

⁵⁴⁹ Ronald L. F. Davis, *Good and Faithful Labor: From Slavery to Sharecropping in the Natchez District, 1860-1890* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), 138.

⁵⁵⁰ Davis, *Good and Faithful Labor*, 139-143.

Revisited,” addressed the same question. Wayne was a student of historian C. Van Woodward, who argued in the landmark publication, *Origins of the New South*, that the planting class of the South had been ruined by the war and replaced by a new ruling elite of merchants, bankers, and manufacturers. Wayne’s initial research led him to think that Woodward might have been wrong, as he noted the names of antebellum planting families in postbellum land deed records, tax rolls, and census schedules. Wayne reasoned that if any group of planters might have withstood the adversity occasioned by the Civil War, it would have been the Natchez planters, a “class of large slaveholders with a long planting tradition and unparalleled economic prospects for the future.” Wayne studied the census data, tax rolls, and land deed records in the context of diaries, letters, accounts by journalists, and government reports, and other primary resource material associated with the Natchez planter elite and ultimately concluded:

Although most large slaveholders of the Natchez District did hold on to their estates and continue planting, this hardly means that their financial position remained unimpaired. War and emancipation had significantly reduced both their material circumstances and their prospects. Many decided that the only alternative was to find outside sources of income. Former slaveowners who before the war had received training in law or medicine now opened up offices, in many cases for the first time. Wives and daughters took employment as teachers. Meanwhile, men and women who had once engaged in conspicuous consumption now attempted to practice the strictest economy.⁵⁵¹

A contradiction seems to exist between many of the larger slaveholders retaining their estates and their lands and yet having little or no money. According to Wayne, the land rolls document the collapse of land values, so that “many planters and their families remained on their estates seemingly reluctantly, because, they claimed, they had no alternative.... In other words...no one else wanted their land.”⁵⁵² Wayne acknowledges that some of the large slaveowners of the antebellum period survived as landowners but maintains that they were transformed as a class.

Longwood (Fig. 36) in Natchez represents the most tangible testimony to the destruction of the Natchez planting class as a unique agrarian society of almost incomparable affluence and influence. Natchez nabob Haller Nutt and his wife Julia began the

⁵⁵¹ Michael Wayne, “*The Reshaping of Plantation Society Revisited*,” *Journal of Mississippi History* 44 (1992): 333-337. See also Michael Wayne, *The Reshaping of Plantation Society, The Natchez District, 1860-1880* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983). Contradiction to the findings of both Ronald Davis and Michael Wayne is found in a Harvard dissertation by Jonathan Wiener on Reconstruction in Alabama. Based on census data, Wiener argues for the persistence of the planting class and the conclusion that the Civil War had not fundamentally altered the course of Southern history. Wayne maintains that Wiener’s study was flawed because it relied on census data, not tax rolls and primary resource material in the papers of planting families.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, 339.

construction of America's largest octagonal house in 1860, but was interrupted in 1861 by the Civil War and halted by the death of Haller Nutt in 1864.⁵⁵³ Nutt family correspondence from the Civil War and postbellum periods documents the Union sympathies of the Nutt family, the damages inflicted upon their property by both the Confederate and Union armies, and the reduced circumstances of the Nutt family after the Civil War.⁵⁵⁴

A small number of the Natchez planting elite survived the Civil War and continued to prosper after the Civil War. Among these were James Surget and other relatives of the Surget family like Katherine Surget Minor.⁵⁵⁵ The continued prosperity of the Surget family is probably linked to the fact that they were the largest landowners in Adams County. Other survivors appear to have invested heavily in the North in railroads, stocks, and securities. Selling investments in the North enabled Mary Louisa McMurrin to satisfy the estate debts of her husband. Mary Louisa McMurrin wrote her son 1868: "I have this winter paid off nearly everything of the old Estate debts. A great relief, but reducing my stocks in N. Y. to a low figure."⁵⁵⁶

Another survivor among the Natchez planting elite was attorney George Malin Davis, second owner of Melrose, who increased his property holdings after the Civil War. During the antebellum period, Davis lived at Choctaw in downtown Natchez. After the Civil War, he expanded his property to include the townhouse mansion, Cherokee, and the two suburban estates, Concord and Melrose.

Although diminished in fortune, the old planter class and their descendants continued to remain in the upper tier of Natchez society. In the decades immediately after the Civil War, many of these families, like the Nutts, struggled to maintain appearances, to take occasional trips, and to educate their sons and daughters in Northern schools. Julia Nutt was heavily in debt and in constant fear of losing Longwood, but she nevertheless continued to educate her children in Northern schools and paid attention to social conventions.⁵⁵⁷ Society news published in Natchez newspapers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries documents the continued participation of the planter class and their descendants in Natchez social functions, but indicates that many of these social functions would not have been held had they not been hosted by newly prosperous merchant families, most of whom were Jewish.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵³ Longwood Site File, National Register nomination and typescript of Julia Nutt's testimony before the Southern Claims Commission, HNF.

⁵⁵⁴ Nutt Family Papers, 1833-1911, Z/1817.000, MDAH, photocopies, Pilgrimage Garden Club, Natchez.

⁵⁵⁵ Wayne, "The Reshaping of Plantation Society Revisited," 339-340. Michael Wayne notes that James Surget and Katherine Minor were among the planters who remained prosperous but he does not include the information that they were relatives.

⁵⁵⁶ Mary Louisa McMurrin to John T. McMurrin Jr., April 17, 1868, Addison Papers, transcript, NATC.

⁵⁵⁷ Nutt Family Papers, 1833-1911, MDAH.

⁵⁵⁸ Accounts of social functions, including guest lists, were published in the Natchez newspaper in a column entitled *Social Brevits*.

Contrary to what might be expected, Lincoln's assassination shortly after Lee's surrender at Appomattox in April 1865 distressed the Natchez community and caused unease about the future of the conquered Confederacy. Most Southerners had thought that Lincoln would treat the conquered South with compassion. Dr. Joseph Buck Stratton, minister of the First Presbyterian Church, described the town's reaction:

Intelligence reached here today of the death of Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by assassination.... Horror and dismay fill the hearts of the community. Business is arrested and the town being in mourning. At 4 p.m. a meeting of the citizens convened at the Institute Hall to make arrangements for a public demonstration of grief tomorrow.⁵⁵⁹

Many in Natchez may have regarded Lincoln with the sentiments later expressed in the memoirs of Confederate veteran Frank Montgomery of Natchez:

I believe Mr. Lincoln to have been a good man, and I think the course of events proved him to be a great man, and I am sure if there had been no secession that there would have been no interference by him, or with his consent, with the rights of the southern states. But he was undeniably a sectional candidate and elected upon a sectional issue, and this, in my opinion then, and in my opinion now, fully justified the southern states in secession, if as was claimed and believed by almost every one in the south, this right existed under the constitution which bound all the states together.... I do not think Mr. Lincoln ought to be blamed in the south for the course he took, for he could not do otherwise, and as for the south, no other course with honor was left than to secede and leave the result to the God of battles, if war should come, which most doubted and few wanted.⁵⁶⁰

Accepting the reality of defeat and the need to rebuild the economy, Natchez newspapers advised their readers to accept the outcome of the Civil War and to work to build a new South. As noted in the previous chapter, many white Mississippians believed that former slaves were incapable of functioning in a free society. White and black Natchez residents had a head start in defining their post-Civil War roles, because the city had been occupied by Union forces in 1863, almost two years before the end of the war. A letter written in 1866 by Antonia Quitman Lovell, temporarily living in suburban Elms Court, to Alice McMurrin showed her frustration with the new relationships that developed between former masters and former slaves who lived in and near town:

⁵⁵⁹ Joseph Buck Stratton, diary, April 18, 1865, typescript, HNF.

⁵⁶⁰ Montgomery, 36.

Our great trouble is for servants. It is too far in the country for the delicate constitutions of the American Ladies of African descent, to walk into church and too retired from the gaieties of town—so have been most of the time minus both cook and dining room servant.... Imagine me dearest Alie cooking dinner, cleaning rooms &c all of which pastimes I have enjoyed since being at Elmscourt—very conducive to health no doubt, but it mars the flesh of my bones sadly....⁵⁶¹

After Union occupation in 1863 and the immediate postwar period, planters and freedmen experimented with new labor arrangements to replace slavery. An 1865 contract between planter James Gillespie and his former field hands on Hollywood Plantation near Natchez outlined the changing status forged between former masters and slaves on plantations:

I have hired Reuben, Maria, Lewis, Henrietta, Liz, Henry, Stephen, Sarah, Sophia, Adams, Fanny, Eliza and Dembo to work for me until 25th of December, 1865 on the following terms: they will work four days each week for me.... I agree to feed them in the usual manner (except molasses). I am not to furnish any clothing or pay Dr. bills for them. In consideration of said services I will allow them two days in each week, that is Friday & Saturday, to work for themselves & give them land & teams to work the same & to plant what crops they may please to do. I will assist them to sell & get to market their crops as much as I can.⁵⁶²

Understood in the Gillespie contract was that the former slaves could occupy, without rent, the cabins that they had previously occupied as slaves. The owner of the Hermitage Plantation went beyond drawing up contracts with former slaves; they leased the entire plantation to twenty-six freedmen for five years at a rent of eighteen bales of cotton per year.⁵⁶³

Immediately after the end of the Civil War, white Mississippi politicians enacted the "Black Codes," which "deprived blacks of suffrage, the right to testify in court proceedings involving whites, the right to own or lease rural lands, and the right to be unemployed."⁵⁶⁴ Blacks who did not have signed contracts as plantation laborers were subject to arrest, as were contract laborers who left before the end of their contract terms. Although the "Black Codes" were revoked within a year due to pressure from the federal government, the laws indicate the intent of whites to extend pre-Civil War codes of conduct.

⁵⁶¹ Antonia Quitman Lovell to Mrs. John T. McMurrin Jr., February 10, 1866, Addison Papers, transcript, NATC.

⁵⁶² Davis, 160.

⁵⁶³ Ibid., 185.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., 167.

Newly-freed African Americans were assisted in adjusting to their status by the Freedmen's Bureau, which was established on March 2, 1865 through one of the last pieces of legislation approved by Abraham Lincoln. As guardians of the freedmen, the Bureau had the power to make contracts, settle disputes with employers, and provide general care as needed. The Freedmen's Bureau also lent money to finance construction of housing for newly freed blacks. The organization in Mississippi included state and district commissioners, "a State superintendent of education, an adjutant-general, inspector-general, surgeon-in-chief, and in December, 1865, 58 local agents (all military officers) and 67 teachers."⁵⁶⁵ The Freedmen's Bureau was instrumental in establishing and staffing schools to educate African Americans. In 1865, Natchez had eleven schools for blacks with twenty teachers and more than 1,000 students of all ages.⁵⁶⁶ The Natchez branch of the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company, was located at the corner of Main and Commerce Street in the former location of the Agricultural Bank.⁵⁶⁷

In 1867, Congress passed the Reconstruction Act. It took all legal authority from the state governments of the ten states of the Confederacy and imposed military rule. The states were divided into five military districts under commanding officers who reported to General Grant as Secretary of War. In July 1868, Governor and Mrs. Benjamin Humphreys were forcibly ejected from the Governor's Mansion in Jackson, and General Adelbert Ames soon took charge as military governor of Mississippi. In 1869, Mississippi elected James L. Alcorn, a Delta planter and former Confederate officer, as governor. He advised people to accept Reconstruction and urged inclusion of African Americans in state and local government. Alcorn assumed office in 1870, and General Ames moved to Natchez soon after. Blanche Ames described her first visit to the city in her diary: "This place redeemed the South in my eyes.... It shows me that this state possesses more capabilities than I had given it credit for."⁵⁶⁸ In late 1873, General Ames was elected governor of Mississippi, and, in early 1874, the Ames family returned to Jackson.

During and after the Civil War, many former slaves moved from the plantations into town. The black population of Natchez more than doubled between 1860 and 1870. Small houses for newly freed African Americans began to appear all over town, and the need for housing spawned the development of entire neighborhoods. Among the African-American neighborhoods that developed in the postwar years were the Woodlawn, Minorville, and Saint Catherine Street neighborhoods. The Woodlawn neighborhood was listed in the National Register as the Woodlawn Historic District in 1995. A section of the Saint Catherine Street neighborhood was also listed in 1995 as the Holy Family Catholic Church Historic District. The Woodlawn and Minorville neighborhoods

⁵⁶⁵ Dunbar Rowland, *Mississippi* (1907; reprint, Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, 1976), 1:746.

⁵⁶⁶ Sansing, Callon, and Smith, 129.

⁵⁶⁷ *Natchez Democrat*, November 9, 1870.

⁵⁶⁸ Sansing, Callon, and Smith, 135.

evolved from the subdivisions of several antebellum suburban estates into small building lots, with the first subdivision of the estate known as Woodlawn occurring in 1866.

The family of William Johnson, the free black diarist of antebellum Natchez, continued to live in the downtown house built by Johnson in 1841. Like the Natchez planting class, the Johnson family experienced economic hardship. To ease the family's financial problems, the children rented a portion of the William Johnson House to boarders, and the daughters taught in newly created schools for African-American students. In 1873, Johnson's daughter Katherine lamented, "I believe that to all out other ills and troubles is to be added that of poverty, for every year we grow poorer and poorer...."⁵⁶⁹

After the Civil War, William Johnson's son Byron expanded the family's planting operations across the river in Louisiana and continued to operate his father's barber shop until he was murdered in 1872. After Byron Johnson's death, the barbershop operation was continued by his brother-in-law Juanito Garrus, husband of his sister Eugenia. The house built by Juanito and Eugenia Garrus still stands at 17 Reynolds Street. William Johnson's daughter Anna, like her father and brother, was interested in farming and, in 1874, acquired a portion of Peachland Plantation, which she managed with help from her brother Richard for many years.

Some former slaves eschewed sharecropping and tenant farming to become postbellum planters. Notable among these were the Mazique family, who acquired China Grove Plantation in 1870, and the Rounds family, who bought Glen Aubin Plantation in 1874. August and Sarah Mazique were former slaves of planter James Railey of Oakland Plantation; Charlie and Charity Rounds had been owned by William Newton Mercer and were slaves on Elliscliffs Plantation. Both the Mazique and Rounds families were assisted in acquiring their plantations by Wilmer Shields, white plantation manager and heir of William Newton Mercer. Shields was acquainted with both the Mazique and Rounds families, since Mercer owned Charlie and Charity Rounds as slaves at Elliscliffs and since the Maziques were slaves on Oakland Plantation, which neighbored Mercer's Laurel Hill and was later acquired by Mercer and willed to Shields. China Grove, Glen Aubin, Oakland, and Elliscliffs were all located in the Second Creek community (see addendum with information about plantation communities surrounding Natchez). In 1891, Alexander Mazique, son of August and Sarah Mazique, acquired Oakland Plantation, where he was born a slave, from the widow of Wilmer Shields.⁵⁷⁰ Members of the Mazique and Shields families enjoyed a close relationship well into the twentieth century.

African Americans began establishing their own churches immediately after the end of the Civil War, quick to leave the churches they had attended with their owners before the

⁵⁶⁹ Sanford, 28.

⁵⁷⁰ China Grove, Glen Aubin, and Oakland Site Files, National Register nominations, HNF; original inventory of slaves on plantations owned by William Newton Mercer, Dr. Thomas H. Gandy, Natchez.

Civil War. Although Presbyterians, Methodists, and Episcopalians initially helped establish African-American churches in their own faiths, they were no match for the Baptists. The congregational autonomy of the Baptist Church probably appealed to people who were tired of authority and did not want any authority from white-dominated religious sects. Mississippi's oldest African American Baptist congregation is Rose Hill Baptist Church in Natchez.⁵⁷¹ In 1866, Zion Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church purchased the Second Presbyterian Church (built 1858) from the First Presbyterian Church. Their minister at the time was Hiram R. Revels, who was later elected a United States senator by the Mississippi legislature.⁵⁷² Although skeptical of hierarchical religious faiths, some African Americans did eventually respond, though not in large numbers, to the missionary work of the Roman Catholic Church. Holy Family Catholic Church (1894) (Fig. 37) in Natchez is the oldest black Catholic Church in Mississippi.⁵⁷³

In 1871, the City of Natchez built the Union School on the southeast corner of North Union Street and Monroe Street, which educated several generations of African Americans before it was demolished about 1950. A house at 16A Bowles Alley in the Holy Family Catholic Church Historic District is labeled as a school on the 1892 Sanborn Insurance Map and is probably the only surviving small frame school for African Americans in Natchez.

Opportunities for higher education were also made available to blacks during Reconstruction. In 1871, Mississippi established Alcorn College, a land-grant college that took over the campus of antebellum Oakland College in nearby Claiborne County. Hiram Revels became president of Alcorn College after he finished his term of office as United States senator. Advances in providing higher education for African Americans continued after Reconstruction. In 1877, the year Federal troops departed from Natchez, the Baptist Missionary Convention established the Natchez Seminary in the United States Marine Hospital (ca. 1850; burned early 1980s), the Seminary later moved to Jackson and became what is known today as Jackson State University. In 1885, the Baptist Church established Natchez College on the antebellum suburban estate, Elmo, built by secessionist Douglas Walworth. Although Elmo burned in the late nineteenth century, the college rebuilt on the same site, added new buildings, and continued operation until the early 1990s.⁵⁷⁴ Anne Moody, author of *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, attended Natchez College.⁵⁷⁵ Today it is a complex of empty buildings with an uncertain future.

⁵⁷¹ Rose Hill Baptist Church Site File, research report prepared by Mrs. W. L. Nelson, HNF.

⁵⁷² Zion Chapel A. M. E. Church Site File, research notes and microfilm print-out of 1858 newspaper article outlining the construction of the building, HNF.

⁵⁷³ Holy Family Catholic Church Site File, historical information supplied by Duncan Morgan for the publication of an anniversary celebration booklet, HNF.

⁵⁷⁴ Robert L. Jenkins, "The Development of Black Higher Education in Mississippi (1865-1920)," *The Journal of Mississippi*, 45 (1983): 272-286.

⁵⁷⁵ George Alexander Sewell, *Mississippi Black History Makers* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977), 394.

African Americans in Natchez did not wait long after the Civil War to become involved in local politics. Studies of post-Civil War black politicians reveal that ten of fifteen prominent black politicians were free before the Civil War. The remaining had been house or town slaves.⁵⁷⁶ In 1869, former slave John R. Lynch (Fig. 38) was appointed Justice of the Peace for Adams County and became the first African American to hold political office in Mississippi. Lynch was born on Alfred Vidal Davis's Taconey Plantation in Concordia Parish, Louisiana, but became a house servant at his suburban estate, Dunleith, in Natchez (Fig. 39). In 1870, Lynch was elected to the Mississippi House of Representatives and was named Speaker of the House at the age of twenty-four. In 1872, he was elected to the United States Congress and served until the 1880s. For a while, Lynch was a landowner and was involved in planting activities. Lynch eventually became an attorney and in later years turned to writing. He wrote a defense of Reconstruction politics in *The Facts of Reconstruction*, published in 1913, which was followed in 1922 by *Some Historical Errors of James Ford Rhodes*. His autobiography, *Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John R. Lynch*, was published in 1970. Lynch's final residence was in Chicago, where he practiced law.⁵⁷⁷ Lynch's sister Catherine married Clarence Johnson, son of African American diarist William Johnson. Their son, Dr. William R. Johnston (the family changed the spelling of the name), became the last descendant of William Johnson to live in the William Johnson House.⁵⁷⁸

Minister Hiram R. Revels (Fig. 40), one of the most famous black politicians of post-Civil War Natchez, arrived in the city immediately after the Civil War and assumed the pastorate of Zion Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church (Fig. 41). Revels was elected to the United States Senate by the Mississippi Legislature in 1870 and became the first black man to sit in either house of the United States Congress.⁵⁷⁹ Revels did not seek reelection to the United States Senate and returned to Mississippi to serve as the first president of Alcorn College. Like fellow politician John Lynch, Revels became a landowner who indulged in planting activities.

The national careers of Revels and Lynch were not typical of black participation in Mississippi politics, although there were numerous black officials elected during Reconstruction when the presence of federal soldiers in Mississippi provided the protection necessary to ensure suffrage. In 1871, Natchez elected several black aldermen and an African American mayor, Robert H. Wood, who became the only African

⁵⁷⁶ Michael Telesca, "Black Politicos of Reconstruction Era Natchez," (Southern History Seminar, California State University-Northridge, 1993), 1-2.

⁵⁷⁷ Frank C. Bell, "The Life and Times of John R. Lynch: A Case Study 1847-1939," *The Journal of Mississippi History* 38 (1976): 53-67; John R. Lynch, *Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John R. Lynch* (Chicago: 1970); Robert Stephen Newbery, "John Roy Lynch: A Political Biography," (master's thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1970).

⁵⁷⁸ Mary W. Miller, *Historic Structure Report, William Johnson House, Natchez, Mississippi*, Report, Ann Beha Associates (Boston, 1996), 47-49.

⁵⁷⁹ Billy W. Libby, "Senator Hiram Revels of Mississippi Takes His Seat, January-February 1870," *The Journal of Mississippi History* 37 (1975): 381-394.

American to serve as mayor of a Mississippi town during Reconstruction.⁵⁸⁰ Wood was later elected sheriff of Adams County and also served as postmaster. Black city aldermen during Reconstruction included William McCary, son of Robert McCary who was the best friend of diarist William Johnson; Robert Fitzhugh, son of free African American store clerk Nelson Fitzhugh; and William Lynch, brother of John R. Lynch. Another post-Civil War African-American leader was Louis J. Winston, a Natchez free black who became an attorney and founded the Colored Building and Loan Association. Winston held the county offices of sheriff, circuit court clerk, and county assessor. Louis Winston's house still stands at 67 St. Catherine Street and a bronze bust by black sculptor Isaac Hathaway adorns his tombstone in the Natchez City Cemetery (Fig.42). In 1875, Mississippi elected a second African-American senator, Blanche K. Bruce. Bruce became a Boliver County planter after the Civil War and later served a full six-year term in Washington.⁵⁸¹

According to John R. Lynch, the election of Rutherford B. Hayes to the presidency in 1876 assured the annihilation of the Republican party in the South. Reconstruction ended during the Hayes administration and federal troops departed from Mississippi in 1877, where upon black participation in politics declined sharply. A study of the Adams County poll books indicates that black voters after Reconstruction decreased to half of their total in 1870.⁵⁸²

In 1890, Mississippi enacted a new state constitution with the "avowed and confessed purpose to eliminate the ignorant vote whether white or black."⁵⁸³ Regardless of the intent, the effect was to rid the political process of black voters and black politicians. The new constitution was ratified by a vote of 104 to 8 and was signed by all the delegates present except for three, one of whom was a Natchez legislator, former Confederate General William T. Martin.⁵⁸⁴ In 1868, Mississippi had 87,000 black registered voters; two years after the passage of the constitution, the number had dropped to 9,000.⁵⁸⁵ In Natchez, the poll taxes and literacy tests, and perhaps fear of violence, caused a corresponding decline. The courthouse precinct in Natchez had 1,200 registered black voters in 1820 and only 15 in 1902.⁵⁸⁶

Although the promises of Reconstruction were great, the long-term reality for African Americans proved quite different. Although no longer victims of legal enslavement, African Americans were nonetheless in bondage to a system of segregation, both by law and custom, in a region that remains, even today, one of the poorest in the nation. Likewise, the white Mississippian had problems unimagined by his Northern counterpart. Mississippi writer David Cohn provided perhaps the most prosaic descriptions of the

⁵⁸⁰ Sansing, Callon, and Smith, 133.

⁵⁸¹ Rowland, *Mississippi*, 319.

⁵⁸² Poll Books, Adams County Circuit Court, HNF.

⁵⁸³ Rowland, *Mississippi*, 538-544.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁵ Davis, *Good and Faithful Labor*, 192.

⁵⁸⁶ Telesca, 16.

dynamics of race relations in the Deep South between the Civil War and the Civil Rights movement. According to Cohn, neither the white man nor the black man was free, because their society—laws, customs, manners, and institutions—were conditioned by the presence of each other: “It was governed less by the written law than by unwritable codes, an intricate ritual of manners, and a constant adjustment among members of both races. All this was a drain upon the spirit and a sapping of the energies of everyone in the area. It was quiet there. But it was the quiet of a storm center.”⁵⁸⁷

6.4 Rise of the Merchant Class

After the Civil War, the planter class ceded its economic influence and affluence to a newly prosperous merchant class. Michael Wayne noted: “The Storekeeper, once on the periphery of the plantation economy, now came center stage.”⁵⁸⁸ Ronald L. F. Davis credited the growing importance of the role of the merchant to “the abrupt entry of a great number of formerly enslaved people into the demand end of the retail market.”⁵⁸⁹ He noted:

By the war’s end, it is no exaggeration to say that the Natchez District was literally overrun with storemen. By 1867, a new development began to take shape in the district. More and more planters were leasing lands to local merchants outright or to freedmen tenants, who in turn obtained the means of planting from neighborhood stores.⁵⁹⁰

By 1880, Natchez District merchants had replaced planter landlords as the freemen’s chief source of supply. Davis noted that it was the “accommodationist character of the merchant that enabled him to fit into the postwar situation, first as a petty entrepreneur and finally as a dominant supplier-landlord.”⁵⁹¹ Davis also gave his opinion on the reaction of the antebellum planter class to the newly prosperous merchant:

For the antebellum planter class, the merchants’ role as chief source of supply was both resented and welcomed. Planters who had lost lands to their merchant creditors undoubtedly saw the merchant’s role as the key to their own decline.... One thing is certain, however, few surviving antebellum planters, even though they continued to own plantation estates, were planters in the antebellum sense.⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁷ James C. Cobb, ed., *The Mississippi Delta and the World, The Memoirs of David L. Cohn* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 6.

⁵⁸⁸ Wayne, *The Reshaping of Plantation Society*, 163.

⁵⁸⁹ Davis, *Good and Faithful Labor*, 121.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 143-144.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*, 145.

Many of the newly prosperous Natchez merchants were Jews who had arrived in Natchez during the 1840s from places like Alsace-Lorraine and Bavaria.⁵⁹³ The immigrants, their children and grandchildren, assumed positions of importance in the community after the Civil War. Two of the most prominent were Henry Frank and Isaac Lowenburg, who came to Natchez as sutlers, or merchants attached to the occupying Union army. The two men married daughters of merchant John Mayer, whose own son, Simon Mayer, served in the Confederate army.⁵⁹⁴ In the 1880s, Isaac Lowenburg became the first Jewish mayor of Natchez.⁵⁹⁵ Frank and Lowenburg were two of the wealthiest men in Natchez during the postbellum period. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Jews were fully integrated into the cultural, social and economic life of the city, and, in 1905, they built a new domed temple (Fig. 43) in the Beaux Arts style. Although numbering less than ten percent of the local population, they controlled almost fifty percent of the city's commerce.⁵⁹⁶

During the years immediately after the Civil War, the economy of the Natchez area was stagnant. Plantations were in poor condition due to neglect, and foreign cotton growers had gained control of the cotton markets while the South was engaged in war. The planters also endured bad crop years in 1866 and 1867. The physical character of Natchez testifies to its economic slump after the Civil War. Few grand buildings were erected during the first two decades after the Civil War, and the City of Natchez has only a few examples of the Italianate style so popular in northern states in the immediate post-Civil War period. The few grand residences built between 1865 and 1885 testify to the growing wealth of members of the city's merchant class. Most conspicuous of these were the Stewart House (ca. 1870; demolished 1960s); Glen Auburn (ca. 1875), Mississippi's grandest example of the French Second Empire style; and Edelweiss (1883), the state's finest example of the Swiss chalet style.⁵⁹⁷ Mansions like Dunleith, owned by planter A. V. Davis, became home to newly prosperous merchants like Hiram Baldwin.

The growing prosperity of the Natchez merchant class is also reflected in the construction of new commercial buildings. Merchants John Conrad Schwartz and Robert Dixon, among many others, constructed new two-story brick commercial buildings at 423 and 512 Main Street about 1870.⁵⁹⁸ About 1880, Joseph Rivera and Phillip Sanguineti each erected two-story brick commercial buildings at 619-623 and 634-638 Franklin Street, which had long served as the headquarters of plantation supply businesses (Fig. 44).

⁵⁹³ Natchez City Cemetery, tombstones, Old Jewish and Jewish Hill sections.

⁵⁹⁴ Aunt Sister's Book, photocopy of the original, Mayer Family Research File, HNF.

⁵⁹⁵ City of Natchez, Minutes of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen, Natchez City Hall.

⁵⁹⁶ Jewish Natchez Research File, research report by Kenneth Hoffman, HNF.

⁵⁹⁷ Stewart House Research File, photocopy of historic photograph of the Stewart House and photocopies of bills and receipts related to Stewart's business, HNF; Glen Auburn Site File, narrative history written by Mary W. Miller, HNF; and Edelweiss Site File, photocopy of 1875 design source and narrative history written by Mary W. Miller, HNF.

⁵⁹⁸ Dixon Building Site File, National Register nomination, HNF and Schwartz Building, 423 Main Street Site File, HNF.

New commercial buildings and residences appeared all over the city between 1880 and 1908 (Fig. 45). Natchez diversified from cotton production to cotton manufacturing, and entrepreneurs built two cotton mills and a cotton seed oil plant. In 1882, the Natchez-to-Jackson railroad was opened, and, for the first time, the city was linked by rail to the rest of the country (Fig. 46).

Subdivisions of antebellum suburban villa estates created late-nineteenth-century suburban neighborhoods (Fig. 47). Entrepreneurs Henry Frank and Isaac Lowenburg subdivided the grounds of Clifton, where the home of Frank Surget had been destroyed by the Union army. The Clifton Heights neighborhood became the most fashionable in Natchez, and the majority of the houses were built for newly affluent Jewish families. They were grand two-story houses, predominantly in the Queen Anne (Fig. 48) and Colonial Revival styles.⁵⁹⁹ The descendants of Natchez nabob S. S. Boyd of Arlington, in reduced circumstances, sold a portion of Arlington, which was subdivided to create Arlington Heights, a neighborhood of one-story Queen Anne and Colonial Revival cottages. Similarly, suburban estates in the northern part of town were subdivided into building lots, including The Burn, The Wigwam, Cottage Gardens, Airlie, Shields Town House, and Melmont.

The late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century prosperity of Natchez was also reflected in the construction of social club buildings like the Prentiss Club (1904), Elks Club (ca. 1845; remodeled 1901-04), and the Standard Club (ca. 1890; demolished 1960s). The Standard Club (southwest corner of North Pearl and Franklin Streets) was built about 1890 and housed a Jewish social club on the its second story. The Prentiss Club (211 North Pearl St.) and the Elks Club (400 Franklin St.), which were built ten years later, included members who were both gentile and Jewish. The charter of the Prentiss Club states that the club was founded for literary and social purposes only. The club property included a swimming pool, billiards room, card rooms, parlors, bowling alley, and shooting gallery.⁶⁰⁰

A new county jail, new schools, and a new fire station also served as testimonials to turn-of-the-century prosperity. Adams County constructed a new jail in 1891, a grand Queen Anne-style building that is architecturally disguised as a residence.⁶⁰¹ In 1901, a new building was erected for the Natchez Institute, the city's public school for white students.⁶⁰² A large new fire station was built at the corner of Main and Canal Streets in 1902, but it was demolished in the 1960s.⁶⁰³ The philanthropic Carpenter family, who acquired Dunleith in the 1880s, built three public schools for Natchez children in the early twentieth century. Carpenter I and Carpenter II Schools were for the white children

⁵⁹⁹ Clifton Heights Historic District Site File, National Register nomination, HNF.

⁶⁰⁰ Prentiss Club Site File, National Register nomination, HNF.

⁶⁰¹ Old Adams County Jail Site File, photocopies of 1891 newspaper articles, HNF.

⁶⁰² The Natchez Institute is dated 1901 on a plaque on the front wall.

⁶⁰³ *The Natchez Daily Democrat*, August 8, 1902.

in town, and the smaller Prince Street School (Woodlawn Historic District) was for African-American students.

The suburban villa estates surrounding the city assumed new roles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As previously noted, some of the owners of suburban villa estates sold part of their acreage for building lots. Others began to operate as mini-farms to provide butter, milk, and eggs to the growing urban population of Natchez. Even the Kellys and their employees at Melrose sold farm products to city dwellers.⁶⁰⁴ Monmouth, Roselawn, and Longwood also sold dairy products on a commercial basis.⁶⁰⁵

6.5 Tourism and Historic Preservation

Although the city did not yet view its great mansions as tourist attractions in the late nineteenth century, it did use them as illustrations in literature promoting Natchez as a beautiful community with a climate conducive to good health and good business. In the early 1900s, one of the city's grandest mansions, the Harper House on Broadway Street, was demolished for construction of a factory. There was no public outcry, but Eva Lovell noted its passing in a 1903 publication, *Natchez: Historical and Picturesque*:

The demand of mercantile progress claimed for its use the once handsome house known as the Harper House. Its situation was what Trade needed and with a powerful hand she took it, and now covering what was once a beautiful lawn stands a large warehouse. Shall we exclaim, 'How are the mighty fallen!' or shall we rejoice in the prosperity the sight evinces.⁶⁰⁶

In 1901, George Malin Davis Kelly came to Natchez from New York City with his bride to inspect property he had inherited from his mother and grandparents. Included in this legacy were the mansions Concord (burned 1901), Choctaw, Cherokee, and Melrose. The Kellys decided to rehabilitate Melrose, which eventually became their permanent home. Arriving about the same time, H. G. Bulkley bought Glenburnie, which he enlarged by a grand addition in the Colonial Revival style.

The idea of someone moving to Natchez to fix up an old house was novel to Natchez and to the South as a whole, but others would follow suit. In 1919, Weeks Hall returned to Shadows-on-the-Teche, the house that his great-grandfather had built in Louisiana. Hall spent the remainder of his life restoring the house and preserving the remnants of gardens

⁶⁰⁴ Mary W. Miller (author) recalls a conversation with Marian Kelly Ferry about the sale of butter. Marian Ferry stated that she still has the butter mold stamped "Melrose."

⁶⁰⁵ Anne Vaughan, granddaughter of Annie Barnum, remembers her grandmother's accounts of operating a dairy at Monmouth during the early twentieth century. Mrs. Frank Smith (nee Kaiser) remembers the Kaiser family dairy operation at Roselawn in the early twentieth century. Nutt family correspondence and a historic photograph document the dairy operation at Longwood, Nutt Family Papers, Z/1817.000, MDAH.

⁶⁰⁶ *Natchez: Historical and Picturesque* (1983; reprint, Natchez: Myrtle Bank Publishers, 1983), n.p.

established by his great-grandmother. Following the mid-nineteenth-century lead of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, other Southerners became leaders in the historic preservation movement. Charleston and New Orleans enacted the nation's first historic preservation ordinances in the 1930s and 1940s; Natchez soon followed with the adoption of an ordinance in 1954. Kenneth Severens, in his *Southern Architecture: 350 Years of Distinctive American Buildings* (1981), suggests that "preservation may be the South's major contribution to the twentieth century."⁶⁰⁷

The preservation of Melrose, and possibly other houses in the South as well, was aided by African-American caretakers who had formerly been slaves. After the deaths of his wife Julia and father-in-law George Malin Davis in 1883, Dr. Stephen Kelly left Natchez and returned to his native New York with his young son George Malin Davis Kelly. Melrose was left in the care of former slaves and a local agent until 1901, when G. M. D. Kelly returned to Melrose as a young bridegroom. Among the former slaves living at Melrose in 1901 were Jane Johnson and Alice Sims, whose lives are intimately entwined with the history of the house.

Jane Johnston and/or Alice Sims may have lived at Melrose from the time it was acquired by George Malin Davis in 1865. According to family tradition, Elizabeth Shunk Davis bought Jane Johnson when she was only a child.⁶⁰⁸ Since she was 103 at her death in 1946, she would have been born about 1843 and would have been an adult when Melrose was acquired by Davis in 1865. According to family tradition, Jane Johnson and Alice Sims resisted attempts by local residents to remove decorative arts from the house during the family's long absence. Also, after their arrival in 1901, George and Ethel Kelly relied heavily on them in the operation and rehabilitation of Melrose. Family tradition and remembrances of long-time employee Fred Page indicate that Jane Johnson was especially influential in the rehabilitation of the historic landscape. Some scholarship has been devoted to the attitudes of slaves toward their plantation landscapes and their ability to reconceptualize the landscape, sometimes even appropriating mental ownership of parts of the landscape because of the intimacy of their association with it.⁶⁰⁹ Less study has been focused on the lives of former slaves who chose to stay on their plantations, and their attitudes toward personal freedom and land ownership.

In 1908, the boll weevil invaded Natchez.⁶¹⁰ According to agricultural historian Douglas Helms:

⁶⁰⁷ Kenneth Severens, *Southern Architecture: 350 Years of Distinctive American Buildings*, quoted in Catherine Howett, "Notes Toward an Iconography of Regional Landscape Form: The Southern Model," *Landscape Journal*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1985): 83.

⁶⁰⁸ This notation was written on the back of a framed photograph of Jane Johnson by Marian Kelly Ferry. This photograph hung in the kitchen building at Melrose during the Callon period.

⁶⁰⁹ See John Vlach's *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery*, 1993.

⁶¹⁰ Thomas Reber, *Proud Old Natchez* (Natchez: Thomas Reber, 1909), 63.

The cotton boll weevil...migrated from Mexico across the Rio Grande near Brownsville, Tex., in 1892. The weevil's annual fall dispersal carried it to Louisiana in 1903, to Mississippi in 1907, and to the far reaches of the cotton belt in the early 1920s.... During the initial infestation many communities exclusively dependent on cotton underwent boll weevil panics or depressions.... Black and white tenants often migrated in advance of the weevil—to the west, north, and east. The weevil, along with industrial opportunities available during World War I, spurred movement to northern cities.⁶¹¹

Georgia historian Mills Lane noted that the boll weevil:

Traveled eastward at the rate of seventy-five to a hundred miles per year.... This crises, with the coming of the Depression, was a final disaster from which the small farmer could not recover.... By the Depression the cotton belt of the South would become, as it was described at the time, 'a miserable panorama of unpainted shacks, rain-gullied fields, straggling fences, rattle-trap Fords, dirt, poverty, disease, drudgery and monotony.'⁶¹²

Mississippi agricultural historian, William Lincoln Giles, wrote that the boll weevil's arrival in Mississippi dates to September 10, 1907, when evidence of the pest was first noted in a cotton field six miles south of Natchez. By the fall of 1909, the infestation covered the southwestern third of the state of Mississippi, and it took six acres to produce a single bale of cotton in Adams County. According to Giles, the refrain of the state's cotton-producing regions became boom, bust, and boll weevils. "Although the boll weevil brought misery and financial loss to the state," Giles noted, "it also stimulated interest in research and information for control and alternative enterprises.... [and] had a role in bringing about revolutionary changes in Mississippi agriculture."⁶¹³

Increased manufacturing in the North and the agricultural shake-up caused by the boll weevil together provided the major impetus for the migration of many Southern African Americans to Northern cities. In the East, the migration was often to Washington, Philadelphia, and New York. In the Deep South, migration was more often to midwest cities like Chicago and Detroit. In these northern cities, African Americans often formed social clubs and retained some of their regional ties. Former blacks from Natchez organized the Natchez Club of Chicago, an organization that sponsored the erection of the Rhythm Club marker in the Natchez bluff park in honor of 209 African Americans who died in a fire at the Rhythm Club on April 23, 1940. The Natchez Club of Chicago

⁶¹¹ Douglas Helms, "Boll Weevil," *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, eds. Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 32.

⁶¹² Mills Lane, *The People of Georgia* (Savannah: The Beehive Press, 1975), 266.

⁶¹³ William Lincoln Giles, "Agricultural Revolution 1890-1970," *A History of Mississippi*, ed. Richard Aubry McLemore (Hattiesburg: University College Press of Mississippi, 1973), 2:190-197.

recently sponsored the erection of a state historic marker in front of Holy Family Catholic Church on St. Catherine Street.

The historic architecture of Natchez testifies to the final decline of the area's cotton-based economy. No grand houses rivaling those in Clifton Heights were built after 1908 during the period when the Craftsman- and Mediterranean-influenced styles were popular in other parts of the United States. Another indication of the decline of the Natchez cotton-based economy after the arrival of the boll weevil was the cessation of Mardi Gras festivities. Although the City of Natchez was an early celebrant of Mardi Gras, no celebrations were held after 1909 until the festival was reborn in the 1980s.⁶¹⁴

During the mid- to late 1920s, Natchez experienced an economic surge that is reflected in civic construction projects that included two new high schools (Brumfield School for African Americans and Margaret Martin School (formerly Natchez High School for white students), a new hospital (Chamberlain-Rice; later Natchez General; now Oak Towers Apartments), and a new city hall.

New industrialization came to Natchez in the 1920s, when a box factory opened on the plateau below the site of Fort Rosalie, the area of the original French settlement. The factory provided new opportunity for Natchez African Americans, who, for the first time, were given jobs on the assembly line. Previously, they had held only janitorial positions in manufacturing establishments like the cotton mills. The late George West, first African-American alderman after Reconstruction, worked in the box factory before establishing a successful funeral home business.⁶¹⁵ The smoke stack of the box factory still stands on the plateau below the fort site.

The construction of the new city hall in 1925 officially began the historic preservation movement in Natchez. To create a site for the new structure, city officials intended to tear down the historic city hall and the columned open-air market (Fig. 49). For the first time, opposition arose to destroying one of the city's historic landmarks. Citing the Rockefeller family's pioneering work in Williamsburg, a group of Natchez women campaigned for the preservation of the Market. The leader of the fledgling preservationists was Miss Charlie Compton, who worked in vain to persuade city officials to change their minds.

Although Charlie Compton was not successful in preventing the demolition of the Natchez market, she did raise the public consciousness about the value of the city's historic buildings. Inspired by the garden clubs of Virginia, the women of Natchez formed the Natchez Garden Club in 1929. In 1931, the club hosted a state convention and members were amazed at the interest in the old houses. As a result, they decided to

⁶¹⁴ Alma Kellogg Carpenter, interviewed by Mary W. Miller, September 1, 1996. Alma Carpenter's father was a member of the 1909 Mardi Gras court.

⁶¹⁵ George West, interviewed by Mary W. Miller and Mississippi Educational Television, 1981, HNF.

host a tour of houses in spring 1932 to boost the local economy, calling it the "Natchez Pilgrimage."⁶¹⁶ City officials and the local business community scoffed at the women's plans, but the Natchez Pilgrimage was an enormous success the very first year. Melrose was one of the houses opened during the first Pilgrimage (Fig. 50 and 51). Using proceeds from the Pilgrimage, the Garden Club bought and restored the House on Ellicott Hill. The restoration of this significant example of vernacular Lower Mississippi Valley architecture was the first restoration by an organization in the state of Mississippi. The Pilgrimage sparked the rehabilitation of many historic houses in the Natchez area by providing money to finance the work. Private preservation efforts were further boosted as owning an old house became a symbol of status in Natchez.

In the mid-1930s, legislation was enacted to establish two national parkways—the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Natchez Trace Parkway—and the federal government became involved in preservation in the Natchez area. In 1937, the National Park Service acquired Mount Locust in conjunction with the development of the Natchez Trace Parkway.⁶¹⁷ The restoration of Mount Locust is significant because Henry Judd and Charles Peterson, nationally known pioneers in the field of historic preservation, supervised the work.⁶¹⁸ At the same time, The National Park Service also acquired the Native American site, Emerald Mound.

In the late 1930s, Armstrong Tire and Rubber opened a plant in Natchez. They were soon followed by International Paper Company and Johns Manville. In the 1940s, oil and gas was discovered in Adams County. Workers from rural Adams County and surrounding counties poured into Natchez to take factory jobs or work in the growing oil industry, and their need for housing spurred the further subdivision of the suburban villa estates such as the Burn, Linden, Montebello, and Roselawn. The oil and gas industry became the major industry in Natchez after the mid-1940s and reached its peak in the 1970s and early 1980s. John Callon, president of Callon Petroleum, bought Melrose in 1976. Following a two-year renovation, the Callon family opened Melrose daily for the first time in its history and hosted some of the city's most important social gatherings between 1978 and the sale of the house in 1990 to the National Park Service.

Although the Natchez Pilgrimage helped assure the preservation of the city's mansion houses, the growing number of automobiles and the prosperity that followed new manufacturing jobs, the discovery of oil, and World War II began to erode the city's historic commercial district. Aerial views of Natchez from a 1938 "Travel Talks," a short movie feature, record a city that had changed little since photographer Henry Norman climbed St. Mary's Cathedral and photographed the town in 1880 (Fig. 52). Alarmed by the growing destruction of buildings following World War II, the City of Natchez enacted

⁶¹⁶ Katherine Grafton Miller, *Natchez of Long Ago and the Pilgrimage* (Natchez: The Rellimak Publishing Company, 1938), 23–38.

⁶¹⁷ Dawson A. Phelps, "Mound Plantation, Jefferson County, Mississippi: A Historical and Archeological Report" (Natchez Trace Parkway, November 22, 1941), 1.

⁶¹⁸ Phelps, "Mount Locust, A Restudy of Its History," 1.

the first historic preservation ordinance in Mississippi in 1954. The ordinance was relatively weak and protected only pre-Civil War buildings, but it set the stage for the stronger ordinances that followed in 1980 and 1991. Earlier in 1952, Natchez became one of the first cities in Mississippi to embrace land-use planning, which helped preserve the city's historic residential and commercial neighborhoods.

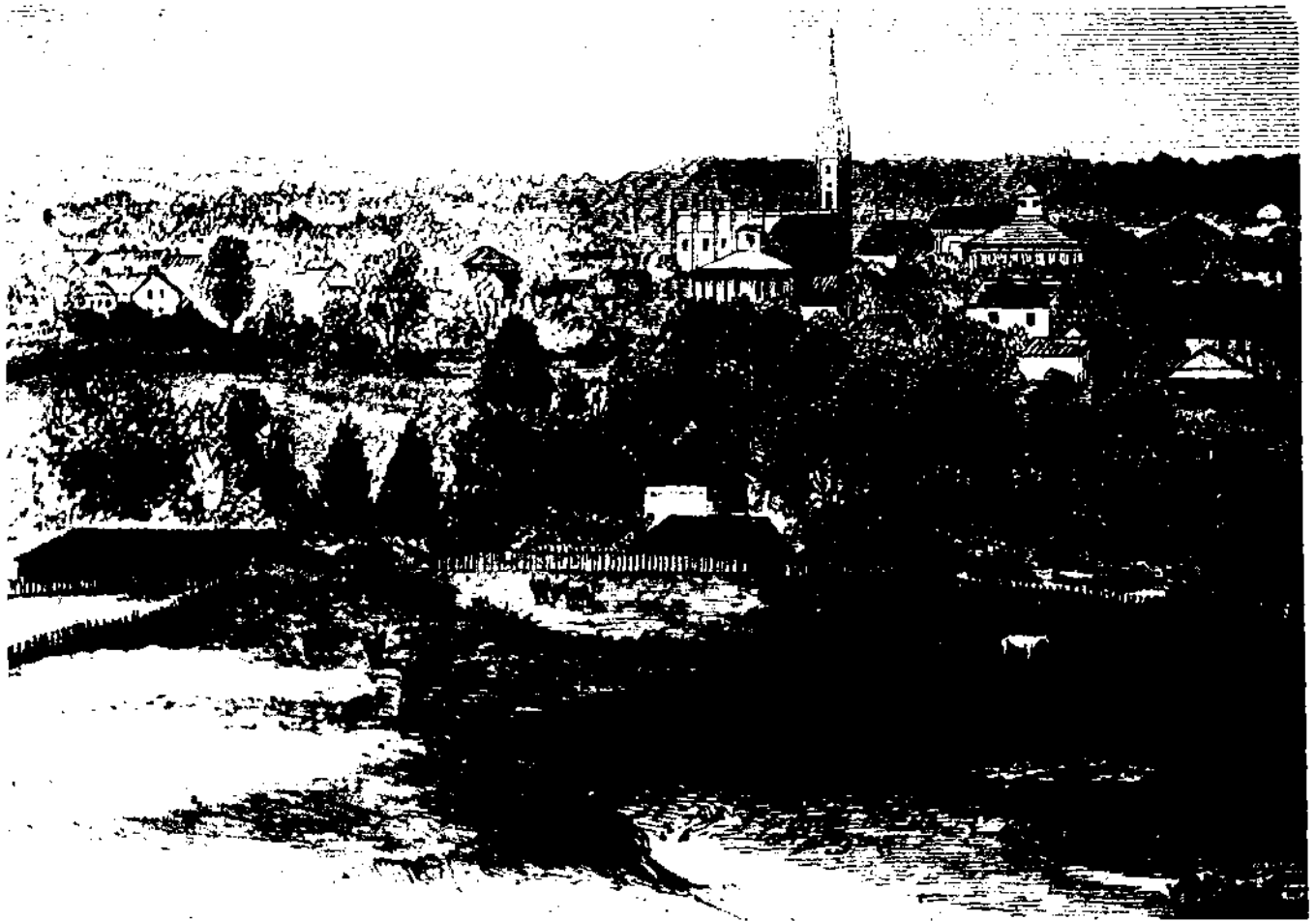
The Civil Rights Movement came to Natchez during the 1960s. Wharlest Jackson, a black employee of Armstrong Tire and Rubber Company, was killed by an explosion in an unsolved murder associated with the civil rights movement in Natchez. During this period, Natchez elected its first black alderman since Reconstruction and the number of black elected and appointed officials grew rapidly after the 1960s. By 1995, Mississippi had the highest percentage of black elected officials in the United States. Approximately half of the population of Natchez is black.

In the 1970s, the State of Mississippi, through the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, became involved in historic preservation in the Natchez area. The Department of Archives and History acquired the endangered Grand Village of the Natchez Indians and established a small museum and interpretive center. It also acquired Jefferson College, where it undertook Mississippi's first academic restoration. In 1974, the private, nonprofit Historic Natchez Foundation was organized. The foundation opened an office with full-time staff in 1979 and has become one of the most active preservation organizations in the nation. With the opening of the Historic Natchez Foundation office, men and women, blacks and whites, became involved in the local historic preservation movement.

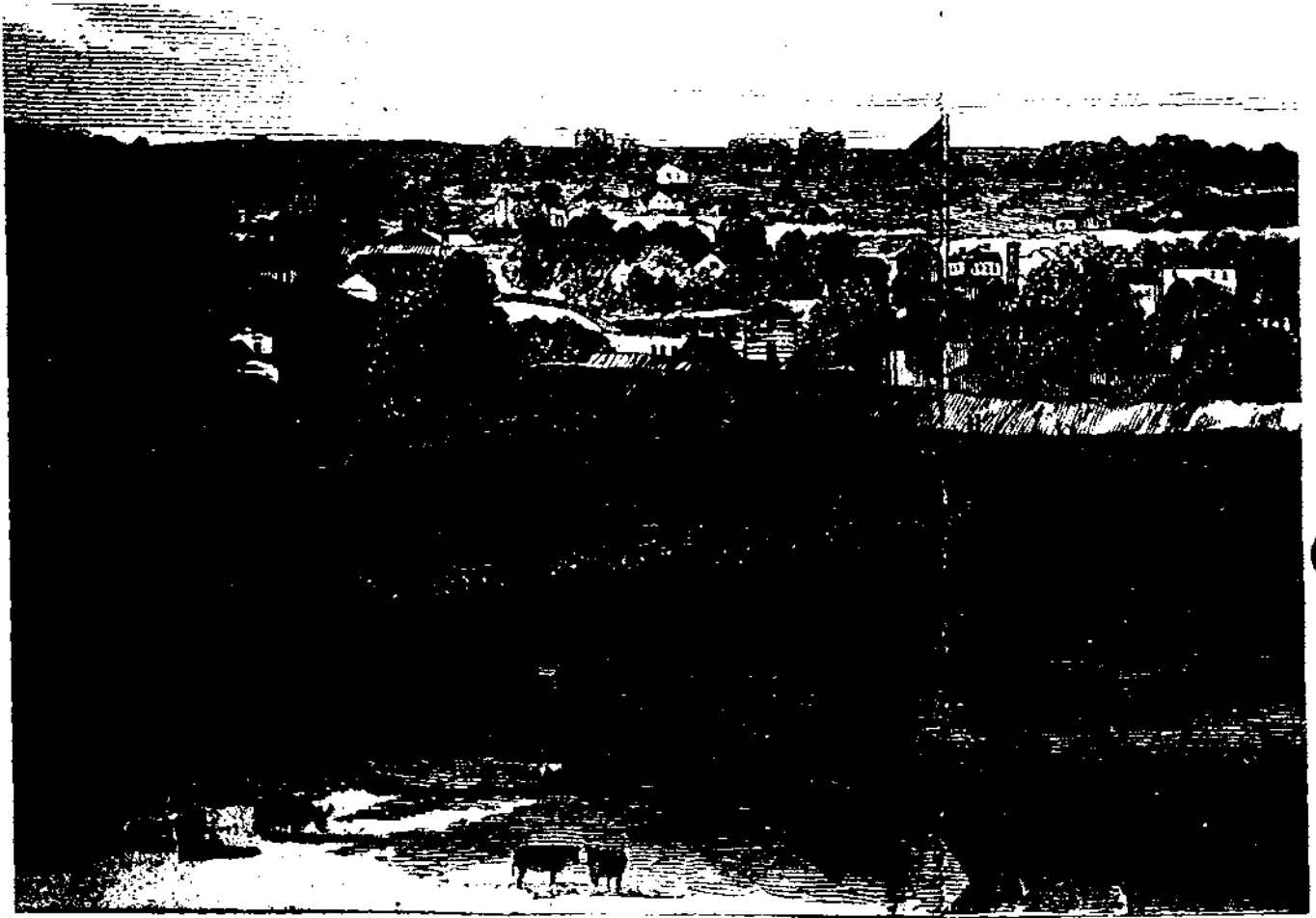
In 1976, the Natchez Garden Club, an organization of white women, gave the first official recognition of the importance of the city's African-American heritage when they purchased the William Johnson House. They acquired the house only to insure its preservation and hoped eventually to pass ownership to an African-American organization. Beginning in the 1980s, the African-American community began to demonstrate increased interest in promoting and preserving its heritage through the formation of the Natchez Association for the Preservation of Afro-American Culture (NAPAC). This organization with plans to open a museum and interpretive center in the Old Natchez Post Office, located on the site of William Johnson's barber shop.

In the mid-1980s, the local oil economy of Natchez collapsed. For the first time, the City of Natchez and the business community began to view the historic resources of the city as resources to rebuild a depressed economy. With the support of public and private entities, the City of Natchez began to seek involvement from the National Park Service in the preservation of its historic resources. In 1988, Congress authorized the establishment of the Natchez National Historical Park, which included acquisition of the site of historic Fort Rosalie and the great mansion Melrose. The legislation also created a preservation district to aid in preserving the city's historic resources. In 1990, the legislation was amended to allow for the acquisition by donation of the William Johnson House.





34. Panorama view of Natchez, ca. 1864. (left section)



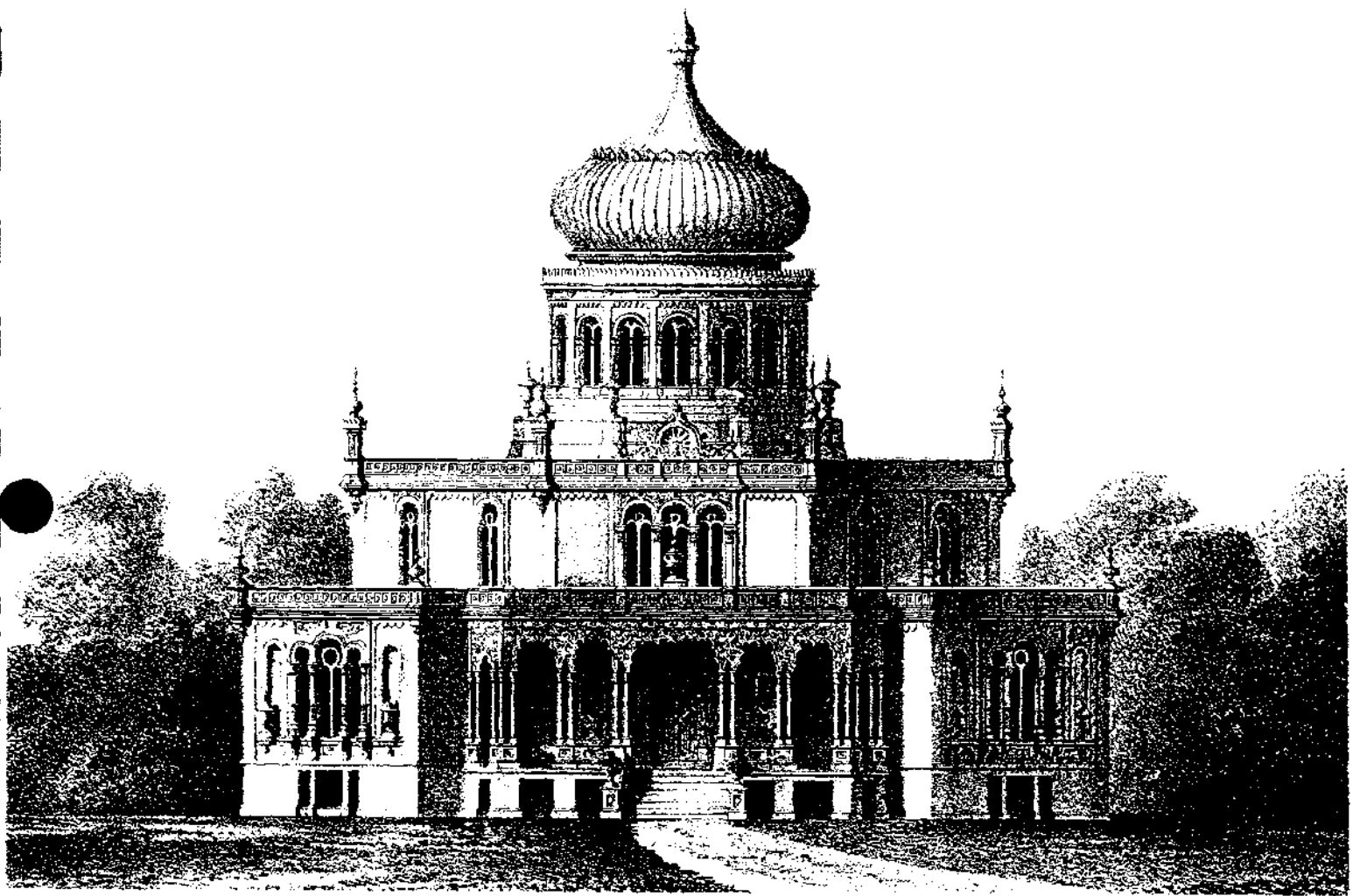
34. Panorama view of Natchez, ca. 1864. (middle section)



34. Panorama view of Natchez, ca. 1864. (right section)



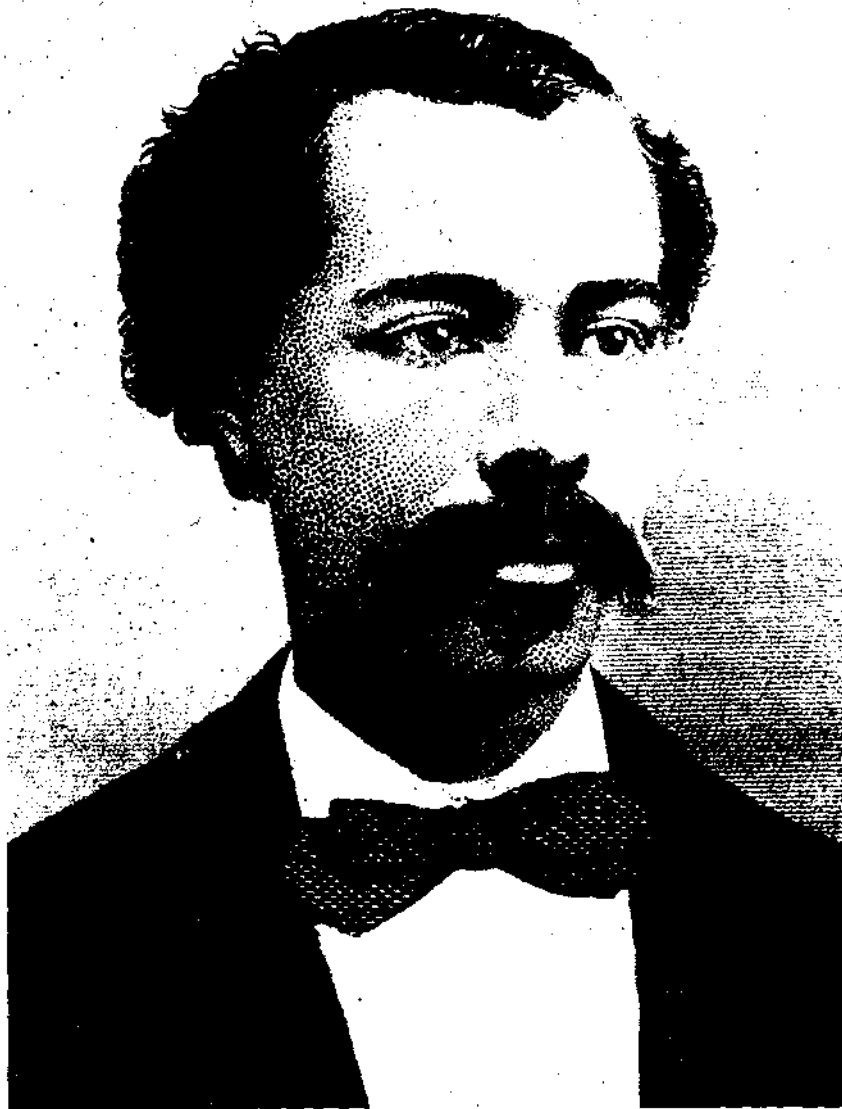
35. Richard Wright, Natchez native and author of *Native Son*.



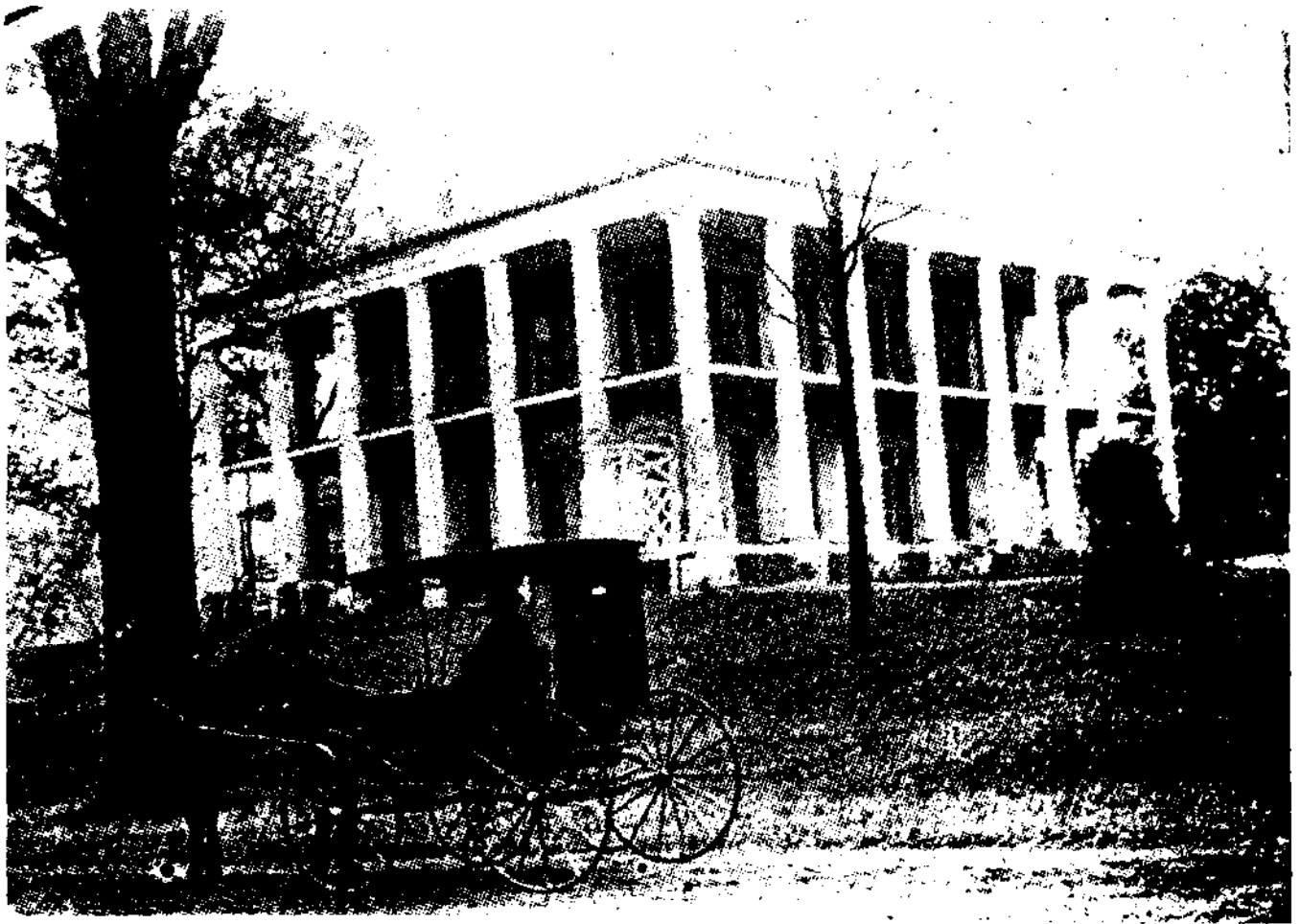
36. Illustration of the inspiration for Longwood. (Plate from Samuel Sloan's *Model Architect* vol. II, ca. 1860)



37. Holy Family Catholic Church, 1894.



38. John R. Lynch.



39. Dunleith, where John R. Lynch was a slave.



40. Hiram R. Revels.



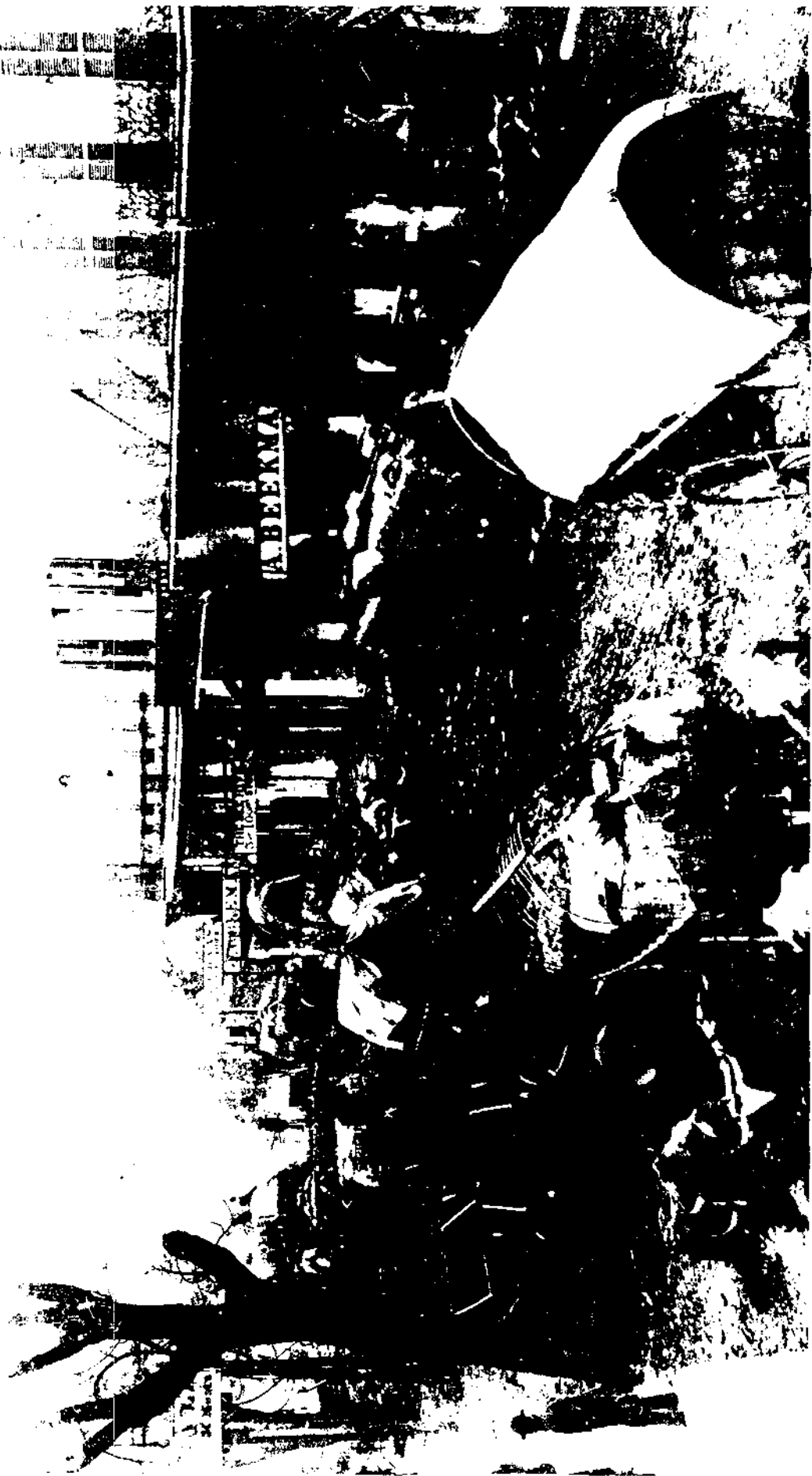
41. Zion Chapel AME Church, where Hiram Revels preached.



42. Portrait bust of Louis J. Winston in Natchez City Cemetery.

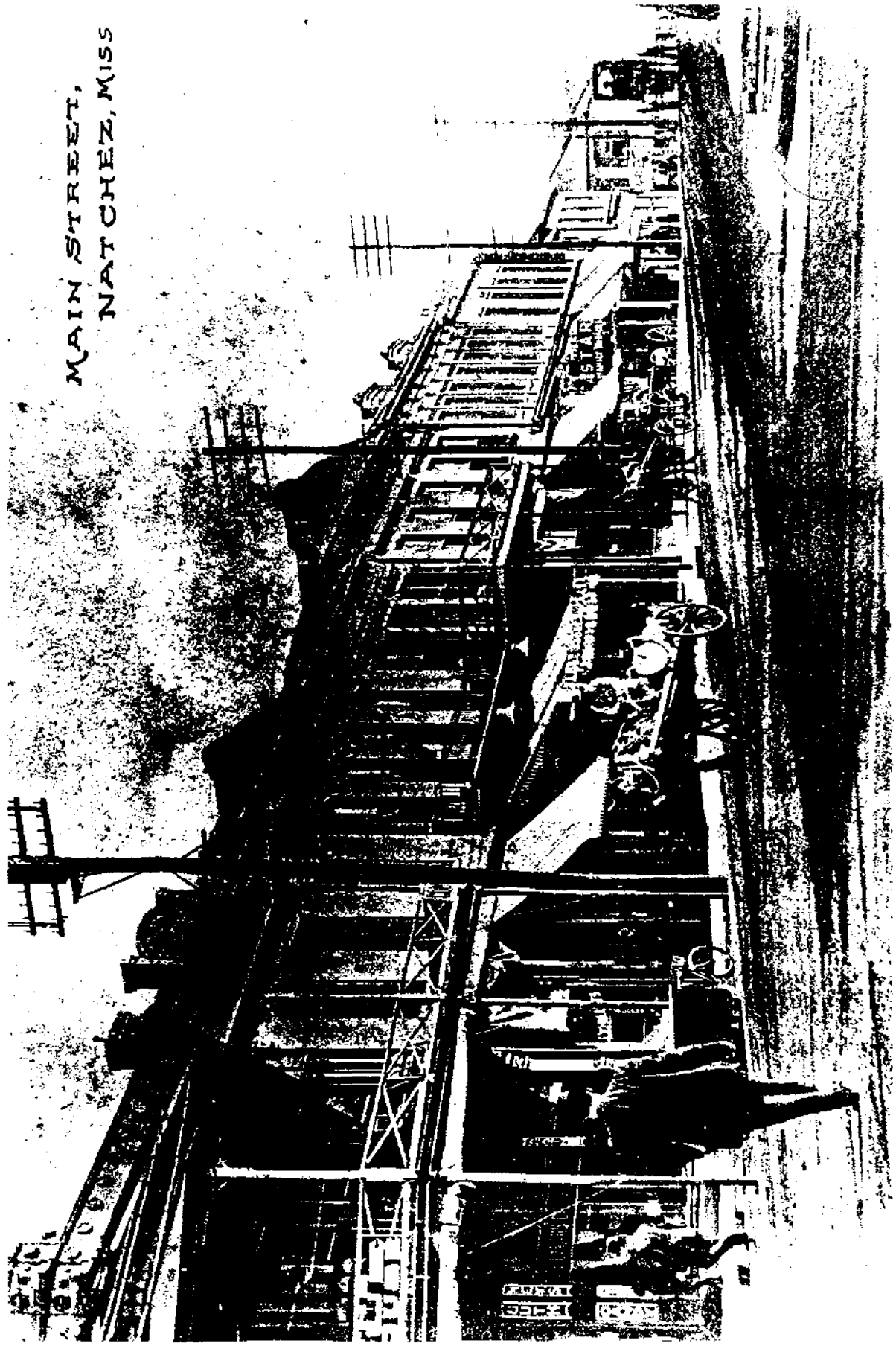


43. Temple B'Nai Israel, built in 1905.



44. Franklin Street, ca. 1880 photograph of plantation supply stores with wagons.

MAIN STREET,
NATCHEZ, MISS



45. View of the north side of the 400-block of Main Street, Natchez, ca. 1895.

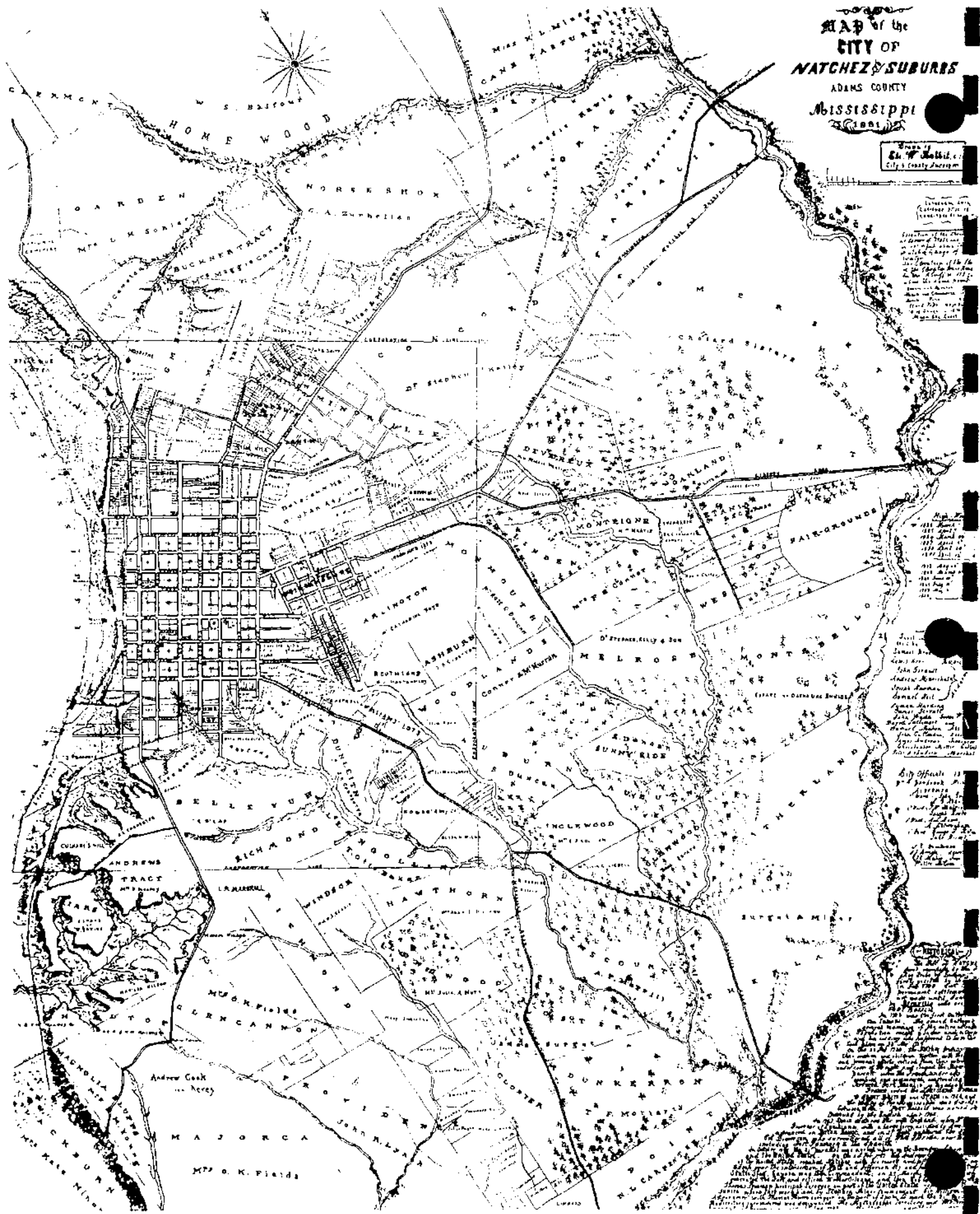




46. Railroad depot at Briel Avenue.

MAP of the
CITY OF
NATCHEZ & SUBURBS
ADAMS COUNTY
Mississippi
1891

Drawn by
W. Babbitt, C.
City & County Surveyor



Section of the City
of Natchez, Miss.
as shown by this map
is divided into lots
of various sizes
and shapes
and is bounded
by the Mississippi
River on the east
and Adams County
on the south
and west
The City of Natchez
is situated on the
east bank of the
Mississippi River
and is bounded
by the Adams County
line on the south
and west
The City of Natchez
is situated on the
east bank of the
Mississippi River
and is bounded
by the Adams County
line on the south
and west



48. Friedler House on Linton Avenue.



49 ● View of City Hall and 1837 historic market demolished in 19



50. Exterior view of Melrose during Pilgrimage.



51. Interior Pilgrimage scene at Meirose, 1940.



52. Bird's-eye view from Cathedral steeple looking north up Union Street, ca. 1880.



7.0 MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS



Although the legislation that created the Natchez National Historical Park limited National Park Service land ownership to the Fort Rosalie site, Melrose, the William Johnson House, and a visitor and administrative center, the legislation mandated a study of Natchez historic properties to establish a preservation district or districts. The purpose of the preservation district(s) was to help preserve and promote interpretation of the resources that contribute to the understanding of the purposes of the act. The result of the study was a single large preservation district that encompasses most of the significant resources in Natchez, and is approximately six square miles in size.

The National Park Service preservation district includes ten National Historic Landmarks, forty-one individually listed National Register properties, and six of the city's National Register districts. All but a small portion of the Woodlawn Historic District, which was not listed in the National Register until 1995, is also included. The National Park Service has no regulatory or management control over properties within the preservation district; however, the legislation allows the National Park Service to enter into cooperative agreements and provide technical advice to government agencies, businesses, and owners of historically or culturally significant properties on issues such as interpretation, preservation, and signs in return for bringing the property within the scope of the park's purpose. The preservation district is probably best described as a zone of influence, and the National Park Service should pursue using its resources and expertise to assist citizens to preserve and interpret the historic, cultural, and natural resources of Natchez.

The initial 1988 legislation that created the park did not include the William Johnson House, but Congress amended the legislation to allow the National Park Service to acquire, by donation, the William Johnson House and an adjacent antebellum building that shares a common wall. The legislation that created the Natchez National Historical Park also contains a provision that would allow the National Park Service to acquire additional land for a visitor and administrative center, if necessary, that could be located outside the boundary of lands included in the Fort Rosalie site, William Johnson House complex, and Melrose complex.

The National Park Service bought Melrose in 1990 and acquired the William Johnson House complex in 1991, through donation from the City of Natchez. Unlike Melrose and the William Johnson House, the Fort Rosalie site is composed of multiple parcels of land and a number of landowners. Acquisition of the Fort Rosalie properties is ongoing.

No archeological study of Melrose has yet been undertaken, but such a study will probably not yield much additional information about the property. This does not suggest, however, that archeological work should not be done. At the very least, archeological investigations should be done at the outbuildings identified in the Historic Structures Report. Archeological study of the Melrose property may disclose the site of the slave cemetery on Melrose and additional information about the historic landscape. Family papers, papers of contemporaries, newspapers, courthouse documents, historic photographs and drawings, memories of family members and employees, and a 1908

survey map depicting both buildings and landscape features provide a remarkably complete archive for interpreting the history of Melrose. The National Park Service properly emphasizes the antebellum history of the site, but recognizes the continuum of history at the site in its interpretation of Melrose to the public. This continuum of history is important to interpret in relationship to major trends of history on the local, state, and national levels.

The initial assessment of the William Johnson House as significant only on the state level was probably influenced by the rejection of the property as a National Historic Landmark during a thematic study of African-American historic sites in conjunction with the national bicentennial celebration. The inspection team was negatively influenced both by the condition of the building in the 1970s and by William Johnson's status as a slave holder. From the vantage point of two additional decades of study, the Historic Resource Study indicates that the William Johnson House is nationally significant for its association with diarist William Johnson. Johnson, a free Negro, was a unique individual because he kept a daily diary which documents his life from October 1835 to June 1851. In the diary, he describes his life as a businessman, entrepreneur, father, and slave owner. His business acumen and high standards of conduct placed him in a position at the top of Natchez free black society, a position recognized by both the white and black populations of the city. National Park Service acquisition of the Johnson House helps to substantiate its national significance. Furthermore, the lives of William Johnson's descendants, who owned the house until 1976, provide special insight into the unique positions of formerly free African Americans in a racially divided post-Civil War South. Particularly interesting are the four unmarried daughters of William Johnson who emerged as the stalwarts of the family after the Civil War. Their surviving correspondence and papers document their education, their influence, and some early-feminist sentiments. William Johnson's descendants are worthy of additional research and attention in the interpretation of the property and render the property significant on at least local and state levels for post-Civil War African-American history.

The William Johnson House has had two archeological studies; however, a full-scale study of the property is needed to guide the use and interpretation of the grounds. The replacement of the original kitchen dependency with an 1897 kitchen building substantially affects the interpretation of the site. The existing archeological focus of site interpretation (with the floor removed in the main house and a section of floor removed in the dependency building) should be replaced by emphasis on William Johnson and his descendants. The archeological history of the site would be better interpreted through exhibit material rather than alteration of the historic structures associated with the lives of Johnson family members. Although interpretation of the site should focus primarily on William Johnson, it should also reference his descendants to recognize the continuum of history as expressed in National Register criteria.

The Fort Rosalie site is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a component of the Natchez Bluffs and Under-the-Hill Historic District listed in the National Register of

Historic Places in 1972. The Mississippi Department of Archives and History prepared a special study on the history and significance of the Fort Rosalie site, which was officially determined by the Department of the Interior to be nationally significant prior to acquisition. The Fort Rosalie site consists of three components: (1) the actual fort site on top of the bluff, (2) the French settlement site on a plateau below the bluff, and (3) the site of the eighteenth-century landing on the riverfront beneath the plateau.

Typical of many early district nominations, the Natchez Bluffs and Under-the-Hill Historic District included no inventory of individual properties. In 1990, The Mississippi Department of Archives and History prepared an inventory and assessment of the buildings on the Fort Rosalie site, and determined that only two buildings, both at the north end of the fort site, should be preserved on site. One of these is the ca. 1880 Stientenroth House, now serving as National Park Service headquarters, and the other is a log cabin that is the only surviving structure from a ca. 1940 recreation of Fort Rosalie. Designated for relocation are five buildings, including a ca. 1935 combination bungalow house and store under a single roof, one Queen Anne-style house, one Italianate-style house, and two matching Colonial Revival-style houses, all located on or adjacent to the fort site on the bluff.

Acquisition of the Fort Rosalie property is ongoing, but the process was disrupted and stalled by the legalization of riverboat gambling in 1990. The City of Natchez reneged on its promise to Congress to donate the riverfront portion of the Fort Rosalie site to the National Park Service and sold it for gambling development. Under authority of the Mississippi Antiquities Act, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History managed to return the land to public ownership. The City of Natchez then leased the riverfront for casino development, but the Mississippi Department of Archives and History permitted its use only for utility service and handicap parking. The private landowner of the French settlement portion of the Fort Rosalie site balked at selling his property and leased it to the riverboat casino for a 550-car parking lot.

When acquisition of the Fort Rosalie property is complete, the National Park Service plans to conduct comprehensive archeological investigations of the site. Interpretive plans should be developed and may include the investigations themselves, as well as archeological features that might be uncovered.



8.0 APPENDICES



8.1 Bibliography



8.1 Bibliography

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8.2 Glossary of Terms



8.2 Glossary of Terms

Sources used for defining the following words were: *A Visual Dictionary of Architecture* by Francis Ching; *The Penguin Dictionary of Architecture*, 3rd edition, by John Fleming, Hugh Honour, and Nikolaus Pevsner; and *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 2nd edition.

All-stretcher Bond (vs. Running Bond): In masonry, a bond in which bricks or stones are laid lengthwise; all courses are laid as stretchers with the vertical joints of one course falling midway between those of its adjacent course.

Anthemion: Ornament reminiscent of a honeysuckle flower alternating with palm leaves or palmettes, common in ancient Greek and Roman architecture.

Architrave: In the classical orders, the lowest member of the entablature; the beam that spans from column-to-column, resting directly upon their capitals.

Baluster: An upright support of a rail.

Balustrade: A row of balusters topped by a rail.

Bead-and-butt: Boards placed so the edges are flush against each other, with one of the edges having a continuous bead running along it.

Board-and-batten: Siding consisting of wide boards or plywood sheets set vertically with butt joints covered by battens.

Chamfered: An oblique surface produced by beveling an edge or corner, usually at a 45° angle, as the edge of a board or masonry surface.

Cistern: An artificial reservoir for storing water.

Common Bond: A brickwork bond having a course of headers between every five or six courses of stretchers.

Cornice: The top, projecting section of an entablature; also any projecting ornamental molding along the top of a building, wall, arch, etc, finishing or crowning it.

Double-leaf: Typically a shutter or door made up of two panels, one of which folds back on top of the other, which then folds back against the wall.

Dutchman: A small piece or wedge inserted as filler to stop an opening. A small piece of material used to cover a defect, such as to hide a badly made joint.

Eave: The projecting lower edge of a roof, overhanging a wall.

Entablature: The upper portion of a wall or story, generally supported on columns or pilasters. In classical orders it consists of architrave, frieze, and cornice.

Facade: The front or face of a building, emphasized architecturally.

Fascia: Any broad, flat, horizontal surface, as the outer edge of a cornice or roof.

Frieze: The middle horizontal member of the classical entablature, above the architrave and below the cornice.

Gable: The triangular upper portion of a wall at the end of a pitched roof corresponding to a pediment in classical architecture. It normally has straight lines, but there are variants.

Jamb: The vertical surface of an archway, doorway, or window.

Joist: Horizontal timber laid between the walls or the beams of a building to carry the floorboards.

Lath: Lny of a number of thin narrow strips of wood, often nailed to rafters, ceiling joists, and studs, to make a groundwork for plaster.

Lintel: A horizontal member spanning an opening to carry a superstructure.

Louver: Sloping boards set to shed rain water outward in openings which are to be left otherwise unfilled.

Muntin: The vertical part in the framing of a door, screen, paneling, window, etc., butting into, or stopped by, the horizontal rails.

Patterae (Patera): A small, flat, circular or oval ornament in classical architecture, often decorated with Acanthus leaves or rose petals.

Pilaster: A shallow pier or rectangular column projecting only slightly from a wall and, in classical architecture, conforming with one of the orders.

Plinth: A square or rectangular base for column, pilaster, or door framing. A recognizable base of an external wall, or the base courses of a building collectively, if so treated as to give the appearance of a platform.

Punkah: A fan suspended from the ceiling and operated by pulling a chord.

Sash: Sliding glazed frames running in vertical grooves, as in a window.


Spandrel: The triangular space between the side of an arch, the horizontal drawn from the level of its apex, and the vertical of its springing; also applied to the surface between two arches in an arcade, and the surface of a vault between adjacent ribs. A panel-like area in a multistory frame building, between the sill of a window on one level and the head of a window immediately below.

Stretcher Bond: A method of laying bricks so that only the side of the bricks appears on the face of the wall.

Tongue-and-groove: When the rib on one edge of a board fits into the groove in an edge of another board to make a flush joint.

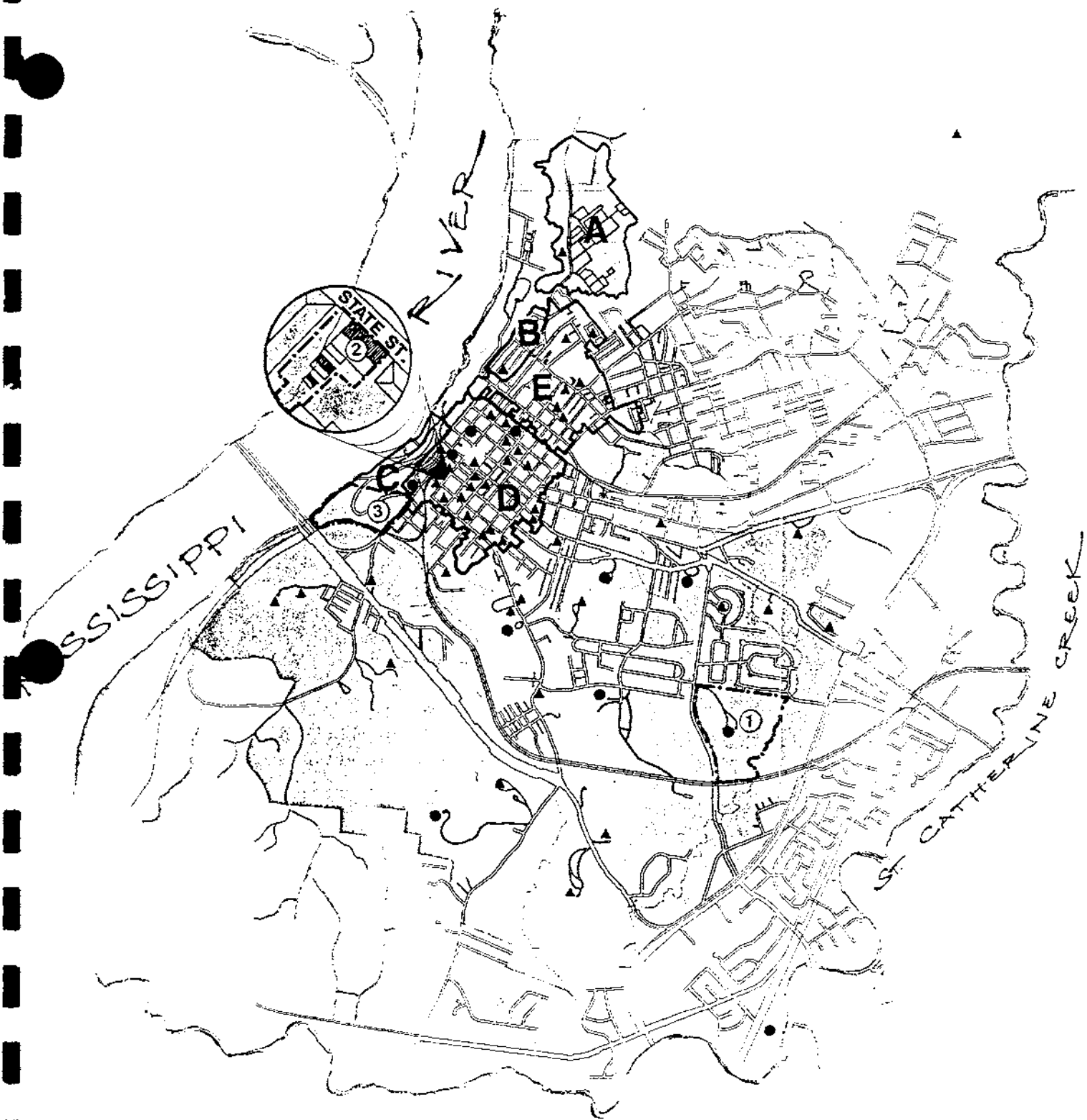
Transom: A window above a door or other window, built on, and commonly hinged to, a transom; a horizontal crossbar in a window, over a door, or between a door and a window or fanlight above it.





8.3 Base Maps for Natchez National Historical Park





- 1. Melrose Estate
- 2. William Johnson Complex
- 3. Fort Rosalie

**HISTORICAL BASE MAP
NATCHEZ NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI**

MISSISSIPPI RIVER



Extant Historic Structure



Nonextant Historic Structure

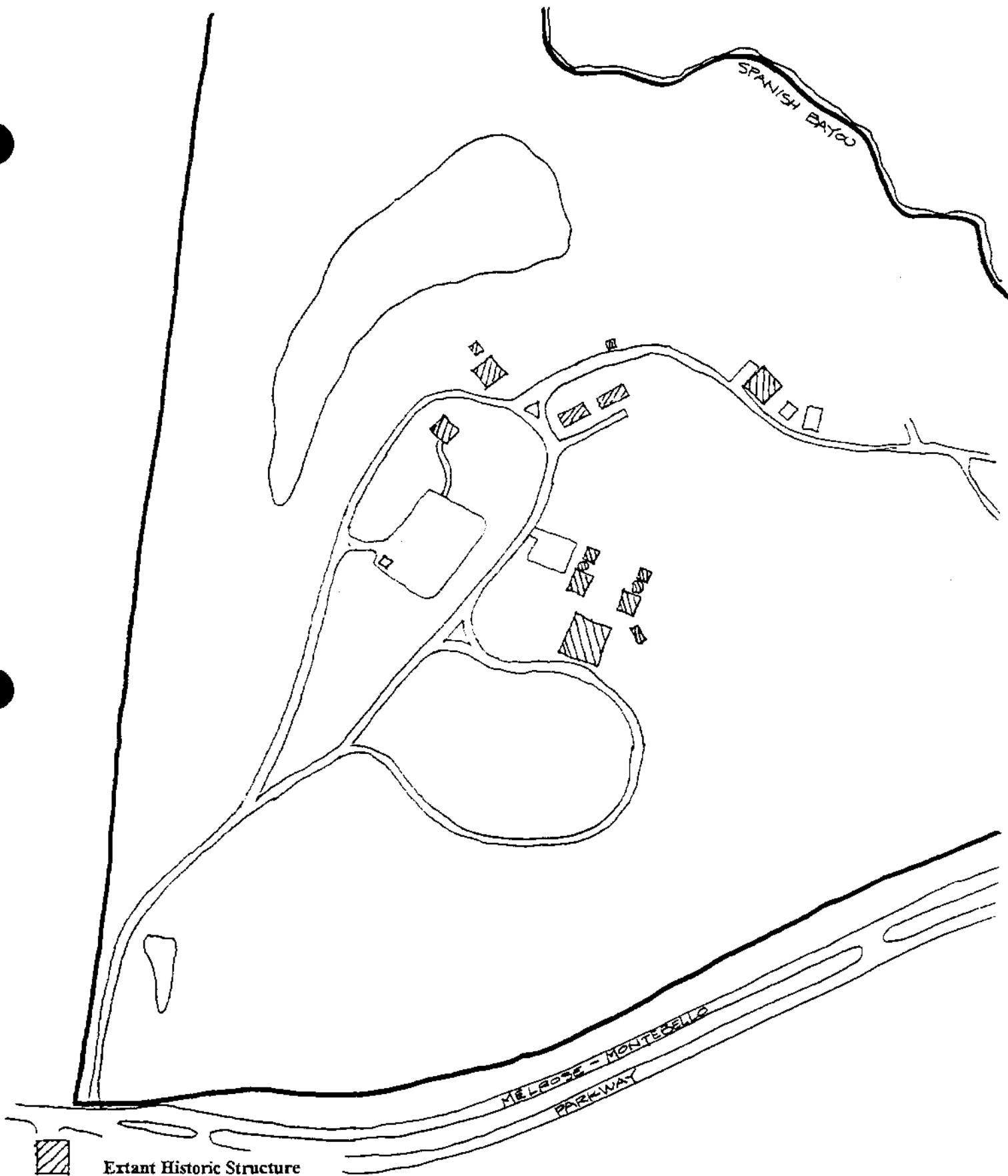






Extant Nonhistoric Structure



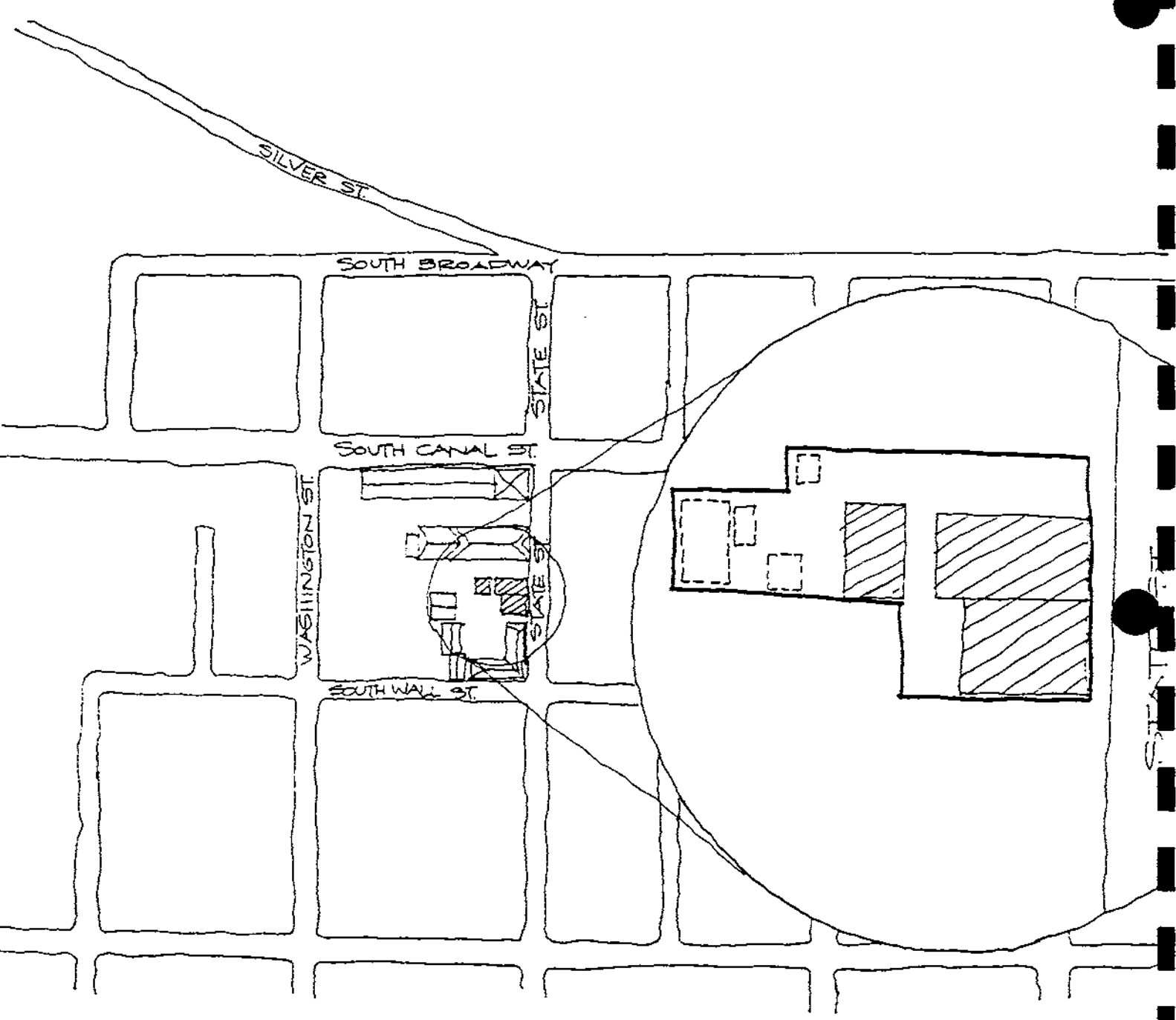
Park Boundary





HISTORICAL BASE MAP
FORT ROSALIE
NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI



-  Extant Historic Structure
-  Nonextant Historic Structure
-  Extant Nonhistoric Structure
-  Park Boundary

**HISTORICAL BASE MAP
MELROSE ESTATE
NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI**



-  Extant Historic Structure
-  Nonextant Historic Structure
-  Extant Nonhistoric Structure
-  Park Boundary

HISTORICAL BASE MAP
 WILLIAM JOHNSON COMPLEX
 NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI

**8.4 National Register Nomination:
Melrose**



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Melrose

other names/site number n/a

2. Location

street & number _____ n/a not for publication

city or town Natchez n/a vicinity

state Mississippi code 28 county Adams code 1 zip code 39120

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State of Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is: _____ Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet. _____
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet. _____
- determined not eligible for the National Register. _____
- removed from the National Register. _____
- other, (explain:) _____

Melrose
Name of Property

Adams County, Mississippi
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing		Noncontributing		
<u>15</u>		<u>5</u>		buildings
<u>1</u>				sites
				structures
				objects
<u>16</u>		<u>5</u>		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
Unknown--inventory not provided with original nomination

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling
Domestic: secondary structure
Agriculture/Subsistence: animal facility
Agriculture/Subsistence: agricultural outbuilding

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture: Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stucco; brick

walls brick

stucco; weatherboard

roof slate; metal

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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Located on a 78.6-acre parcel that was originally on the outskirts of Natchez, Melrose is an elegant mid-nineteenth-century suburban villa situated in a lush, park-like setting landscaped in the naturalistic English manner. The Melrose complex retains an outstanding degree of integrity and includes the massive Greek Revival style main house, behind which is a courtyard flanked by symmetrically arranged kitchen and dairy buildings, cistern houses, and privy and smokehouse. The ante-bellum complex also includes two slave cabins, a slave privy, carriage house, stable/barn, and small barn/storage house. All these buildings are documented on a 1908 survey map of the Melrose property. A circa 1880 playhouse is located behind the dairy (relocated to its present site during the Callon period) and a shed built during the Kelly period stands between the carriage house and stable/barn. Several new service buildings have been constructed by the Callon family and the National Park Service, but these are visually separated from most of the historic complex by a wooded area.

A gravel drive leads eastward from Melrose Montebello Parkway, past an ornamental cypress pond, to circle a broad landscaped lawn in front of the house and to loop between the carriage house and stable/barn. The lower portion of the circular front drive was added during the Callon period. An original brick walk leads from a small brick-paved area behind the house to the kitchen building, and later brick walks added during the Kelly, Callon, and National Park Service periods connect the other dependencies that face the rear courtyard. A large pond is located east of the stable/barn and quarters. The property is gently rolling, and magnolias, pines, Spanish-moss draped live oaks, crepe myrtles, azaleas, camellias, and other trees and shrubs, some indigenous, adorn the grounds. A number of wooden gates and several cisterns are found throughout the grounds as well as a cast-iron gate (original to Choctaw) added during the Kelly period.

A small formal garden, original to the McMurrin period but altered during the Kelly and Callon periods, is located south of the main house and is accessed by four descending brick steps situated between low curving brick walls. To each side of the steps are cast-iron planting urns on iron pedestals. Flower beds with brick and perennial borders span the length of these two walls. A grass lawn separates three formal flower beds that are each separated into fourths by brick borders and brick walkways. Boxwood encircles each of the three beds, and a wall of azaleas forms the rear border of the garden.

Each of the buildings in the Melrose complex is inventoried and rated as either contributing or noncontributing. In addition, the original site plan and landscape elements contribute to the significance of the property. These historic landscape features--formal landscaped areas, formal garden or parterre, lawn, trees, walks, drives, gates, secondary plantings, cisterns, small cypress pond and large pond--are not included in the inventory of structures but are accounted for as one contributing site in the overall number of resources. An inventory of buildings in the Melrose complex follows:

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1. Main House, 1848, Contributing

The main house is a two-story, brick, nearly cubical block resting on a scored stucco foundation with projecting stuccoed water table. The walls are constructed of red-brown, pressed bricks laid in all-stretcher bond, with narrow, intricately-tooled white mortar joints. A monumental Doric portico highlights the main facade while the rear elevation is dominated by a full-width colossal colonnade. The molded full entablature of the portico and rear colonnade extend around all elevations of the house, which is crowned by a hipped slate roof. The roof is surmounted by a balustraded clerestory and pierced by six interior-end stuccoed chimneys, one of which is false and was built for a balanced appearance only. All but the false chimney feature clay chimney pots. The rectangular, four by eight-bay, frame clerestory originally had an almost flat roof deck finished in tongue-and-groove wood decking, but later, during the Kelly period, the deck was gabled to shed water and was roofed in standing-seam metal. The roof balustrade has five plain newel posts with molded capitals on each elevation that are linked by turned balusters similar to designs for balusters published in Asher Benjamin's 1830 book, *The Practical House Carpenter*.

Facing west, the main facade is a five-bay composition with a three-bay monumental, tetrastyle, Doric portico centered on the facade. Cast-iron balustrades with a lyre and anthemion motif enclose both levels of the portico. The pediment features a full entablature and is supported by round stuccoed columns that were originally marbled but over-painted in the early twentieth century. The wall area protected by the portico is framed by monumental pilasters and finished with scored stucco that was originally marbled with each stucco block tinted varying shades of sandstone. This decorative treatment was also over-painted in the early twentieth century. The portico is accessed by a flight of six stuccoed-brick steps flanked by curved, stuccoed, masonry walls that terminate in paneled extensions that support original cast-iron planting urns.

The central entrance on each floor of the westerly facade contains a single-leaf, oak-grained, four-panel door crowned by a two-light transom and framed by four-light sidelights set above molded panels. The muntins of each light of the transoms and sidelights form X's. The frontispieces are composed of slender fluted Doric columns *in antis* supporting heavy denticulated entablatures. The doorway on each level is fitted with double-leaf, two-panel blinds with fixed louvers. To the right of the main entrance is the original silver-plated, wall-mounted bell pull that activates a bell in the hallway. The other bays of the main facade are filled with six-over-six, double-hung windows with wooden sills. The windows of the outer bays of each level have flat arched brick lintels and are fitted with double-leaf, two-panel blinds with fixed louvers, while the windows to each side of the entrances are fitted with folding louvered blinds. The main facade of the clerestory has four bays, with each bay filled with a sliding, four-light sash having X-shaped muntins.

The side elevations have five openings on each level. The two westernmost openings on the basement level are small rectangular ventilators, while the three eastern openings are filled with paired, six-light, sliding

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windows opening onto stuccoed window wells. The three eastern openings are believed to have originally not been filled with window sash, but were merely openings protected by wooden grills. The Kellys most likely added the sliding window sash, but left the original wooden grills intact. All but two of these openings have one set of grills, but the third and fourth bays of the south elevation have two sets. The openings of the first and second floors of the side elevations are filled with six-over-six, double-hung windows with flat arched brick lintels, wooden sills, and two-panel louvered blinds. The side elevations of the clerestory have eight bays, each filled with sliding, two-light sash with X-shaped muntins.

Spanning the rear facade is a colossal Doric colonnade featuring rectangular, stuccoed-brick columns and wooden balustrades with tapered rectangular-sectioned balusters and bold, circular handrails. The gallery may be accessed from a central stair or from a secondary stair at the north end. The wall of the rear elevation is finished with scored stucco, which like that of the main facade, was originally marbled with each stucco block tinted varying shades of sandstone. An exterior three-flight stairway with tongue-and-groove, flush-board balustrade, square newels with molded caps, and circular handrail connects the two levels of the gallery. A single-leaf, two-panel, grained door under this exterior stairway opens onto a stair leading to the basement. The basement can also be accessed through a bulkhead entrance that opens to an area beneath the central rear gallery steps.

The first floor of the rear elevation has four openings but the upper level only has three. On each level is a central entrance doorway with Greek Revival frontispiece composed of four pilasters supporting a full entablature. Each doorway contains an oak-grained, four-panel door topped by a two-light transom and framed by four-light sidelights set above molded panels. The muntins of the transom and sidelights of the first level form X's. The doorway on each level is fitted with double-leaf, two-panel louvered blinds. The entrances are flanked by six-over-six, double-hung windows that are closed by louvered blinds. Beneath the southernmost window of the first floor are paneled jib doors, and this window is fitted with floor-length, three-panel, louvered blinds. At the north end of the first level is a single-leaf, grained, four-panel door that opens onto the service hallway. The north end bay of the first level of the colonnade is screened from the remainder of the gallery and from the side yard by jalousies that extend to the floor. The jalousie-screened area was apparently used by house slaves in carrying out their domestic duties. The jalousies to the north provided both privacy and protection from blowing rain and wind. Mounted on the back wall are original slave bells that were wired to bell pulls or cranks inside the house.

Melrose has a center-hall plan, with a short front hall flanked by a large room at each side, beyond which is a greatly widened rear hallway, called a saloon in a lumber order and 1883 inventory, flanked by two smaller rooms to the south, and to the north a lateral stair hall and smaller rooms and secondary hallways. The location of the staircase in a lateral hallway is typical of grand Natchez mansions and is found also at other Natchez National Historic Landmarks including Arlington, Rosalie, Dunleith, and Stanton Hall. The floor plan is

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derivative of a typical early floor plan of the Lower Mississippi Valley, where a short hall separates two front rooms and widens at the rear to become a loggia or enclosed room flanked by smaller cabinet rooms. At Melrose, this plan is greatly exaggerated and becomes a complicated plan for a Natchez house dating to the mid-nineteenth century. On the main story, a service hall runs along the north wall, extending from the dining room to the rear gallery. Opening from the southern side of this service hall is a pantry, lateral stair hall, under-stair closet, and a warming kitchen. A short hallway south of the pantry connects the dining room to the lateral stair hall. The plan is basically echoed on the second-story level but without the service hallway and the hallway linking the dining room and the lateral stair hall. Flanking the stair hall on the second-story level are small rooms that are compartmentalized into two smaller rooms. East of the stair hall the two small connecting rooms feature the larger of the two rooms opening into the main hallway. The sizes reverse on the western side with the smallest room opening into the main hallway. The original uses of these rooms are unknown but they were probably originally used as bathing and dressing rooms by the McMurrin family. During the Kelly and Callon period, they eventually became plumbed bathrooms and closets.

Walls and ceilings throughout the house interior are plaster, and the walls are both painted and papered although no original wallpapers survive. The floors on the first story are cypress and the floors on the second-story are pine. The floors of both the front and rear first-story hallways are covered wall-to-wall in original painted-canvas oilcloths. The front hall oilcloth features a geometric design, but the rear hallway, or saloon, oilcloth imitates Brussels carpeting. Wood baseboards are 16 inches high on the first floor and 14 inches high on the second. Beneath each window on both levels is a molded wooden panel. All first and second-story doors are four-paneled and currently grained in imitation of oak. The first floor doors were originally grained with an oak pattern, while the second floor doors were grained with a maple pattern. Door knobs and keyhole escutcheons are silver-plated in the most public first-story rooms, but second-story doors and those in the more private areas have porcelain knobs and brass escutcheons. The mantel pieces are typically black with white or green veining, or white with green veining marble and are shouldered and battered only in the most public rooms, the drawing room, parlor, and dining room. Gilt cranks for the slave bells are located beside the mantels in all but the library, which has a bell pull.

Plaster ceiling medallions with acanthus leaf motifs are in the front and rear hallways, the drawing room, and parlor. The ceiling medallion in the rear hallway is framed by a molded plaster ornament with corner rosettes. The drawing room has its original Cornelius and Company chandelier, while the back hall retains its original two-arm bronze Carcel fixture. The Gothic lantern candle fixture that was believed to have been originally located in the front hall is now in the small hall connecting the dining room to the stair hall. The crystal and gilt fixture in the parlor was added during the Kelly period and the cut-glass fixture now in the entry hallway was added during the Callon period.

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The main entrance opens into the front hallway, which features outstanding millwork. The doorways opening from the front hall into the dining room and drawing room are framed by ornate surrounds composed of Doric pilasters supporting a frieze with a central paneled tablet, reeded corner blocks, and a deeply paneled wooden transom. The front and rear hallways are separated by a single-leaf, four-panel door crowned by a two-light transom and framed by four-light sidelights. Both the transom and sidelights feature X-shaped muntins. The frontispieces framing the front and rear entrances and framing the doorway connecting the front and rear hallways are composed of four pilasters supporting a full entablature.

The most outstanding interior architecture features of Melrose are the Ionic frontispieces that frame the first-story doorways between the three rooms on the south side of the hallway (the drawing room, parlor, and library) and that frame the doorway of the stair hall. The frontispieces consist of fluted Ionic columns supporting a full molded entablature. Within each frontispiece is a panel with an oval patera. The frontispiece defining the stair hall also has a five-light transom with X-shaped muntins beneath the panel with oval patera. These frontispieces frame double-leaf, four-panel, sliding pocket doors with oak-grained finishes. The frontispiece for the pocket doors on the library elevation is composed of pilasters supporting a full entablature embellished with a wide molded keystone. The entrance hallway, drawing room, parlor, library, and grand rear hallway of the first story are all crowned by a full entablature in plaster that completely encircles the rooms and is supported by pilasters that also function as doorway and window surrounds. In the grand hallway at the rear, the pilasters that frame the doorways are repeated as simple wall pilasters throughout the room.

Unlike the other first-story rooms, the dining room does not have a plaster cornice. It is dominated instead by an elaborate mahogany punkah, or ceiling fan, suspended from the center of the ceiling. The punkah is decorated with a carved anthemion and attached scrollwork and hangs from a coffered-wood ceiling centerpiece. Melrose has the finest punkah in the Natchez region and probably the finest in the nation as well. The windows of the dining room are trimmed with symmetrically molded surrounds with bull's eye corner blocks and central tablets imitating keystones.

A service hallway runs along the north wall of the house and extends from the dining room to the rear gallery. The hallway provides access to a pantry, stair hall, under-stair closet, and warming kitchen. A three-part, sliding transom spans the north and south walls of the pantry to provide both air and light to the windowless pantry and to a short hallway on its southern side that connects the dining room to the lateral stair hall. These transom openings are composed of central eight-light sash flanked by ten-light sash. The doorways inside the short hallway connecting the dining room and the stair hall feature Egyptian influence lintels. The doorway between the short hallway and stair hall contains a partially glazed door with twelve upper lights over two molded panels. The warming kitchen has a plain black marble mantel. The doorways opening from the service hallway into the lateral stair hall and under-stair closet contain molded two-panel doors.

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Located in the lateral hall, the stairway is an open-string, four-flight, geometrical staircase with intermediate landings. The staircase continues unbroken from the main story to the attic and features scrolled stair ends, turned balusters, and circular handrail. The scrolled extension of the handrail at the base of the stair is similar to designs published in Asher Benjamin's 1830 *The Practical House Carpenter*. The full-size windows that light the stair landing are also protected by balustrades, a feature seen at other Natchez mansions. The wall area beneath the staircase is paneled, and the silver-plated carpet rods of the first two flights are believed to be original.

The detailing of the second story is simpler than the first story. The doorway separating the front and rear hallway has a two-light transom and four-light sidelights set above molded panels. The frontispiece of this doorway and those of the doors opening onto the front and rear galleries are composed of pilasters supporting a full entablature. The lateral stair hall is framed by a segmentally arched opening surrounded by pilasters supporting a full entablature. Doors on the second story have molded surrounds topped by a cornice molding.

On the south side of the hallway are three bedrooms; on the north side are one bedroom and compartmentalized rooms on each side of the lateral stair hall. What may have been a dressing or bathing room opens off the northwest bedroom and is separated from a still smaller room by a four-panel pocket door with three-light transom. A similar arrangement with the sizes of the rooms reversed is located east of the stairway. The northeast bathing and dressing rooms are separated by a four-panel pocket door without a transom and the larger of the two rooms is heated by a fireplace. The black marble mantelpiece with Ionic columns is from the Natchez house Choctaw and was installed during the Kelly period.

The main stairway terminates on the attic level at a doorway with molded two-panel door that opens into a large rectangular room with stuccoed walls and unfinished ceiling. A two-flight, open-string stairway at the east end of the room leads to the roof. The stair has a balustrade with rectangular balusters and a small square newel post with molded cap. The clerestory windows are sliding windows, and wall-mounted cabinets beneath the windows contain the pulleys, which are operated from the attic floor. A batten door on the north wall opens onto a wooden tank with lead liner that held rainwater collected by integral wood gutters. An unfinished, L-shaped room wraps around the south and west sides of the main attic room.

The basement is divided into nine spaces and can be accessed either from a stairway on the rear gallery or from a bulkhead opening under the rear gallery's central stairs. Two slave bells are at the foot of the bulkhead stair. A large central room, or hallway, provides access to the room beneath the portico, to three rooms to the north, to three rooms to the south, and to a corridor on the east that extends the full width of the basement and is accessed from both the staircase and bulkhead stair. Unusual picket doors open off the central hallway into the rooms, and paneled doors with later glazed-panel inserts open off the central room into the basement corridor. A modern partition wall with recycled batten door was installed in the basement corridor.

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during the Callon period. Judging by its size and architectural finish, the basement originally played an important role in the domestic life of the house. The floors of the northeasternmost room and the southeasternmost room have concrete floors believed to be original and are the only basement rooms with fireplaces. These fireplaces feature segmentally arched openings with no mantel pieces. The other rooms originally had dirt floors that were bricked and smoothed with cement during the Kelly period. Bricks were provided from the ruins of the Natchez mansion Concord, which burned in 1901.

Melrose retains an exceptionally high degree of architectural integrity and gains added significance from its retention of many of the original interior furnishings. Melrose's drawing room has matching gilt window cornices, the original over-mantel and pier mirrors, and even the original parlor curtains of silk broccatelle with original tie-backs of glass and stamped brass. Much of the original furniture also remains in the house and includes the Rococo Revival parlor suite of the drawing room and the bookcases in the library. Melrose's interior is well documented through surviving original furnishings, historic photographs, family correspondence, and two inventories dating to 1865 and 1883. Such documentation is extremely rare.

Much of Melrose's architectural significance is derived from the survival of a full complement of the dependency buildings that were an essential component of the suburban villa complex. Directly behind the house, facing the courtyard, are nearly matching, flanking, two-story kitchen and dairy buildings; cistern houses; and privy and smokehouse. To the north and east of the main house are two slave cabins, a slave privy, carriage house, stable/barn, and a small barn/storage house. A ca. 1880 playhouse is south of the dairy. Each of the buildings on the property is described below.

2. Kitchen, ca. 1845, Contributing

Set perpendicular to the main house and facing south onto the courtyard, the kitchen is a detached, two-story, side-gabled, brick building with an integral two-tiered gallery. The walls are constructed of brick laid in five-course, common bond. Mimicking the rear elevation of the main house, the kitchen's main facade is stuccoed and its gallery features colossal, rectangular stuccoed-brick columns. A wooden balustrade with rectangular-sectioned balusters and round handrail encloses the upper level of the gallery. The roof is pierced by a central, interior, brick chimney with corbelled cap. In the early twentieth century, an original parapet wall was removed from the eastern gable end due to severe deterioration, and the wood-shingle roof was replaced with standing-seam metal.

The main (south) facade is a four-bay elevation (d-w-d-d). The third bay to the east on each level opens into an enclosed, semi-circular stairway. Surviving evidence of hinges and historic photographs document that the original single-leaf, four-panel doors at each level of the stair opening have been removed. The outer bays

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on each level contain single-leaf, four-panel doors, while the window opening on each level contains a twelve-over-twelve, double-hung sash installed between 1976 and 1978 in an original doorway opening. The original doorways are documented in photographs from both the Kelly and Callon periods. The east elevation has a single twelve-over-twelve, double-hung window on each level while the west elevation has two such windows on each floor. Each gable end of the kitchen building is pedimented, but only the western tympanum contains a semi-circular louvered vent. The rear (north) elevation contains three twelve-over-twelve, double-hung windows per floor. All but the windows of the main facade are protected by louvered blinds and have flat-arched brick lintels.

The kitchen building originally had three doorways opening into three rooms on both the first and second stories. The Kelly family made the first alteration to the kitchen building during the first half of the twentieth century when they removed the partition wall between the westernmost two rooms of the first story. The middle room contained the cooking fireplace; the westernmost room was probably originally a pantry and/or work room. Contemporary kitchen facilities were installed during the 1976-78 renovation and the doorway that originally opened into the room with the fireplace was replaced by a window. The brick floors on the first story were also installed at the same time in place of the historic cement finish. The second story originally provided housing for slaves and was partitioned into three rooms. The partition walls of the second floor were removed during the 1976-78 renovation, and new walls were constructed to create a bedroom, sitting room, and bathroom. The door and window surrounds appear to be original, and the surviving mantel features simple surrounds with a mantel shelf supported by brackets. One of two original mantels was removed during the renovation but is stored in the stable/barn.

3. Dairy, ca. 1845, Contributing

Facing north onto the rear courtyard, the dairy is an architectural complement to the kitchen building and is a two-story, brick, side-gabled building with an integral two-tiered gallery featuring rectangular, colossal, stuccoed-brick columns and a wooden balustrade with rectangular-sectioned balusters and round handrail on the upper level. The four-bay main facade is stuccoed. During the first half of the twentieth century, a deteriorated parapet on the eastern end wall was removed, and the wood-shingle roof was replaced with standing-seam metal. A central, interior, brick chimney with corbelled cap pierces the roof. The gables are pedimented, and the western tympanum has a semi-circular louvered vent.

The main facade (northern) of the dairy has five openings on the lower level and four on the upper. The lower level has, from east to west, a circular portal in the upper wall, a four-panel door, the stair opening, a twelve-over-twelve, double-hung window, and a four-panel door. The upper level has the same openings except for the portal. Only the first-story window originally had shutters. The stairway, like that of the kitchen, is an

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enclosed semi-circular stair, and the original four-panel doors that opened off the stairs onto each level of the gallery have been removed.

The first story of the western gable end of the dairy contains double-leaf, eight-panel garage doors installed during the Kelly period prior to 1908 when the western room of the first story was converted to garage use. The second story of the western gable end contains two twelve-over-twelve, double-hung windows. The eastern elevation has one twelve-over-twelve, double-hung window on each level, and to each side of the window of the lower level is a circular portal. The rear (south) elevation has three twelve-over-twelve, double-hung windows on each level, and an original circular portal is at the eastern end of the first level. All but the windows of the main facade have flat-arch brick lintels and louvered blinds.

The first floor of the dairy building is divided into two rooms, each with wooden post-and-lintel mantelpieces. Along the east wall of the eastern room is a double-tiered arrangement of stuccoed basins for dairy operation. These basins relate to similar structures found in the dairies and/or milk rooms at Arlington, Magnolia Hill, Oakland, and Mount Olive. The eastern room of the first story has a concrete floor that is believed to be original while the western room has a wooden floor that was added during the ca. 1980 filming of the television miniseries *Beulah Land*. The second level was originally used as slave rooms and was divided into two rooms with no connecting doorway. These rooms were remodeled into a sitting room, bedroom, and bath during the 1976-78 renovation. One original mantel piece was removed but is stored in the stable/barn.

4a. and 4b. Cistern Houses, ca. 1845, Contributing

Directly east of both the kitchen and dairy buildings is an octagonal cistern house. The walls of the two cistern houses are constructed of latticed panels and the roofs are clad with stamped metal shingles, which replaced the original wood shingles in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. Each building has only one opening, which contains a single-leaf latticed door. The two cistern houses are relatively unaltered but show evidence of numerous repairs. The cisterns and their pumps feature both original and replacement parts.

5. Smokehouse, ca. 1845, Contributing

Although the smokehouse shows little evidence of use, its intended function was undoubtedly for smokehouse use. It strongly relates architecturally to other smokehouses in the Natchez region in both Mississippi and Louisiana, particularly to the brick smokehouse at Cherry Grove Plantation in Adams County. Facing south onto the courtyard, the smokehouse is a one-story, square (16'1" x 16'1"), brick building crowned by a pyramidal roof capped by a roof finial. The original wood-shingle roof was replaced in the first half of the

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twentieth century with standing-seam metal. The building has only two openings. On the south elevation is a central, single-leaf batten door with flat-arched masonry lintel; on the north elevation is a louvered window vent, shuttered on the inside by a batten blind. The interior of the building is a single room with dirt floor, unplastered brick walls, and exposed ceiling construction.

In the early twentieth century, during the Kelly period, a pump and compressor were installed in the smokehouse to provide water to the second story of the main house. During the Callon period, the smokehouse was converted into a laundry room.

6. Brick Privy, ca. 1845, Contributing

Located at the southeast corner of the courtyard, the brick privy is a one-story, nearly square (16'1" x 16'3") building crowned by a pyramidal standing-seam metal roof capped by a roof finial. The original wood shingle roof was replaced by the present roof in the first half of the twentieth century. The main (north) facade has a single-leaf, batten board door with flat arched brick lintel. The east elevation has two entrances, each with single-leaf, batten door, with the southernmost doorway having a screened transom. The south elevation has one single-leaf, four-panel door with screened transom. The west elevation has no openings. The interior retains its original floor plan and is divided into four chambers, each accessed only from the exterior. The two rooms in the south half of the building are the male and female privy compartments, with seating boxes scaled for both adults and children. The pit toilets in these two rooms were originally flushed with water from cisterns. The northern two rooms are currently used for storage and modern bathrooms, but their original uses are unknown.

7. Playhouse, ca. 1880, Contributing

The playhouse was originally located behind the kitchen but was moved to its present location behind the dairy during the Callon period. The playhouse was built about 1880 for George Malin Davis Kelly and is a diminutive, frame, side-gabled, double-pen building on brick piers. The walls are constructed of wide, vertical, flush boards, and the roof is clad in wood shingles. A historic photograph illustrates the scalloped bargeboard that originally trimmed the gables. The main facade has two door openings filled with double-leaf, batten doors with porcelain knobs. The side elevations have one shuttered window opening while the rear elevation has two. The interior is divided into two spaces, connected by a door opening.

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8. South Slave Cabin, ca. 1845, Contributing

The southern slave cabin is a one-and-one-half story, frame, side-gabled building. As originally constructed, the building was a double-pen structure with central interior chimney. Evidence indicates that soon after the cabin was completed, a third room was added to the south end. The original double-pen section of the house rests on brick foundation piers infilled with rough-sawn wood, while the foundation of the addition is a solid brick wall enclosing a partial cellar. Pierced by two interior brick chimneys, the roof was originally clad in wood shingles but is now clad in standing-seam metal. The main (west) facade has five openings with the first, third and fifth bays contain single-leaf, batten doors while the other two bays are filled with six-over-six, double-hung windows with louvered blinds. The cellar window of the addition is a four-light, hinged sash with wooden grill. The cellar window does not appear to be original.

The south elevation has a four-light, hinged window with wooden grill in the cellar level; a six-over-six, double-hung window in the first level; and in the upper half-story or loft is a small opening protected by a batten shutter. The north elevation has a six-over-six, double-hung window on the lower level and a small shuttered opening in the upper half-story. The rear (west) elevation has six bays (w-d-d-w-w-d) with access to the cellar at the northeast end through bulkhead doors. The doors of the rear elevation are batten doors, and the windows are six-over-six, double-hung sash protected by louvered blinds.

The wall dividing the two original rooms on the interior is made of wide, random-width, sawn planks laid vertically, and the perimeter walls are plaster on lath. The floors are tongue-and-groove wood floors. The fireplace in the northernmost room is stuccoed and has a wooden mantel shelf, while the middle and southernmost rooms have a full wooden surround with bracketed mantel shelf.

9. North Slave Cabin, ca. 1845, Contributing

The northernmost slave cabin is a one-and-a-half story, side-gabled, double-pen, frame building resting on a brick foundation. A central interior brick chimney pierces the roof, which is clad in standing-seam metal, a replacement of the original wood shingles. The main facade has four openings (d-w-d-w), with the door openings filled with single-leaf batten doors and the window openings filled with six-over-six, double-hung sash with louvered blinds. The shed-roof rear addition and porch spanning the main facade were added before 1908 either by the Kellys or tenants on the property. The porch has chamfered wood posts, a plain wooden balustrade with rectangular-sectioned balusters, and chamfered newels. The south elevation has a six-over-six, double-hung window with louvered blinds, a window with batten door in the loft, and a carport with a shed roof supported by chamfered posts. The carport was added during the Callon period. The shed-roof rear addition has, from south to north, a six-over-six, double-hung window, a fixed six-light sash, and two single-leaf, batten

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doors. The north elevation has a six-over-six, double-hung window in both the original section and the shed-roof rear addition.

The dividing wall of the interior historic portion of the quarters is made of wooden plank while the perimeter walls are plaster on lath. The floors are tongue-and-groove wood floors, and the mantels are simple with bracketed mantel shelves. Modern kitchen and bathroom facilities were inserted into the rear shed addition about 1980.

10. Stable/Barn, ca. 1845, Contributing

The stable/barn is a frame building resting on a cement foundation and crowned by a standing-seam metal, gabled roof pierced by a central ventilator. The west facade of the stable has six openings (w-d-w-d-w-w), with the window openings having been added during the Kelly period. The second and fourth bays are filled with batten carriage doors while the other bays are window openings filled with batten blinds. The lower level of the north elevation has six shuttered window openings, and there is a large shuttered opening in the loft. The east elevation has four openings, a batten door on the north end and three shuttered windows. The south elevation has two batten doors on the lower level, above which are two shuttered window openings and a shuttered opening in the loft. Historic photographs indicate that the windows on the south elevation were also added during the Kelly period, and the physical evidence indicates that the windows on the north elevation were added at the same time.

The interior is divided into four main spaces separated by walls of widely-spaced, rough-sawn, horizontal boards. The floors are concrete that appears to date to the Kelly period. The north half of the stable contains six stalls, four of which retain their hay bins and water boxes. A single-flight, open-string stair at the southwest corner of this room accesses the full loft. The room at the southeast corner contains three milking stalls.

11. Carriage House, ca. 1845, Contributing

The carriage house is an architecturally distinctive frame building that rests on a concrete foundation and is crowned by a standing-seam metal roof, which replaces the original wood-shingled roof. The main (north) facade is divided into three bays by pilasters supporting a segmentally-arched entablature. The central bay contains a large, false, segmentally-arched, batten door while the other bays have small segmentally-arched batten doors. Only the westernmost door was originally operable. The gabled end is pedimented with a semi-

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circular louver in the tympanum. The walls and tympanum of the northern elevation are finished with flush board.

The west elevation has no openings, and the east elevation features a shed-roof addition that was made during the Kelly period. The south elevation has three double-leaf carriage doors on the lower level and a central shuttered doorway flanked by shuttered windows in the upper level. The south elevation of the shed addition also has double-leaf carriage doors.

The original section of the carriage house has only one room, with unfinished walls and ceiling. The concrete floor and the single-flight, open-string stair on the west wall leading to the loft were added during the Kelly period. The shed addition has a dirt floor.

2. Slave Privy, ca. 1845, Contributing

Located behind the southern slave quarters is the slave privy, a small frame building with side-gabled roof and brick pier foundation. The original wood-shingle roof was replaced in the first half of the twentieth century with standing-seam metal. Wooden brackets used to support gutters are intact at the eaves although the gutters are no longer in place. The only openings in the building are single-leaf, batten doors protected by bracketed shed roofs on both the west and east elevations. The interior is divided into male and female compartments, each with three seats, two sized for adults and one for children.

13. Small Barn/Storage House, ca. 1845, Contributing

East of the main house and south of the slave cabins is a small board-and-batten, gable-front barn/storage house with cement foundation. The main (north) facade and the east elevation have double-leaf, board-and-batten carriage doors. The south and west elevations feature shed-roofed additions supported by plain posts with exposed rafter tails in the eaves. The building has undergone many changes but appears to date to the ante-bellum period. It appears on the 1908 map of the property.

14. Ticket Booth, ca. 1975, Noncontributing

The ticket booth was moved onto the site and placed in the large parking lot north of the house after the National Park Service acquired the property. The small frame building rests on concrete piers and has a gabled roof clad in asphalt shingles. The entrance contains a single-leaf, wood door and windows contain metal sash.

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16. Shed, ca. 1910, Contributing

East of the stable/barn is a small board-and-batten shed resting on a concrete foundation. The shed roof is clad in corrugated metal and features exposed rafters in the eaves. The only openings are in the west facade and consist of a single-leaf batten door a small three-light window. This building was constructed by the Kellys.

17. Greenhouse, ca. 1980, Noncontributing

A non-historic, gable-front, wood-frame greenhouse is south of the small barn. The bottom half of the building is clad in plywood, while the upper half of the walls and the roof are clad in fiberglass. The main facade has Plexiglas double-leaf doors, and the interior has a gravel floor.

18. Modular Museum Storage Building, ca. 1992, Noncontributing

South of the greenhouse is a modern, modular building with flat aluminum roof and concrete foundation. The main facade has two double-leaf metal doors. This building is used for museum storage space.

19. Pole Barn, ca. 1995, Noncontributing

A four-bay, metal pole barn with side-gabled, metal roof is southeast of the main house and is not visible from the historic complex.

20. Maintenance Building, ca. 1995, Noncontributing

Next to the pole barn is the maintenance building, which is a side-gabled building clad in rough-faced, square concrete blocks. The main facade has six bays, including a band of metal windows, a four-light metal window, a glazed metal door, a four-light metal window, and two metal garage doors. A three-bay, gabled porch supported by four concrete-block piers fronts the main entrance and flanking four-light windows.

MeLrose
Name of Property

Adams County, Mississippi
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Historic Preservation
(See continuation sheet for NHL criteria, themes, and periods of national significance)

Period of Significance

1866-1946
(See continuation sheet for period of National significance)

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Byers, Jacob

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #HABS MS-61; HABS MISS, 1-NATCH.V, 12-
- recorded by Historic American Engineering 2ph/1pg Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Historic Natchez Foundation



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Melrose is eligible for National Historic Landmark status both for its architectural significance and for its associations with important events in the history of the United States during the period 1841 to 1865.

Melrose is also eligible for the National Register of Historic Places for statewide significance in the area of historic preservation (criterion A), with the period of significance being 1866 to 1946.

Architecturally, Melrose is one of the best preserved and most significant historic sites in the entire South, unusually complete and well detailed, with a full complement of outbuildings, a landscaped park, and a formal garden. The house also gains significance from its large collection of mid-nineteenth-century furnishings, many of which are documented in an 1865 inventory and in family tradition as being original to the McMurren period when the house was built. At least one marble pedestal table was added during the Davis period between 1866 and 1883, when a second inventory of the house was made. The Kelly family significantly increased the mid-nineteenth-century furnishings after 1901 with additions from the Natchez mansion Choctaw. The main house represents the height of achievement in the Greek Revival style, being one of the grandest of Natchez's many Greek Revival mansions. Melrose is cited by William C. Allen, Architectural Historian of the United States Capitol, as being "the best Greek Revival house in the South."¹ The architectural integrity of Melrose's main house and outbuildings, as well as the integrity of its suburban setting, are outstanding. The Melrose property was purchased in December 1841, and construction probably extended from 1842 to about 1850.

Historically, Melrose is significant under the theme American Ways of Life: Occupational and Economic Classes, as outlined in *History and Prehistory in the National Park System and National Historic Landmarks Program* (1987), because it represents a significant economic, social, occupational, and regional group. The original owners of Melrose, John T. and Mary Louisa Turner McMurren, were members of the South's planter aristocracy. Melrose was not a working plantation but was the suburban residence of the McMurren family and exemplifies the lifestyle of the Southern planter aristocracy from 1841, the year the McMurrens purchased the property, to 1865, the end of the Civil War.

At the end of the Civil War, in January 1866, the McMurren family sold Melrose to Elizabeth Shunk Davis, wife of wealthy attorney and planter George Malin Davis. The estate remained in the Davis family for 110 years, with George Malin Davis's grandson, George Malin Davis Kelly, inheriting the property in 1883. The Davis-Kelly family ownership is historically important because of the family's long association with the Melrose property. Mrs. George Malin Davis Kelly, the former Ethel Moore of New York City, was also one of the co-founders of the Natchez Garden Club, which established the Natchez Pilgrimage house tours and was responsible for the 1935-36 restoration of the House on Ellicott's Hill, a National Historic Landmark. The

¹ David Gleason, Mary Warren Miller, and Ronald W. Miller, *The Great Houses of Natchez* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986), vii.

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restoration of the House on Ellicott Hill was the first restoration undertaken by an organization in Mississippi. The Kellys opened Melrose in 1932 for the first Natchez Pilgrimage and it participated in every Pilgrimage until 1974, when it withdrew from Pilgrimage due to the ill health of Ethel Kelly.

ARCHITECTURE

Melrose is nationally significant as an intact ante-bellum suburban estate that includes its magnificent Greek Revival style main house, rear service yard with flanking kitchen, dairy, cistern houses, smokehouse, and privy, as well as two slave houses, slave privy, carriage house, stable/barn, and small barn/storage house. These buildings retain an outstanding degree of integrity, as does the park-like setting, which is landscaped in the naturalistic English manner. Also significant is Melrose's retention of a large portion of original furnishings. The high quality of the architecture; the outstanding integrity of both the architecture and the setting; the documentation of designer, builder, and construction; and the survival of original dependency buildings all unite to make Melrose one of the most important architectural achievements of the nineteenth century.

On December 16, 1841, John T. McMurrin, a wealthy attorney and planter, purchased 133 acres of land that would become the Melrose estate. A November 18, 1841, letter written by McMurrin's law partner, John Quitman, refers to the property that would become Melrose as the "Moore field."² Obviously, the future site chosen by the McMurrins for Melrose was simply a field when they acquired it, not a heavily forested tract or the residence site of the Moores.

By early 1843, some construction may have been underway on McMurrin's new property. On January 14, Quitman noted in a letter to his wife Eliza, double first cousin of Mary McMurrin, that he was "sorry to hear this evening a report that one of McMurrin's new buildings had been burned down."³ Shortly afterward, Eliza Quitman wrote her husband that Kent has not yet commenced work at Monmouth because "he is rebuilding McMurrin's house.....Mr. McM. insisting upon his going to work immediately."⁴

The first known reference to the name Melrose is found in an 1843 letter from Eliza Quitman to her husband that described an accident involving a carriage driven by a McMurrin slave "on his way to Melrose to

² John Quitman to Eliza Quitman, Jackson, November 18, 1841, Quitman Family Papers [hereafter cited as Quitman Papers], Subseries I.1, Folder 22, Southern Historical and Folklife Collection [hereafter cited as SHFC], University of North Carolina [hereafter cited as UNC], Chapel Hill, NC (Natchez National Historical Park [hereafter cited as NATC] History Files, Natchez, Mississippi, transcribed copy).

³ John Quitman to Eliza Quitman, January 14, 1843, Quitman Family Papers, Subseries I.1, Folder 30, SHFC, UNC, Chapel Hill, NC (NATC History Files, Natchez, Mississippi, transcribed copy).

⁴ Eliza Quitman to John Quitman, January 18, 1843, Quitman Family Papers, Subseries I.1, Folder 30, SHFC, UNC, Chapel Hill, NC (NATC History Files, Natchez, Mississippi, transcribed copy).

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take his mistress to church.”⁵ In 1844, another letter written by Eliza Quitman refers to the death of a McMurrans slave named Laura who was “buried at Melrose.” The letter notes that the McMurrans had a “graveyard already prepared and planted with evergreens...”⁶ The McMurrans family are buried at the Natchez City Cemetery and the graveyard at Melrose may always have been intended only for the burial of slaves. The location of this cemetery has not been determined.

Several factors probably influenced the McMurrans in selecting Melrose for the name of their Natchez suburban estate. Sir Walter Scott, who was probably the most popular writer in the ante-bellum South, immortalized Scotland’s Melrose Abbey in his popular novel *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, published in 1805. References to Scott were numerous in ante-bellum Natchez, and copies of his books abounded in the libraries of Natchez area planting families. McMurrans’s Scottish ancestry may also have been a factor in the choice of the Melrose name.

Although research has yet to uncover the specific dates of construction of the various outbuildings at Melrose, the construction date of the main house is well documented in the records of Andrew Brown’s sawmill. Among McMurrans’s many purchases of lumber in the 1840’s is one particular charge that indicates the house was nearing completion at the beginning of 1848. On January 31, 1848, charges to McMurrans appear in Brown’s order book for flooring that is 1 1/4 “ x 5” for specific rooms that are identified by name, including the “front rooms,” “north back room,” “south back room,” “stair way [sic],” and “saloon [sic]” as the rear first and second-story hallways are also identified in an 1883 inventory of the house.⁷

Quitman family letters provide further documentation that the house was well underway in 1847. In April 1847, Eliza Quitman wrote to her husband that “Mr. McMurrans is rapidly progressing in building his new house at Melrose, they expect to live in it in the course of the next year.”⁸ Later in September 1847, Eliza Quitman noted that Mr. McMurrans’s house “is going up finely, the brick work is nearly done.....”⁹

⁵ Eliza Quitman to John Quitman, November 20, 1843, Quitman Family Papers, Subseries 1.1, Folder 34, SHFC, UNC, Chapel Hill, NC (NATC History Files, Natchez, Mississippi, transcribed copy).

⁶ Eliza Quitman to John Quitman, May 12, 1844, Quitman Family Papers, Subseries 1.1, Folder 36, SHFC, UNC, Chapel Hill, NC (NATC History Files, Natchez, Mississippi, transcribed copy).

⁷ Andrew Brown Papers, Order Book 1844-51, entry dated January 31, 1848. University of Mississippi, Oxford. A copy of the 1883 inventory of Melrose from the probate papers of George Malin Davis is located in the Melrose site file, Historic Natchez Foundation.

⁸ Eliza Quitman to John Quitman, April 2, 1847, Quitman Family Papers, Subseries 1.1, Folder 50, SHFC, UNC, Chapel Hill, NC (NATC History Files, Natchez, Mississippi, transcribed copy).

⁹ Eliza Quitman to John Quitman, September 2, 1847, Quitman Family Papers, Subseries 1.1, Folder 53, SHFC, UNC, Chapel Hill, NC (NATC History Files, Natchez, Mississippi, transcribed copy).

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Melrose was designed and built by local builder Jacob Byers, a native of Hagerstown, Maryland. Byers was possibly familiar with the sophisticated work of Benjamin Henry Latrobe, who in 1817 had designed a courthouse for Hagerstown. The architectural details of Melrose indicate that Byers was also familiar with the builder's guides published by Asher Benjamin and Minard Lafever. According to his 1852 obituary, Byers was "an eminent architect and builder,--having made the plan and superintended the erection of the palace mansion of J. T. McMurrin, Esq., by many considered the best edifice in the State of Mississippi."¹⁰ The Andrew Brown sawmill papers support the obituary's documentation that Jacob Byers was the builder of Melrose. In February 1847, a lumber order under J. T. McMurrin's name has an additional citation that reads, "by Byers."¹¹ Census records indicate that Byers was living in Natchez by 1830, and the census lists his occupation as carpenter.¹² No Jacob Byers papers have been located and no other houses designed and built by Byers have been identified, although his name appears frequently during the 1830 to 1850 period in probate receipts for carpentry work.

The 1850 census also indicates that a 41-year-old mason from Philadelphia, Daniel Snyder, and his family were living with the Byers family at that time.¹³ No evidence exists to document that Snyder was the mason of Melrose or to rule him out entirely.

Melrose exhibits the most outstanding brickwork of any house in Mississippi and its brickwork ranks with the finest examples in the nation. The bricks, which are laid in an all-stretcher bond, are pressed brick laid with narrow, intricately tooled white mortar joints. The same mason who built Melrose almost certainly did the outstanding brickwork at the Dr. Dubs Townhouse, built in 1852. The same all-stretcher bond with finely struck joints appears only on the facade, which indicates that this fine brickwork must have been expensive. The only other known houses that might be the products of the Melrose brick mason are circa 1850 Shadyside, where the outstanding brickwork is limited to the facade and a public side elevation, and 1855 Weymouth Hall, where the bricks are unfortunately covered by multiple coats of paint.

When the McMurrins completed construction on their Melrose estate is unknown but probably occurred about 1850. Documentary research and examination of the existing buildings on the Melrose property indicate that the Melrose complex during the McMurrins' ownership included the main house, kitchen and dairy buildings, two cistern houses, brick privy, smokehouse, two detached slave houses, slave privy, stable/barn, carriage house, and a small barn/storage house. These buildings are the ones platted on a 1908 survey map. The McMurrin complex probably also included the extant ornamental cypress pond, formal garden, orchard,

¹⁰ *Mississippi Free Trader* [Natchez], June 16, 1852, p. 2.

¹¹ Andrew Brown Papers, University of Mississippi, Oxford, Day Book 1843-48, entry dated February 16, 1847.

¹² *Mississippi 1830 Census*, eds. Irene S. Gillis and Norman E. Gillis (Baton Rouge: Norman E. Gillis, 1965).

¹³ *Population Schedules, Adams County, Mississippi, 1850*, p. 8.

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wooden gates [or their architectural ancestors], and cisterns dotted throughout the grounds. Family correspondence documents a cemetery on Melrose but its location is unknown.

Melrose was considered by the McMurrans' contemporaries to be the grandest suburban villa estate in the Natchez area. As previously mentioned, the Natchez writer of the 1852 obituary of architect Jacob Byers described Melrose as "the palace mansion of J. T. McMurren, Esq., by many considered the best edifice in the State of Mississippi."¹⁴ This opinion was also shared by English-born architect Thomas K. Wharton, who visited Natchez in 1859 and wrote in his diary that General Quitman's house Monmouth was conspicuous:

"...but surpassing all, that of Mr. McMurren, looking for all the world like an English park, ample mansion of solid design in brick with portico and pediment flanked by grand forest trees stretching away on either side, and half embracing a vast lawn in front of emerald green comprising at least 200 acres [sic] through which winds the carriage drive--The place is English all over."¹⁵

Architecturally, the main house at Melrose confirms the Jacob Byers obituary in its documentation that the house was designed by a Natchez builder, because the designer was obviously well versed in the local architectural idiom. The main house at Melrose exhibits the architectural form of the grand Natchez mansion that was introduced to Natchez in 1812 with the construction of Auburn (NHL) and firmly established in 1823 with the construction of Rosalie (NHL). The grand mansion form found in Natchez, and to a lesser extent throughout the South, is based on a nearly cubical brick block, crowned by a hipped roof with railed balustrade. The grand mansion form features a monumental portico sheltering the central three bays of the main facade and a colossal colonnade extending the full width of the rear of the building. The grand mansion form established at Rosalie was repeatedly utilized for Natchez houses up to the time of the Civil War. It was duplicated at Melrose, Choctaw (1836), and the Harper House (demolished). It appeared without the roof balustrade at Magnolia Hall (ca. 1858) and with a double-tiered rear gallery at Homewood (ca. 1858) and Stanton Hall (NHL), completed in 1858. The addition of a rear colonnade converted earlier houses like Auburn and Arlington (NHL) to an approximation of the form. Circa 1818 Monmouth (NHL) and circa 1803 Gloucester each received both a giant-order portico and rear colonnade during later remodelings.

Melrose also exhibits certain architectural details that are typical of Natchez and are, in some cases, direct responses to the semi-tropical climate of the region. The staircase placed in a lateral hallway, sliding or hinged windows in a clerestory, jib windows, a dining room punkah, spacious galleries, high ceilings, and large expanses of windows are all present at Melrose and all are indicative of Natchez architecture.

¹⁴ *Mississippi Free Trader*, June 16, 1852, p. 2.

¹⁵ Thomas K. Wharton, unpublished diary, August 23, 1859, New York Public Library, New York, New York.

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Melrose's floor plan is atypical for houses exhibiting the form of the grand Natchez mansion, where the hallway typically extends the same width from the front to the back door of the house. The floor plan is also somewhat complicated for a house of the mid-nineteenth-century period, with its service hallway along the northern wall, a short hall linking the dining room to the stair hall, and the compartmentalized smaller rooms of the second-story, which have no precedent in Natchez. Melrose's floor plan is typical of grand Natchez mansions, however, in placing the staircase in a side or lateral hallway.

The most outstanding interior architectural features of Melrose are the Ionic frontispieces framing the openings between the drawing room, parlor, and library and framing the lateral stair hall. Other significant interior features include plaster ceiling medallions and the full entablature in plaster that encircles the front and rear hall ways, and the drawing room, parlor and library. The entablature is supported by pilasters that function as doorway and window surrounds. In the grand hallway at the rear, the pilasters that frame the doorways are repeated as simple wall pilasters throughout the room. The only other Natchez house that features walls divided into panels by pilasters is the front section of Richmond, built circa 1838, where Ionic pilasters support a fully enriched Grecian entablature. Melrose also features fine millwork, marble mantelpieces, oak-grained finishes, and silver-plated hardware. The dining room's mahogany punkah with carved anthemion is the region's finest punkah and is probably the nation's finest as well.

The McMurrans furnished Melrose in the height of mid-nineteenth century taste. Like other families of the Natchez planting aristocracy, they purchased fine furnishings from New York, Philadelphia, and New Orleans. They ordered fine lighting devices from Cornelius and Company of Philadelphia and covered their floors with fitted carpeting and painted canvas floor cloths. Melrose retains a large collection of its original furnishings that contribute to the significance of the property. The numerous outbuildings and landscaped grounds--complete with a formal garden and ornamental cypress pond--also retain a high degree of integrity from the period of significance.

AMERICAN WAYS OF LIFE

Melrose is nationally significant under the theme American Ways of Life: Occupational and economic Classes, because it represents the lifeways of a significant economic, social, occupational, and regional group--the Southern planter aristocracy. The period of significance extends from 1841, the year that the Melrose property was purchased by John T. McMurren, to 1865, the end of the Civil War. The suburban villa--complete with its grand Greek Revival mansion and a large collection of original furnishings, a full complement of original outbuildings, and a landscaped park and formal garden--is an outstanding representation of John T. McMurren's economic and social status as a wealthy, influential lawyer and planter with a great financial stake in slavery.

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Natchez is famous among America's historic cities for its wealth of architecturally significant buildings and grand interiors that have been preserved as evidence of the opulent life of the city's planting society during the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century. Few Southern towns have produced, imported, and then preserved such a rich flowering of architecture and decorative arts. This rich flowering is remarkable, since the town numbered only about 6,600 on the eve of the Civil War. However, it is understandable with the knowledge that Natchez was one of the richest towns per capita in the United States. The town was the commercial, cultural, and social center of the cotton belt of the Deep South. The planters not only made fortunes for themselves, but also for the merchants, bankers, and lawyers whose services they required. The wealthy Natchezians were in the upper social strata, with the planters being recognized as the aristocracy of the Cotton Kingdom. Money derived from cotton created a concentration of power and wealth in Natchez that was unparalleled by other southern towns of comparable size. Historian John Hebron Moore, in his 1988 book entitled *The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest Mississippi, 1170-1860*, described Natchez' influence in social terms:

As the oldest, largest, wealthiest, and most beautiful of Mississippi towns, Natchez was clearly unique....No rival challenged the preeminence of Natchez in social matters during the slavery era.

Natchez' [sic] peculiar social distinction was derived from a small group of enormously wealthy planters who resided on the outskirts of the town. These extremely wealthy planters in the suburbs of Natchez made the little community into the social capital of the planter class of Mississippi. Elsewhere in the state, slave-owning cotton growers tried to imitate Natchez fashions in architecture, carriages, dress, manners, and customs.¹⁶

Unlike the wealthy Natchezians, most Mississippians on the eve of the Civil War were still only one step removed from the rough-and-tumble existence of frontier life. Only a small number of people in Mississippi society could be described as aristocratic.¹⁷

Cotton production was centered principally on plantations across the Mississippi River in Louisiana and Arkansas and upriver in the broad flat lands between the Mississippi and Yazoo rivers, an area known as the Mississippi Delta. The economy of Natchez would probably have withered if the planters had moved their families to the sites of their farming activities. However, they preferred life near town to life on the plantation and chose to live in Natchez, the established commercial, cultural, and social center of the cotton kingdom. They amassed great fortunes and constructed grand town houses like Stanton Hall (HNL) and Magnolia Hall

¹⁶ National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior. *Natchez National Historical Park General Management Plan/Developmental Concept Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*. (Draft. Denver: Denver Service Center, March 1993), 19.

¹⁷ James J. Pillar, "Religious and Cultural Life: 1817-1860," *A History of Mississippi*, ed. Richard Aubrey McLemore (Jackson: University and College Press of Mississippi, 1973), I, 410-11.

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(NRHP) and magnificent suburban villa residences like Longwood (NHL) and Melrose. These villas combined the convenience of a town-house location with the serenity of a country retreat.

On December 16, 1841, a 133-acre tract of land that would become Melrose was purchased by wealthy attorney and planter John T. McMurren (1801-1867), a native of Pennsylvania who came to Natchez in the 1820's. In 1827, McMurren became the law partner of John A. Quitman (1798-1858), a New Yorker who was a Mexican War general and hero, United States Congressman, and Governor of Mississippi. In 1831, the relationship between Quitman and McMurren was further entwined when McMurren married Mary Louisa Turner, the daughter of one of Natchez's most prominent citizens, Judge Edward Turner, and double first cousin of Quitman's wife Eliza. In the same year, the Turners deeded John and Mary McMurren the residence now known as Holly Hedges, where the McMurrens lived until they acquired the Melrose property near Monmouth, the suburban estate of the Quitmans.

Established as a lawyer and married to the Natchez-born daughter of a well-to-do entrepreneur who arrived in Natchez at the beginning of the territorial period, McMurren used his profession and his marriage to launch that most lucrative of all Natchez vocations--cotton planter. Natchez was the center of the richest cotton producing land in the world. The introduction of the cotton gin in 1795 and the inauguration of steamboat service on the Mississippi River in 1811 caused the Natchez economy to boom, and planters and merchants whose fortunes were based on cotton became renowned for their opulent way of life. Natchez became the symbolic capital of the Deep South's cotton kingdom. Writer Joseph Holt Ingraham visited Natchez about 1833 and described the Natchez region where John McMurren came to seek his fortune:

A plantation well stocked with hands, is the *ne plus ultra* of every man's ambition who resides at the South. Young men who came to this country, "to make money," soon catch the mania, and nothing less than a broad plantation, waving with the snow white cotton bolls, can fill their mental vision, as they anticipate by a few years in their dreams of the future, the result of their plans and labours...As soon as the young lawyer acquires sufficient to purchase a few hundred acres of the rich alluvial lands, and a few slaves, he quits his profession at once, though perhaps just rising into eminence, and turns cotton planter...Physicians make money much more rapidly than lawyers, and sooner retire from practice and assume the planter...Ministers, who constitute the third item of the diploma'd triad are not free from the universal mania...Cotton and negroes are the constant theme--the ever harped upon, never worn out subject of conversation among all classes...Not till every acre is purchased and cultivated--not till Mississippi becomes one vast cotton field, will this mania, which has entered into the very marrow, bone and sinew of a Mississippian's system, pass away. And not then, till the lands become exhausted and wholly unfit for farther cultivation...Among northerners, southern planters are reputed wealthy. This idea is not far from correct--as a class they are so; perhaps more so than any other body of men in

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America...Incomes of twenty thousand dollars are common here. Several individuals possess incomes of from forty to fifty thousand dollars, and live in a style commensurate with their wealth.¹⁸

In 1833, about the time that writer Joseph Ingraham visited Natchez, John McMurren acquired his first plantation as a gift from his wife's parents. The Turners deeded John and Mary McMurren 645.11 acres of land and 24 slaves on what was known as Hope Farm Plantation.¹⁹ The McMurrans held Hope Farm Plantation for only three years before selling it in 1836.²⁰ The sale of the plantation may have been prompted by McMurren's election to the Mississippi House of Representatives, where he took his seat in early 1836.²¹ At a public dinner in March of the same year, McMurren resigned his seat in the legislature and cited health concerns as the reason. Also, in 1836, McMurren formed a new law partnership with James Carson.²²

In 1840, McMurren again turned his attention toward planting when he acquired a portion of the Marksville Plantation near Fort Adams in Wilkinson County.²³ Presumably his venture in planting was successful, because he soon turned his attention to establishing a suburban villa estate for his family. In 1841 McMurren purchased 133 acres referred to as "Moore's field" for the site of Melrose. Construction of the grand Melrose complex probably extended from about 1842 to 1850. The McMurrans hired a local builder to design and construct an elaborate mansion, and they apparently also took great interest in the design of the setting for their suburban villa. The estate has a formal garden and a landscaped park in the naturalistic English manner. The landscape plan also included the small cypress pond beside the driveway and a rear courtyard flanked by similar service buildings. The McMurrans furnished the main house in the height of mid-nineteenth-century style, with furniture ordered from Philadelphia and New York City, chandeliers and lamps from Cornelius and Company of Philadelphia, and painted canvas floor-cloths from England. Numerous references to shopping in the Northeast and New Orleans appear in the family correspondence. A letter from Mary McMurren to her sister Fannie Conner, dated June 8, 1854, refers to buying in Europe and shipping home.²⁴ The McMurrans acquired the objects found in the homes of many wealthy Natchez planters--French porcelain vases, Parish

¹⁸ Joseph Holt Ingraham, *The South-West. By a Yankee*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1835), II, 84-91.

¹⁹ Adams County, Mississippi, Deed Book U:21.

²⁰ Joyce L. Broussard, "Profile: John T. McMurren, The Economic and Sociopolitical Life Cycle of a Lawyer and Planter in the Old South," *Southern Seminar*, California State University, Northridge, May 4, 1992, photocopy, Historic Natchez Foundation, 46.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

²² *Ibid.* 43.

²³ *Ibid.* 53.

²⁴ Mary Louisa Turner McMurren to Fannie Conner, June 8, 1854, Lemuel T. Conner Papers, Series 2, folder 2.21, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collection, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana (NATC History Files, Natchez, Mississippi, transcribed copy).

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statuettes, oil portraits of prominent statesmen, Brussels carpeting, painted floor cloths, gilt mirrors, expensive French curtain fabrics, French mantel clocks, English engravings, and furniture manufactured chiefly in Philadelphia and New York.

A wide variety of recreational activities were available to Mississippi's wealthy planter class during the ante-bellum period, including horse racing at the famous Pharsalia track near Natchez or at private race tracks maintained at various plantations; using the spa at Washington or bathing in the mineral water at Cooper's Well near Jackson; vacationing on the Gulf Coast; and attending elaborate dinner parties or extravagant balls. The wealthy planters also spent a great amount of time exchanging informal visits with one another, which would often involve dinner or a game of cards. The theater appealed to almost all classes of Mississippi society during the ante-bellum years, and Natchez was a principal theatrical center.²⁵

The McMurrans' wealth not only enabled them to build an elegant estate, furnish it royally, and to entertain extravagantly, but it also allowed them to travel extensively. In addition to the shopping trips mentioned above, the McMurrans often traveled to Newport, Rhode Island, when the summer heat in Natchez became too oppressive. On June 29, 1851, the McMurrans' daughter Mary Eliza wrote her friend Charlotte that she expected to "enjoy the sea-bathing so much."²⁶ In 1854, the McMurrans traveled to Scotland to visit Melrose Abbey, as well as Sir Walter Scott's house, Abbotsford in Roxburghshire and Dryburgh Abbey in Berwickshire. Sometimes on their travels--in London and Newport, for instance--the McMurrans encountered other members of the Natchez aristocracy.²⁷

John McMurren began to curtail his law practice in the 1850s and devote more time to being a cotton planter. The Adams County court records indicate that McMurren's legal practice began to decline as he became increasingly involved in cotton planting. Furthermore, family correspondence dating to the 1850s documents McMurren's frequent absences from Melrose to tend to his cotton plantations. McMurren, like many others, relied heavily on credit in the expansion of his cotton planting interests. His use of credit in his planting enterprises spawned an 1855 letter to John Quitman in which McMurren inquired about rumors of war with England and confided to Quitman that "such a war would most seriously embarrass [sic], if not sacrifice me, with my debts running at heavy interest."²⁸

²⁵ Pillar, 414.

²⁶ William Nathaniel Banks, "Living with Antiques: Melrose in Natchez, Mississippi." *The Magazine Antiques*, March 1987, 653.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 655.

²⁸ John T. McMurren to John Quitman, Natchez, February 28, 1856, Quitman Family Papers, Subseries 1.1, Folder 87, SHFC, UNC, Chapel Hill, NC (NATC History Files, Natchez, Mississippi, transcribed copy).

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At the same time that McMurren was expanding his cotton empire in the 1850s, the political unrest that would lead to civil war was building. In 1856, Mary Louisa McMurren wrote her son that "politics is the theme now, eclipsing even the cotton crop" and noted that John McMurren thought that only Millard Fillmore would be able to save the ship of Union, at this period.²⁹

The McMurren family, like many of the families of the wealthy Natchez nabobs, did not approve of secession. Adams County elected pro-Union delegates to the state secession convention. John McMurren's daughter-in-law Alice described his Union sentiments in a letter where she wrote that McMurren was "a strong Unionist as long as their [sic] was hope."³⁰ Alice further noted in her diary when her husband left to join the Confederate Army that he did not improve of secession.³¹

During the early years of the Civil War, John and Mary McMurren lived at Melrose with their daughter Mary Elizabeth Conner and their daughter-in-law Alice Austen McMurren. Both their son and son-in-law enlisted in the Confederate Army.³² John McMurren, Jr., received a medical discharge due to hearing loss.³³ Son-in-law Farar Conner was injured and imprisoned before returning home to Natchez.³⁴ Daughter Mary Elizabeth died in 1864 after a long illness, by which time John and Alice McMurren had moved to the North.³⁵ In October 1864, John T. McMurren almost lost his life when a "Negro picket" fired at him at the gates of Melrose, where Union pickets were stationed.³⁶

In late 1865, Alice McMurren wrote in her diary that Melrose was to be given up.³⁷ On January 26, 1866, John McMurren sold his law office to Natchez attorney George Malin Davis and Melrose to Davis's wife Elizabeth.³⁸ Most of the household furnishings were included in the sale, and an 1865 inventory survives

²⁹ Mary Louisa Turner McMurren to John T. McMurren, Jr., September 4, 1856, Melrose, Addison Papers, Private Collection, (NATC History Files, Natchez, Mississippi, transcribed copy).

³⁰ Alice Austen McMurren to Mr. and Mrs. George Austen, Melrose, June 17, 1861, Addison Papers, (NATC History Files, Natchez, Mississippi, transcribed copy).

³¹ Alice Austen McMurren, copy of typescript of her diary, Historic Natchez Foundation, 4.

³² *Ibid.* and *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Mississippi* (Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1891), II, 580-81.

³³ Alice Austen McMurren, copy of typescript of her diary, Historic Natchez Foundation, 1861 to April 1862.

³⁴ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Mississippi*, I, 580-81.

³⁵ Mary Louisa McMurren to Mr. and Mrs. John T. McMurren, Jr., Melrose, April 7, 1864, Addison Papers, Private Collection, (NATC History Files, Natchez, Mississippi, transcribed copy).

³⁶ Mary Louisa McMurren to John T. McMurren, Jr., Melrose, January 1, 1865, Addison Papers, Private Collection, (NATC History Files, Natchez, Mississippi, transcribed copy).

³⁷ Alice Austen McMurren, copy of typescript of her diary, September 9, 1865, Historic Natchez Foundation.

³⁸ Deed Book NN, 617 and NN, 618.

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to document these original furnishings. Unlike McMurren and a number of other well-to-do Natchez planters, George Malin Davis appears to have survived the Civil War financially unscathed.

After the sale of Melrose, John and Mary Louisa McMurren moved to Woodlands with Mary Louisa McMurren's mother, Eliza Turner. In 1867, John McMurren died as a result of injury incurred while jumping from a burning steamboat, *The Fashion*. Mary McMurren continued to live at Woodlands until her death in 1891.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Melrose is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for statewide significance in the area of historic preservation (Criterion A) The 110-year stewardship of the Davis-Kelly family resulted in the continuous maintenance, and from 1901 to 1910 in the rehabilitation of the historic Melrose property. In addition, Mrs. George Malin Davis Kelly, the former Ethel Moore of New York, was one of the co-founders of the Natchez Garden Club in 1929 and the Natchez Pilgrimage in 1932, which from that time has been central to the historic preservation movement in Natchez. The period of significance extends from 1866, the year the Davis family acquired Melrose, to 1946, the year of George Malin Davis Kelly's death and the fifty-year cut-off date for National Register eligibility.

As discussed previously, on January 26, 1866, John McMurren sold both his law office to Natchez attorney George Malin Davis and the Melrose complex with its household furnishings to Davis's wife Elizabeth. A surviving inventory taken in 1865 documents the original furnishings. Unlike McMurren and a number of other well-to-do Natchez planters, George Malin Davis appears to have survived the Civil War financially unscathed.

Like McMurren, George Malin Davis was born in Pennsylvania and practiced law in Natchez. Davis came to Natchez with his mother and brothers when just a boy. His education at Oakland College in Claiborne County is documented in 1836 letters he wrote to his family in Natchez. He married Elizabeth Shunk on October 19, 1842, and she brought to the marriage several Louisiana cotton plantations, which remained in the family until the 1920s.³⁹

³⁹ Marian Kelly Ferry, interviewed at Melrose, May 4, 1976, by Ronald W. Miller, architectural historian, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, handwritten copy, Historic Natchez Foundation.

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After their purchase of Melrose, members of the Davis family apparently resided both at Melrose and at their townhouse mansion Choctaw, which they had acquired in 1855.⁴⁰ Very little information is available about the history of Melrose during the lives of George Malin and Elizabeth Davis. In the Davis family papers is a letter written from Elizabeth Davis to her daughter Julia, who was in boarding school in New York City, that mentions that Elizabeth had been adding to the plantings at Melrose.⁴¹

The Davis's only child to survive adulthood was their daughter Julia, who was sent to boarding school in New York City in 1867. While in New York, Julia met Stephen Kelly, the nephew of Charles Meeks of Natchez, and they were married in New York City in 1873. Stephen Kelly was the son of Richard Kelly, founder and president of the Fifty National Bank of New York City. In the 1900s, the bank merged with Manufacturer's Trust, which became Manufacturer's Hanover. Stephen Kelly was educated to be a medical doctor, but he never practiced. He followed his father as President of the Fifty National Bank of New York City.⁴²

Stephen and Julia Kelly came to Natchez after their wedding and presumably resided at Melrose. Family tradition maintains that the Kellys divided their time between Natchez and New York. Their son, George Malin Davis, Kelly, was born in New York in 1876 but was baptized that same year in Natchez by Episcopal Bishop Greene, whose portrait once hung in Melrose. In 1877, after the death of his wife, Elizabeth, George Malin Davis moved his office into the Melrose dairy building.⁴³

In 1883, Julia Davis Kelly contracted tuberculosis from a servant and died in Natchez. Later that same year, her father George Malin Davis also died. An inventory taken in 1883, along with the earlier inventory of 1865, provides invaluable documentation of Melrose's historic furnishings. The playhouse located on the Melrose property was built for George Malin Davis Kelly, probably before his mother's death in 1883. Upon the death of his mother and grandfather, George Malin Davis Kelly, at the age of seven, inherited a vast Natchez estate that included the Natchez mansions Melrose, Choctaw, Cherokee, and Concord, as well as several plantations in Louisiana. The deaths of the Davis family left Stephen Kelly with no family in Natchez, and he returned to New York, where his mother helped him rear his only son.⁴⁴

Stephen and George Malin Davis Kelly made at least two documented trips to Natchez after their move to New York City. They visited Melrose when George Kelly was twelve and spent the summer in Natchez

⁴⁰ Choctaw site file, Historic Natchez Foundation.

⁴¹ Marian Kelly Ferry, 1976 interview.

⁴² Marian Kelly Ferry, 1976 interview.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

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when he was seventeen. Caring for Melrose during the absence of the Kellys were a local agent and former Davis house slaves, Alice Sims and Jane Johnson. Alice Sims lived in the room above the dairy and Jane Johnson lived in the southern slave cabin. Jane Johnson lived to be 103 years old and died in 1946; Alice Sims lived to be 96.⁴⁵

In 1900, George Kelly married Ethel Moore. Shortly after they married, they took a trip to Florida, where they were joined by Ethel Kelly's mother. George Kelly proposed that the three of them go take a look at a little property he owned in Natchez, Mississippi. Neither his wife nor his mother-in-law was aware of him owning property in Natchez.⁴⁶

When the Kellys arrived at Melrose in 1901, the house furnishings were as they had been in 1883. Dust covers had been thrown over the furniture, silver was stored in a large chest placed behind the signed McMurrans sofa in the rear hallway, and china was still in the pantry. Former slaves Jane Johnson and Alice Sims had cared for the house during the family's long absence. Ethel Moore was enthralled with Melrose, and she and her husband decided during that first trip to undertake a rehabilitation of Melrose for use as an occasional home.⁴⁷ Photographs taken during the first decade of the twentieth century show a Melrose that had suffered from neglect. The kitchen building and the dairy building were perhaps the two buildings in most deteriorated condition. Photographs of the interior and exterior of the main house show less deterioration. The grounds also probably suffered from neglect.

When George and Ethel Kelly decided to rehabilitate Melrose in 1901, they did something that was almost unheard of at the time. They decided to retain the original furnishings, which were hopelessly out of fashion and only about 60 years old, and made a conscious decision to try to restore the house. Some alterations did occur, but they were few in number and were in large part made to make the house livable by the addition of such necessities as bathrooms and a furnace. That so few changes were made is remarkable considering the period in which the work was undertaken and the great wealth and young age of the Kellys. In 1910, they moved permanently to Natchez, where they became actively involved in the affairs of the town.⁴⁸

The main alteration to the exterior of the house was the over-painting of the original decorative painting scheme on the facade. This treatment is documented in photographs dating to the late nineteenth century. Not only had graining and marbling gone out of fashion, the expertise of craftsmen who did ornamental painting disappeared as painted decorative treatments ceased to be fashionable during the Eastlake and Queen Anne

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

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periods when millwork was left natural and varnished. The Kellys also gabled the balustraded roof deck atop the clerestory so that it would shed water and roofed it in standing-seam metal.⁴⁹

On the interior, the Kellys replaced the original mantel piece in the second-story, small northeastern corner room with a black marble mantel piece original to Choctaw. Bathrooms were installed in the house during the Kelly period, but the kitchen was retained in the detached outbuilding. In the basement, the Kellys installed a furnace and they paved the dirt basement floors with brick except in the two rooms with fireplaces that appear to have been originally paved with cement. The bricks for the basement came from the ruins of the mansion Concord, which burned the year that the Kellys arrived in Natchez. George Kelly used these same bricks to make walks connecting the dependency buildings. Prior to the arrival of the Kellys, the only brick walk apparently led from the small brick-paved area behind the main house to the kitchen building.⁵⁰

During the Kelly period, all of the outbuildings' original wood-shingle roofs were replaced except for the southern slave cabin. Changes to the kitchen building included the removal of the original parapet wall at the eastern gable end, probably due to deterioration; the removal of the partition wall between the westernmost two rooms of the first floor; and the bricking of the opening of the cooking fireplace, where the Kellys installed a wood-burning cooking stove with a flue in the chimney.⁵¹ Although the partition wall was removed, the Kellys retained both original doorways, even though two of the doorways were nearly adjacent and opening into an enlarged kitchen room.

Changes to the dairy building included the removal of the original parapet wall on the western gable end. By 1908, the Kellys had also installed garage doors in the western gable end and converted the western first-story room into a garage with grease pit.⁵²

Alterations to the brick privy were limited to the installation of a plumbed bathroom in one of the four compartments. A pump to provide water to the second-story of the main house was installed in the smokehouse. The stable/barn was altered by the addition of shuttered window openings and concrete flooring. The Kellys added a shed-roof addition to the northern side wall of the carriage house, as well as a concrete floor and a stair to provide access to the loft.

⁴⁹ John Callon, interviewed by Mary W. Miller, preservation director, Historic Natchez Foundation, at Natchez, October 12, 1995.

⁵⁰ Marian Kelly Ferry, 1976 interview.

⁵¹ Ronald W. and Mary W. Miller, notes on memories from 1976 inspection of Melrose, Melrose site file, Historic Natchez Foundation.

⁵² G. W. Babbitt, 1908 Survey of Melrose, photocopy, Historic Natchez Foundation.

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The northern slave house was altered either by the Kellys or the families caring for Melrose by the addition of a front shed-roof gallery and shed-roof rear addition. Both of the slave houses underwent various alterations to accommodate the needs of families who worked at Melrose and lived in the two buildings.⁵³

The Kelly family built additional dependency buildings at Melrose, which included a shed-roof poultry building with space to shelter farm equipment and at least two tool sheds, one of which has been demolished. The surviving storage shed remains and is inventoried as a contributing building.

Electricity was brought to Melrose in 1920 and was partially funded by the filming of the motion picture, *Heart of Maryland*.⁵⁴ This was the first of many movies documented to have been filmed in Natchez during the twentieth century. Melrose has played a prominent role in the history of the film industry in Natchez.

The design of Melrose represents the height of achievement in the Greek Revival style, and its nineteenth-century furnishings are museum quality. The integrity of Melrose's suburban setting and its architecture are outstanding. The high quality of the architecture, the integrity of the architecture and setting, the survival of all primary ante-bellum outbuildings, the retention of the original mid-nineteenth-century furnishings, and the primary documentary material related to the house and its occupants unite to create a nineteenth-century preservation phenomenon at Melrose that is almost unparalleled in America today. That the estate retains such an outstanding degree of integrity is due in large part to the 110-year stewardship of the Kelly family. Unlike the owners of many of the suburban estates, including Arlington, The Burn, The Wigwam, Oakland, Clifton, Ravenna, Shadyside, and D'Evereux, the Kelly family resisted the temptation to subdivide Melrose into building lots to respond to the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century needs of a growing urban population. Any loss of Melrose land or land rights during the Kelly family period was unavoidable and related to right-of-way for the railroad or public acquisition for road construction.

In addition to rehabilitating their own home, George and Ethel Kelly were involved in all aspects of civic life in Natchez, including early efforts in the field of historic preservation. In 1920, George Kelly drove the first golf ball at the dedication of the new golf course at Duncan Park, which he was instrumental in developing. George Kelly used the gift of his voice to direct the choirs at Trinity Episcopal Church and his own First Presbyterian Church; he was also the cantor on Friday nights at Temple B'nai Israel. He stood on the bluff bandstand and led the citizens of the town in singing on Armistice Day at the end of World War II, and he sang at the local rally to secure legislative support for the creation of the Natchez Trace Parkway.

⁵³ Marian Kelly Ferry, 1976 interview.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

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In 1929, Ethel Kelly was one of the founders of the Natchez Garden Club, which in 1932 established the Natchez Pilgrimage. Tourism based on historic preservation has been the cornerstone of the local economy since the first annual house tour in 1932. When the women of the Natchez Garden Club proposed the house tour, the business community was skeptical and thought that no one would come to Natchez at the height of the Great Depression to pay to see unpainted houses with run-down interiors. Nevertheless, the Natchez Garden Club held the first Pilgrimage in 1932 with 22 houses open to the public, and it was an unqualified success.⁵⁵ The Kellys opened Melrose for the first Pilgrimage and it remained opened for every Pilgrimage until 1974, when it was closed due to Ethel Kelly's ill health.

The Natchez Pilgrimage is the second oldest organized house tour in America; Virginia's Garden Week was established just a few years earlier. The Natchez Pilgrimage officially signaled the start of the heritage tourism economy of Natchez. With the money raised from the first Pilgrimages, the Natchez Garden Club purchased the dilapidated House on Ellicott Hill in 1934 and completed the restoration in 1935-36. The club's acquisition and restoration of the house came to be a landmark in Mississippi's preservation history, because the House on Ellicott Hill was the first building in Mississippi to be restored by an organization. Through the years, the Natchez Garden Club has continued the tradition of historic preservation it initiated in the 1930s. It continues to host the Natchez Pilgrimage with the Pilgrimage Garden Club, and it rescued and preserved the nationally significant William Johnson House, now owned by the National Park Service.

George Malin Davis Kelly died in 1946, but his wife Ethel continued to live at Melrose until her death in 1975 at the age of 97. The Kellys' daughter, Marian Kelly Ferry, continued her parents' tradition of preservation when she sold Melrose in 1976 with the inclusion of all its remaining acreage and most of its nineteenth-century furnishings. The Historic Natchez Foundation, founded in 1974, established the Ethel Moore and George M. D. Kelly Restoration Award to recognize outstanding achievements in restoration. When John and Betty Callon bought Melrose in 1976, they acquired one of America's most significant house complexes. The Callons undertook a rehabilitation from 1976 to 1978 and sold Melrose, again with most of its original furnishings, to the National Park Service in 1990.

⁵⁵ Katherine Grafton Miller, *Natchez of Long Ago and the Pilgrimage* (Natchez: The Bellimak Publishing Co., 1938), 24, 27,



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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Melrose, Natchez, Adams County, Mississippi

Section number 9 Page 2

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Melrose
Name of Property

Adams County, Mississippi
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 78.6 acres

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	115		
Zone	Easting	Northing	
2			

3			
Zone	Easting	Northing	
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary Warren Miller

organization Historic Natchez Foundation date February 20, 1996

street & number 108 South Commerce street telephone (601) 442-2500

city or town Natchez state MS zip code 39120

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Melrose, Natchez, Adams County, Mississippi

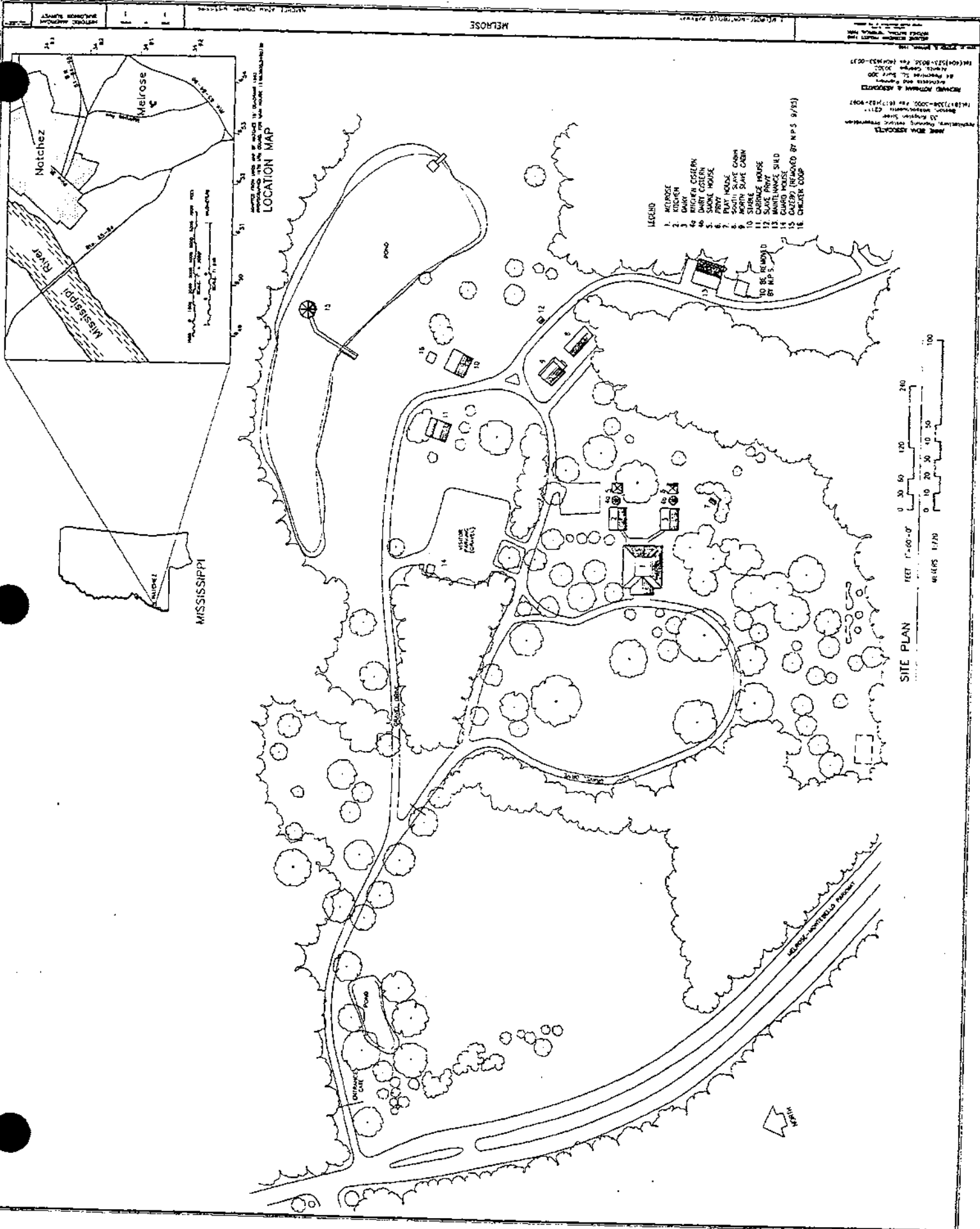
Section number 10 Page 1

Verbal Boundary Description:

See attached survey of Melrose property. The Melrose complex incorporates 78.6 acres of land.

Boundary Justification:

The original National Register nomination, which was completed in conjunction with National Historic Landmark designation in 1973, did not include all the acreage historically associated with the Melrose complex. The National Register boundaries should be enlarged from the existing 56.1 acres to include the 78.6 acres associated with Melrose historically and by National Park Service ownership. This enlargement is essential to protect the significant suburban estate character of the property and to include any historic archaeological resources as yet unidentified, including the cemetery that is documented in family correspondence but whose location remains unknown.



MELROSE

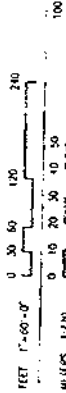
LOCATION MAP

LEGEND

- 1. KITCHEN
- 2. DINING ROOM
- 3. PARLOR
- 4. BATH
- 5. HALL
- 6. SLEEPING PORCH
- 7. SLEEPING PORCH
- 8. SLEEPING PORCH
- 9. SLEEPING PORCH
- 10. SLEEPING PORCH
- 11. SLEEPING PORCH
- 12. SLEEPING PORCH
- 13. SLEEPING PORCH
- 14. SLEEPING PORCH
- 15. SLEEPING PORCH
- 16. SLEEPING PORCH

SITE PLAN

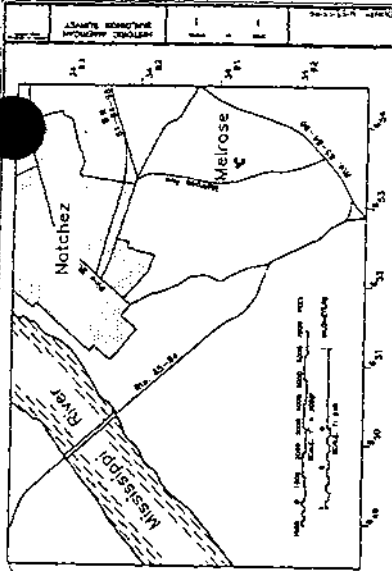
FEET 1"=60'-0"



SCALE 1/32"

JAMES BOW ASSOCIATES
 ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS
 235 North State Street
 Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70801
 (504) 388-2000 FAX (504) 388-2002

REYNOLD NORMAN & ASSOCIATES
 ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS
 44 Poydras Street, Suite 200
 New Orleans, Louisiana 70112
 (504) 571-1000 FAX (504) 571-0217



MISSISSIPPI

NATCHEZ

MELROSE





**8.5 National Register Nomination:
William Johnson House**



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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

William Johnson House

AND/OR COMMON

William Johnson House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

210 State Street

CITY, TOWN

Natchez

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Fourth

STATE

Mississippi

CODE

28

COUNTY

Adams

CODE

001

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Vacant

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mrs. James Miller Natchez Garden Club

STREET & NUMBER

Third Street P.O. Box 537

CITY, TOWN

Natchez

VICINITY OF

STATE

Mississippi

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Adams County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Courthouse Square, 100 Block South Wall Street

CITY, TOWN

Natchez

STATE
Mississippi

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

CHECK ONE

CHECK ONE

- EXCELLENT
- DETERIORATED
- GOOD
- RUINS
- FAIR
- UNEXPOSED

- UNALTERED
- ALTERED

- ORIGINAL SITE
- MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The William Johnson House is a three-bay, two-and-one-half-story townhouse set directly upon the street at 210 State Street in Natchez, Mississippi. Although altered by remodeling and recent deterioration, the Johnson House survives as a typical example of a nineteenth century middle-class dwelling in the Greek Revival style, built between 1840-1841. It is constructed of brick laid in common bond with the facade stuccoed and scored in imitation of ashlar masonry. Only the pair of pilastered dormers with six-over-six double-hung windows and the raised seam tin roof are thought to be original features of the facade. The entrance frontispiece, with its sidelights and glazed door, appears to have been installed ca. 1910, at which time the windows may have been altered. A two-tiered veranda, with iron supports on the first level and turned wooden columns on the second, was also probably attached to the front (north) elevation at this time. Behind the dwelling is a two-story kitchen comprised of two rooms per floor, each served by fireplaces in a central chimney. Each room has direct access to the outside by means of four-paneled doors painted their original Spanish brown and tan colors. A badly deteriorated catwalk connects the second-floor galleries of each building, and along with the catwalk, a rotting stair gives the only access to the upper level of the dwelling house.

The ca. 1910 remodeling which altered the facade of the William Johnson House also affected the interior trim of the first floor. A living and dining room, divided by a Colonial Revival screen of columns resting on high bookcases, occupied the forward third of the plan. A narrow hall leads from the living room to the back entrance and is flanked by four small chambers with twentieth century woodwork. Interior features of this floor which are approximate to the Greek Revival style are limited to the rear (south) six-paneled door, one window architrave with a typical ogee-and-fillet backband, and a relatively sophisticated wooden mantel designed with fluted Doric columns and a five-part frieze.

In contrast to the first floor, the upper floor retains a great deal of its original trim. Entrance to this floor is gained from the upper rear (south) gallery which is enclosed on the east by a board-and-batten screen and on the west by the addition of a modern bathroom. A small passage connects the gallery with two narrow chambers flanking it and with a spacious room occupying the northwest quarter of this floor. Perhaps used as a parlor, this room contains a fireplace with a simple pilastered mantel and doors with fielded panels. Although plain, the other chambers of this floor retain their original floors, baseboards, doors (at least two of which have their original paint), and architraves. Two spring latches, which were installed on doors to what was called the "closepress [sic]" under the attic stairs, are the most notable hardware to survive.

The structural deterioration of the William Johnson House is progressing at an alarming rate. When the house was being built, the north and south walls were not properly tied into the neighboring party wall. Settling of the house has resulted in a gap between the two structures. Rising damp has weakened the foundations and lower walls of the dwelling, and the rear gallery, stairs, and catwalk are dangerously close to collapse. The entire east wall of the two-story kitchen building has fallen, while the remaining walls are weakened by rising damp and rotten structural members.

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
PRE-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	Afro-American history
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES William Johnson (1809-1851) BUILDER/ARCHITECT William Johnson Residence (1841-1851)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

According to the words of the prolific and internationally acclaimed historian Allan Nevins, William Johnson was "one of the most remarkable and interesting American diarist."¹ He offered the first known complete chronological journals kept by a free black person in the antebellum South. Johnson's diary tells of the life and vitality of a major southern town, Natchez, Mississippi, before the Civil War. The diary illustrates the extraordinary rise of a black man from bondage to freedom, his success in business, and the complimentary respect that he received in his community. It also presents a configuration of the black-white relationships in the South on a day-to-day basis.

Prior to the discovery of Johnson's diary in 1938 and 1948, historians were limited in their knowledge of the life-style, progress and limitations of free blacks during the pre-Civil War era. The significance of William Johnson's diary is that it offers a distinct, first hand perspective of a free black man's life and sets forth another clue in the mystery of what free blacks did in the antebellum South.

BIOGRAPHY

Born a slave in 1809, William Johnson was freed at age eleven and took the name of the man who freed him and who had also freed his mother and sister earlier. During the 1820s, Johnson served as an apprentice in a barber shop belonging to his brother-in-law, James Miller, a prominent barber in Natchez, Mississippi. During the early nineteenth century, many of the leading barber shops in the South were operated by free blacks and the apprenticeship system was the principle means of training for this prestigious occupation in the black community. After completing his apprenticeship in Miller's shop, William Johnson operated his own barber shop in Port Gibson, Mississippi, and later returned to Natchez to buy his brother-in-law's establishment. In addition to purchasing James Miller's barber shop, Johnson's business enterprises soon expanded to include a bathhouse and two smaller barber shops.

William Johnson's businesses were run by both free blacks and slaves working under his direction. He received numerous applications for apprenticeship positions and his selections included children of free blacks who were placed by their parents and slaves who were placed by their masters. The ages of the young boys ranged from 10 to 15 years, and they remained apprentices until the age of 18 when they made arrangements to be journeymen in the barber's trade.

Even though barbering was Johnson's primary business and money-making venture, he was also engaged in money-lending, farming, brokering, real estate rentals and speculation. A year after he began keeping his diary, Johnson wrote of several new building constructions in which he acted as his own contractor using

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Davis, Edwin Allen and Hogan, William Ransom. The Barber of Natchez. Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1954.

Johnson, William. William Johnson's Natchez: The Antebellum Diary of a Free Negro. edited by William Ransom Hogan and Edwin Adams Davis. New York: Kennikat Press, 1958 and 1961. (continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than three

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 5	6 5, 2 6, 7, 0	3, 4 92 5, 4, 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The William Johnson House at 210 State Street is bounded on the northeast by State Street, on the northwest by a railroad station and terminal, on the southwest by a vacant lot, and on the southeast by a two-story law office building.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

William C. Allen, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

May, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

P. O. Box 571

(601) 354-6218

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Jackson,

Mississippi 39205

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Elmer B. Hilliard

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE May, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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the labor of his slaves and local white artisans. The first of these structures was built between 1836 and 1837 on property owned by his mother-in-law, Harriet Battles. The property was rented out and managed by Johnson; however, in September, 1839, the building burned down. Johnson then built a two-and-one-half-story structure on the same site between August 1840 and November 1841 which he and his family occupied, and which his present descendants now own at 210 State Street in Natchez, Mississippi.

The holding of slaves by free blacks during the antebellum period has always been an indiscernible study. Because of a lack of evidence, historians have failed to investigate thoroughly the existence of slaveholding by free blacks. Therefore, the significance of William Johnson's diary is that it presents, along with Madame Marie Therese Coin-Coin Metroyer's Yucca plantation in Melrose, Louisiana, and Thomas Day's workshop studio in Milton, North Carolina, a more enlightened picture--physical and written documentation--as to the roles of free black slaveholders in the antebellum South.

Blacks such as Johnson were restricted in their hiring and employment practices. Therefore, the services of other free blacks were secured for skilled jobs, slaves for household functions and unskilled labor, and services secured from unskilled whites who were willing to work for a black man. In the case of William Johnson, thirty-one slaves had been in his possession between the purchase of his first in 1812 until his death in 1851.

Interestingly enough, Johnson's views on slaveholding were typical of those established by white slave masters. He did not challenge the social and economic status quo of southern society and he governed himself accordingly--even in the management of his slaves. Slaves were investments and Johnson believed that reasonable labor returns could be secured by the maintenance of adequate discipline.

The respect which Johnson received from the Natchez community allowed him considerable latitude in his relationship with whites which few free blacks experienced. Johnson was allowed to rent rooms and buildings and to lend money to whites. He was also allowed to employ, and most significantly, to sue whites in court in civil suits. Nonetheless, while his business and financial dealings approached that of equality, his social contacts fell within the bounds of existing unwritten codes of non-social interaction between the races, which applied to all blacks whether free or slave.

In June 1851, a long standing boundary dispute with a man named Baylor Winn resulted in the murder of William Johnson. While on his death bed, Johnson identified Baylor Winn as his assailant, and the people of Natchez and across the state demanded that the prosecution lead to an ultimate conviction. However, under Mississippi law, as it was with most southern states, a black man, slave or free, could not enter into a law suit against or with a white man unless it was by prior legal arrangement. Therefore, after two years of litigation in two different counties, Johnson's murderer was released because the prosecution failed to substantiate the race of the defendant. At this time, no case could be brought against a white man for the murder

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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CONTINUATION SHEET

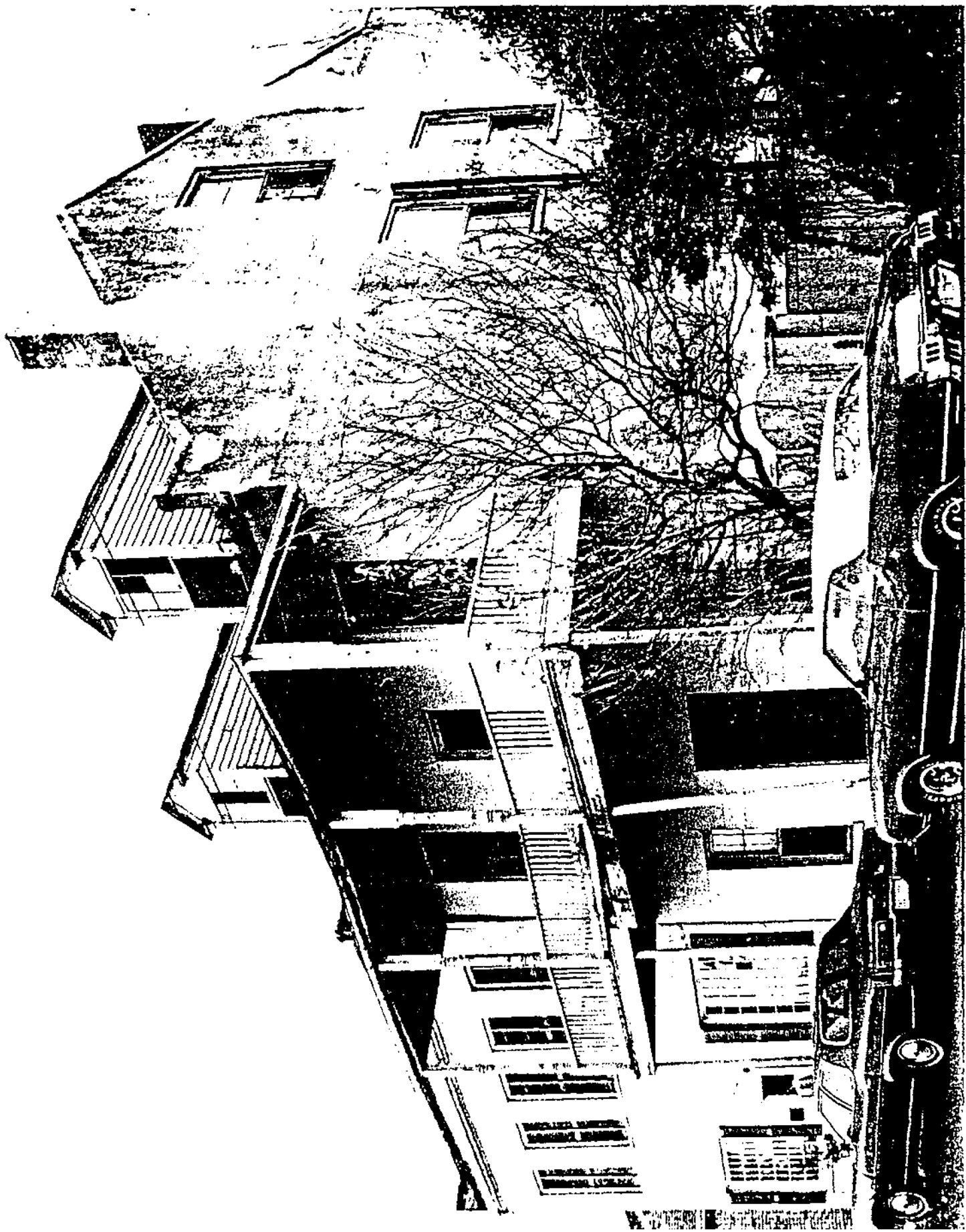
ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

of a black man. In spite of William Johnson's unusual standing, his death by murder "was avenged by the law no more than if he had been a common slave..."²

The diary of William Johnson, found in 1938 with two missing chapters that were not discovered until 1948, recorded his private observations for the years 1835-1851 in Natchez, Mississippi. Its discovery was also accompanied by a ledger and finance documents, letters, account books and four volumes of rare nineteenth century newspaper clippings. Johnson's diary illustrates the rise of a free black man to a respected position and the observations recorded in it were those of a curious and intelligent man. Because of the locale of Johnson's barber shop in the business district, it was "one of the vital institutions through which ebbed much of the everyday life of Natchez."³ In his diary, Johnson's observations and insights reflected his vitality. With curiosity that is reminiscent of that of the eighteenth century English diarists Pepys and Boswell who believed that the keeping of a record was "the most meaningful portion of life itself,"⁴ William Johnson left a much needed legacy to the history of the Afro-Americans' economic role in the antebellum South.

FOOTNOTES

1. Allan Nevins, Ordeal of the Union (New York, 1947), 1., p. 258.
2. William Johnson, William Johnson's Natchez: The Antebellum Diary of a Free Negro (Port Washington, New York, 1968), p. 55.
3. Edwin A. Davis, The Barber of Natchez (Baton Rouge, La., 1954), p. 30.
4. Ibid., p. 5.







8.6 National Register Listings in Adams County



8.6 National Register Listings

Adams County National Register Listings	Date Listed	NHL *	Location
Ailes, William, House (Bellevue)	1980		Natchez
Airlie	1982		Natchez
Anna Site	1993 *		Natchez--Pine Ridge area
Arlington	1973 *		Natchez
Auburn	1974 *		Natchez
Baynton, John, House (Williamsburg)	1974		Natchez
Bedford Plantation	1978		Natchez--Stanton area
Beechland	1982		Natchez--Kingston area
Belvidere	1980		Natchez
Brandon, Gerard, IV, House	1982		Natchez
Brandon Hall	1980		Natchez--Stanton area
Briars, The	1977		Natchez
Brumfield High School	1993		Natchez
Buie House	1983		Natchez--Stanton area
Burn, The	1979		Natchez
Carmel Presbyterian Church	1985		Natchez--Kingston area
Cedar Grove	1982		Natchez--Kingston area
Cemetery Bluff District	1980		Natchez
Cherry Grove Plantation	1983		Natchez--Kingston area
China Grove Plantation	1982		Natchez
Cliffs, The	1980		Natchez
Clifton Heights Historic District	1982		Natchez
Commercial Bank and Banker's House	1974 *		Natchez
Cottage Gardens	1979		Natchez
D'Evereux	1972		Natchez
Dicks, John, House	1982		Natchez
Dixon Building	1979		Natchez
Dubs, Dr. Charles H., Townhouse	1978		Natchez
Dunleith	1972 *		Natchez
Edgewood	1979		Natchez--Pine Ridge area
Elgin	1979		Natchez
Elizabeth Female Academy Site	1977		Natchez--Washington area
Elms Court	1977		Natchez
Elms, The	1976		Natchez
Emerald Mound Site	1988 *		Natchez--Stanton area
Eola Hotel	1979		Natchez
Fair Oaks	1976		Natchez
First Presbyterian Church of Natchez	1978		Natchez

Fort Dearborn Site	1974	Natchez--Washington area
Foster's Mound	1982	Natchez--Washington area
Glen Aubin	1985	Natchez
Glen Mary Plantation	1979	Natchez--Pine Ridge area
Glenburnie	1978	Natchez
Glenfield (Glencannon)	1990	Natchez
Gloucester	1976	Natchez
Grand Village of the Natchez Indians	1966 *	Natchez
Hawthorne Place	1979	Natchez
Henderson-Britton House (Magnolia Hall)	1978	Natchez
Hillside	1987	Natchez--Kingston area
Historic Jefferson College	1970	Natchez--Washington area
Holy Family Catholic Church Historic District	1995	Natchez
Hope Farm (Hope Villa)	1975	Natchez
House on Ellicott's Hill (Connelly's Tavern)	1974 *	Natchez
Institute Hall (Opera House)	1979	Natchez
Johnson, William, House	1976	Natchez
Keyhole House	1982	Natchez
King's Tavern	1971	Natchez
Kingston Methodist Church	1982	Natchez---Kingston area
Koontz House (Green Leaves)	1979	Natchez
Lansdowne	1978	Natchez
Laurel Hill Plantation	1982	Natchez
Linden	1978	Natchez
Lisle-Shields Town House	1979	Natchez
Longwood	1969 *	Natchez
Magnolia Hill	1979	Natchez--Kingston area
Manse, The	1979	Natchez
Mazique Archaeological Site	1991	Natchez
Meadvilla	1982	Natchez--Washington area
Melrose	1974 *	Natchez
Mercer-Laird House	1979	Natchez
Mistletoe	1973	Natchez--Pine Ridge area
Monmouth	1973 *	Natchez
Monteigne	1974	Natchez
Montpelier	1979	Natchez
Mount Olive	1980	Natchez--Pine Ridge area
Mount Repose	1979	Natchez--Pine Ridge area
Myrtle Bank	1978	Natchez
Natchez Bluffs & Under-the-Hill District	1972	Natchez
Natchez on Top-of-the-Hill Historic District	1979	Natchez
Neibert-Fisk House (Choctaw)	1979	Natchez
Oakland	1976	Natchez

Oakland Plantation (Railey House)	1989	Natchez
Oakwood	1985	Natchez--Kingston area
Patterson, Charles, House	1994	Natchez
Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church	1979	Natchez--Pine Ridge area
Pleasant Hill	1979	Natchez
Prentiss Club	1979	Natchez
Ravenna	1982	Natchez
Ravennaside	1979	Natchez
Richmond	1978	Natchez
Roos House	1979	Natchez
Rosalie	1977 *	Natchez
Routhland	1977	Natchez
Saragossa	1980	Natchez
Selma Plantation House	1989	Natchez--Washington area
Shadyside	1979	Natchez
Smart-Griffin House (Angeletty House)	1979	Natchez
Smith-Bontura-Evans House	1978	Natchez
Smithland	1987	Natchez--Kingston area
Stanton Hall	1974 *	Natchez
Texada Tavern	1979	Natchez
Tillman House	1979	Natchez
Upriver Residential District	1983	Natchez
Van Court Town House	1980	Natchez
Warren -Erwin House	1982	Natchez--Washington area
Washington Methodist Church	1986	Natchez--Washington area
Weymouth Hall	1980	Natchez
White Cottage (Twin Oaks)	1983	Natchez
Winchester House	1979	Natchez
Woodlawn Historic District	1995	Natchez
Woodstock	1989	Natchez--Kingston area

Adams County Properties

Eligible for National Register of Historic Places but Not Listed

Belmont	Natchez
<p>Early two-story example of Greek Revival Built ca. 1838</p>	
Ingleside	Natchez--Washington area
<p>Home of horticulturist Thomas Affleck Built ca. 1841</p>	
Ormonde	Natchez
<p>Rare Natchez example of Craftsman style ca. 1920</p>	

Propinquity Home of General Leonard Covington Built ca. 1800	Natchez--Washington area
Providence Rare Natchez example of Craftsman style Built ca. 1915	Natchez
Roseland Plantation House Built ca. 1800	Natchez
Springfield Plantation house Built ca. 1855	Natchez
Sweet Auburn Home of Mississippi historian John Wesley Monette Built ca. 1840	Natchez--Washington area

Adams County Districts

Eligible for National Register of Historic Places but Not Listed

- Downriver Residential Historic District (South of Orleans Street; includes South Union Street, South Commerce Street, etc.)
- Eastern Suburban Historic District (East of Martin Luther King Street; includes Homochitto Street, Washington Street, State Street, and Main Street)
- Arlington Heights Historic District (Includes Arlington Avenue and St. Charles Avenue)
- Brumfield School Historic District (Neighborhood surrounding Brumfield School on St. Catherine Street)
- Minorville Historic District (Neighborhood across Martin Luther King Street from Woodlawn Historic District)

Endangered National Register properties in Adams County

- Meadvilla--abandoned and deteriorated
 - Important property due to associations with Cowles Mead, secretary of the Mississippi Territory and B. L. C. Wailes, nineteenth-century historian; erved as tavern on the Natchez Trace and stagecoach stop for town of Washington
 - Privately owned
- Smithland--poorly maintained and deteriorated
 - Privately owned

National Register properties that have been delisted or will be delisted in Adams County

Assembly Hall	burned
Murphy, Patrick, House	burned
U. S. Marine Hospital	burned

National Register Properties in Other Counties or Parishes Important to Interpretation of Natchez History

Canebrake	Concordia Parish, Louisiana
Working plantation with overseer's house and slave quarters	
Endangered due to deterioration	

Taconey	Concordia Parish, Louisiana
Working plantation house with no integrity of setting	
Birthplace of former slave John R. Lynch, who became national political figure during Reconstruction	
Owned by City of Vidalia	

Winter Quarters	Tensas Parish, Louisiana
Working plantation house that belonged to Nutt family of Longwood in Natchez	

Wyolah	Jefferson County, Mississippi
Working plantation with dependency buildings including slave quarters, kitchen, commissary, corn crib, doctor's office, barn, carriage house	
Endangered due to deterioration	

Properties in Other Counties or Parish that are Eligible for Listing in National Register of Historic Places but Not Listed

Mount Locust	Jefferson County, Mississippi
Early example of plantation architecture in Lower Mississippi Valley	
Owned and interpreted by National Park Service	



**8.7 Sites Associated with
African-American History in Natchez**



8.7 Sites Associated With African-American History In The Natchez Area

Natchez on-Top-of-the-Hill Historic District--listed 1979

Robert Smith House--107 South Broadway Street
Built 1851-52 for Robert Smith, free African American who came to Natchez in the 1830s and operated a hack business until his death in 1858; friend of William Johnson

William Johnson House--210 State Street
Built 1841 as the home of free African American barber and diarist William Johnson

McCallum Building--212 State Street
Built 1839 and shares a common wall with William Johnson House; used as a "Negro Boarding House"

Mackel Funeral Home--300 Martin Luther King Street
Oldest African-American funeral home in Natchez. The Mackel family is descended from Robert Wood, mayor of Natchez during Reconstruction

Site of Nelson Fitzhugh House--312 Martin Luther King Street
Nelson Fitzhugh House stood on the northwest corner of the intersection of Martin Luther King and Homochitto Streets; Nelson Fitzhugh's son was indicted for murdering Byron Johnson, son of diarist William Johnson

Kyle House--617 High Street
Built ca. 1810 as the residence of free African American Nancy Kyle; only building associated with free African Americans dating to the territorial period in Mississippi; Nancy Kyle was the companion of white Natchez merchant Christopher Kyle, the father of her daughter Caroline

St. John's United Methodist Church--323 Martin Luther King Street
Built 1886-92 as a Baptist Church, acquired by the African American St. John's United Methodist Church in 1915

Old Natchez Post Office--301 Main Street
Built 1905; enlarged 1925-46; on site of the barber shop of William Johnson; home to the museum operated by the Natchez Association for the Preservation of Afro-American Culture

Dumas Drug Store--707-13 Franklin Street

Built 1904-10; enlarged 1910-25; the Dumas family were influential and included doctors and pharmacists; Dr. Albert Woods Dumas and Dr. Alexander W. Dumas were licensed to practice medicine in Adams County in 1899.

Zion Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church--228 Martin Luther King Street

Built 1858 as the Second Presbyterian Church; purchased in 1866 by the Zion Chapel A.M.E. Church during the pastorate of Hiram R. Revels, who left the pulpit of the church to become a U. S. senator and the first African American to serve in either house of the U. S. Congress; later became first president of Alcorn State University.

Nellie Jackson's House--416 North Rankin Street

Well known house of prostitution operated by long-time Natchez madam Nellie Jackson

Rhythm Club Marker on Broadway Street in Bluff Park

Marker honors the memory of the 209 Natchez African Americans who died in a fire at the Rhythm Club night club in 1940

Richard Wright Historic Marker on Broadway Street in Bluff Park

Marker honors noted writer Richard Wright, author of *Black Boy* and *Native Son*, who was born in Adams County in 1908 and spent his early childhood on Woodlawn Street in the home of his grandparents

Properties in the Natchez on-Top-of-the-Hill Historic District that retain dependency buildings associated with the domestic life of slaves:

Robert Smith House--107 North Broadway Street
servants wing

Banker's House--107 South Canal Street
servants wing

Stanton Hall--401 High Street
servants wing

McMillan Town House--600-02 Jefferson Street
two-story kitchen building

Rosalie--100 Orleans Street
two-story kitchen building

John Smith House--212 North Pearl Street
two-room frame dependency building

Myrtle Terrace--310 North Pearl Street
two-story brick carriage house

- Dr. Dubs Townhouse--311 North Pearl Street
two-story kitchen building
- Magnolia Hall--215 South Pearl Street
two-story, L-shaped kitchen wing
- Greenleaves--303 North Rankin Street
two-story kitchen building
- Texada--222 South Wall Street
two-story kitchen building
- Van Court Townhouse--510 Washington Street
two-story kitchen building
- Quegles House--600 Washington Street
two-story kitchen building

Holy Family Catholic Church Historic District--African-American neighborhood

Holy Family Catholic Church--8A Orange Avenue
Oldest African-American Catholic Church in Mississippi; built 1894 and designed by Natchez builder W. K. Ketteringham; the finest Victorian Gothic Revival building in Natchez; complex includes an 1894 convent, a 1906 school auditorium and cafeteria, a ca. 1895 Rectory, and a post-World War II school building.

John Banks House--9 St. Catherine Street
Built 1886-92 in Queen Anne style; remodeled 1904-10 in Colonial Revival style, home of Dr. John Banks, Natchez's first African-American doctor, who was licensed to practice in Adams County in 1889; Dr. Banks hosted Booker T. Washington when he made his 1904 visit to Natchez.

African-American school--16A Bowles Alley
Labeled as a school on the 1892 Sanborn Insurance Map; this is one of only a few surviving nineteenth-century school buildings that served African Americans

Wharlest Jackson Elks Lodge--17 Old D'Evereux Street
Built ca. 1880 as a private home; later in the 1950s became home, office, and hospital of Dr. Herman Stephens, an African American doctor; became an elks lodge named to honor Wharlest Jackson, an employee of Armstrong Tire and Rubber Company in Natchez who was killed in a truck explosion during the Civil Rights movement in Natchez.

Sadie V. Thompson House--26 St. Catherine Street

Queen Anne house dating to 1886-1892; home of prominent Natchez African American educator Sadie V. Thompson, for whom the city's second African-American high school (1953) was named; previously the home of African-American educator George Washington Brumfield.

Rhythm Club Site--1A St. Catherine Street

Site of the Rhythm Club, where a 1940 fire killed 209 Natchez African Americans.

Parsonage of Zion Chapel A.M.E. Church--15 St. Catherine Street

Built by 1892; ca. 1890; vernacular cottage with elements of the Italianate and Queen Anne styles; long-time parsonage of Zion Chapel.

Woodlawn Historic District--African-American neighborhood

Site of Holy Family Catholic Church prior to 1894--29 Beaumont Street

Rucker House--13 Claiborne Avenue

Built ca. 1890; remodeled ca. 1900; home of the locally prominent Rucker family.

Aaron and Queen Victoria Jackson House--23 Garden Street

Built ca. 1880 for former slaves Aaron and Queen Victoria Jackson, whose descendants still own the house and have an archive of family documents; Aaron Jackson was a veteran of the Union Army and Queen Victoria Jackson was the former slave of Dr. William Newton Mercer, one of the South's wealthiest planters.

St. Peter's Baptist Church--207 Parker Street

St. Peter's Baptist Church was built in 1891 but extensively remodeled.

Prince Street School--102 Prince Street

African-American school building dating to 1913; built by the philanthropic Carpenter family for African-American students.

King Solomon Baptist Church--6 Spring Street

Built 1908; extensively remodeled.

Site of Chapel of Trinity Episcopal Church--913 North Union Street

Site of an African-American chapel sponsored by Trinity Episcopal Church.

Robert and Sarah Mazique Owen House--1002 North Union Street

Built in Queen Anne style by 1904; remodeled in colonial revival style, 1904-10; home of Robert Owen, a president of Natchez College, and his wife Sarah, who was a member of the Mazique family. The Mazique family were a prominent African-American planting family.

Natchez College--1010 North Union Street

Natchez College was an African-American college founded in 1885 by the Baptist Church; the school operated until the early 1990s. Anne Moody, who wrote *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, attended the college. The college campus includes the 1904 Huddleston Memorial Chapel (remodeled 1925-46), the 1930 Women's Auxilliary, the 1925-46 President's House, the 1946-50 Owen Administration Building, the 1946-50 Thompson swimming pool, the ca. 1960 music hall, the ca. 1965 Men's Dormitory, and the ca. 1965 Child Development Center. The college is empty and its future is unknown.

Clarence "Bud" Scott House--1011 North Union Street

Built 1910-25; home of well known jazz musician Bud Scott, who is often listed as a New Orleans jazz musician since he performed frequently in New Orleans.

Richard Wilson House--20 East Woodlawn Street

Built ca. 1900; home of Richard Wilson, whose grandson Richard Wright was a noted twentieth-century writer. Author of *Native Son* and *Black Boy*, Wright lived in the house during his pre-school years.

Upriver Residential Historic District--includes African-American neighborhoods

Beulah Baptist Church--710 B Street

Built 1912; extensively remodeled.

Rose Hill Baptist Church--603 Madison Street

Built 1908; oldest African-American Baptist congregation in Mississippi; shares common 1830s ancestry with First Baptist Church

Dumas House--729 Martin Luther King Street

Built ca. 1895; first the residence of Dr. Albert W. Dumas, prominent African-American physician and later the residence of George F. West, the city's first African-American alderman after Reconstruction. Alderman West's widow continues to reside in the house.

Dorcas Walker House--1 New Street

Built 1899; home of African-American Dorcas Walker, who produced two remarkable daughters, who were also the daughters of Jewish merchant Charles Moritz; One daughter married Dr. Robert W. Harrison, a prominent Natchez dentist and the other daughter became Mississippi's first black social worker. Dr. Robert W. Harrison Jr. became the first African American to serve on the Mississippi College Board.

Properties in the Upriver Residential District that retain dependency buildings associated with the domestic life of slaves:

Riverview--47 New Street

two-story kitchen building

The Burn--712 North Union Street

two-story kitchen building

Melmont--715 North Rankin Street

two-story kitchen building

Lisle-Shields Townhouse--701 North Union Street

one-story dependency buildings

Shadyside--107 Shadyside Street

two-story kitchen building

Cemetery Bluff Historic District

Natchez National Cemetery

Grave of Wilson Brown, former slave and winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor for valor at the Battle of Mobile Bay during the Civil War.

Natchez City Cemetery

Location of graves of jazz musician Bud Scott, diarist William Johnson, and others.

U. S. Marine Hospital site--now incorporated within the Natchez City Cemetery; site of the founding of Jackson State University as Natchez Seminary in 1877; later became Natchez Charity Hospital and was the place of birth, illness, and death for the majority of African-American citizens of Natchez until its closing about 1980.

Natchez Bluffs and Under-the-Hill Historic District

Natchez landing--the point of entry of thousands of slaves who arrived by flat boat, keelboat, and steamboat.

Sites in the Natchez city limits outside National Register districts that are significant for African-American History

Dunleith--84 Homochitto Street

Built 1856; town home of slave John R. Lynch, who was the house servant of A. V. Davis; Lynch was the first African American to hold public office in Mississippi, Speaker of the Mississippi House of Representatives, a United States Congressman, and author.

Emile Angelety House--180 St. Catherine Street

Built ca. 1850; long-time home of African American contractor Emile Angelety; home to Mostly African Market and Project Southern Cross, an enrichment program for African-American high school students.

Louis Winston House--67 St. Catherine Street

Built ca. 1890 for African American lawyer Louis Winston, who established the "Colored Building and Loan Association" that financed the construction of many houses for former slaves in the late nineteenth century.

Watkins Street Cemetery--1300 Watkins Street

African-American cemetery with graves dating primarily to the first half of the twentieth century.

Brumfield High School--100 Saint Catherine Street

Built 1925; first black high school for the City of Natchez; named for educator George Washington Brumfield; renovated into 28 apartments to provide affordable housing for lower income tenants

Forks of the Road Slave Markets

Site of the slave markets at the fork formed by the intersection of Liberty Road, D'Evereux Drive, and St. Catherine Street; one of the two largest slave markets in the South (the largest being at Algiers in New Orleans).

Magnolia Vale and neighborhood

Suburban estate at the northern extremity of Natchez Under-the-Hill; the Union Army built "contraband" barracks to house newly freed slaves north

of Magnolia Vale below the bluff. The barracks are depicted on the 1864 Map of the Defences of Natchez and Vicinity.

Properties in the city limits that retain dependency building associated with the domestic life of slaves:

Concord--Concord Avenue
two-story dependency building is all that survives of the mansion
Concord

Oakland--9 Oakhurst Drive
two-story dependency and basement dairy

Dunleith--84 Homochitto Street
two-story dependency with kitchen, laundry, and slave rooms
poultry house
greenhouse

D'evereux--160 D'Evereux
two-story dependency building

Monmouth--36 Melrose Avenue
two-story kitchen building

Melrose--136 Melrose Avenue
two-story kitchen and dairy buildings; two slave houses, and
carriage house, stable, etc.

Linden--1 Linden Place
two-story kitchen building

Auburn--400 Duncan Avenue
two-story kitchen building and one-story dairy

Elms Court--42 John R. Junkin Drive
basement laundry or milk room, one-story frame house that was
probably an original slave dwelling

Hawthorne--Hawthorne Place
several one-story dependency buildings

Hope Farm--147 Homochitto Street
two-story dependency building

Lansdowne--1323 Martin Luther King
two, two-story dependency buildings, one of which was the
kitchen; plantation cemetery that includes the graves of slaves

Arlington--1320 John Quitman Parkway
two-story dependency building; barn with milk troughs

Longwood--140 Lower Woodville Road
two-story dependency building
portrait of slave named Frederick who first belonged to Rush Nutt
and later to his son Haller Nutt; Frederick worked as a driver or
black overseer when he was younger and probably became a house
servant at Longwood in his old age.

Monteigne--200 Liberty Road
two-story dependency building

Homewood--Martin Luther King Street
Remodeled two-story dependency is all that survives of
Homewood.

**Properties in Adams County, outside the city limits of Natchez, that are significant
for African-American history**

Cleremont Baptist Church--Cemetery Road
Built ca. 1900; African-American church distinguished by its architectural
integrity.

Glen Aubin--Rounds Plantation Road
Built ca. 1835; enlarged ca. 1845; post-Civil War home of Charlie and
Charity Rounds, former slaves of William Newton Mercer on his
Ormonde Plantation.

China Grove--White Apple Village Road
Built ca. 1870; home of August and Sarah Mazique, former slaves who
founded a post-Civil War planting dynasty in southwest Adams County.

Oakland Plantation--Lower Woodville Road

Built ca. 1825; late nineteenth century home of Alexander Mazique, son of August and Sarah Mazique; the Mazique family were slaves at Oakland Plantation before the Civil War

Properties in Adams County, outside the city limits of Natchez, that retain dependency buildings associated with the domestic life of slaves

Cherry Grove--Kingston Road

Numerous dependency buildings associated with plantation life before and after the Civil War

The Forest Plantation Cemetery--Highway 61 South

The cemetery contains the graves of two slaves of the Dunbar family who resided at The Forest.

Magnolia Hill--Upper Kingston Road

One-story outbuildings including slave hospital, kitchen

Cedar Grove--Kingston Road

L-shaped kitchen building

Woodstock--Carmel Church Road

Two-story log kitchen building

Elgin Plantation--Elgin Plantation Road

Two-story brick building

Fair Oaks--Highway 61 South

One-story brick kitchen building

Gloucester--Lower Woodville Road

Two, two-story dependency buildings (one the kitchen and the other the billiard room, each with slave rooms above).

Laurel Hill Plantation

Two, two-story dependency buildings

Mount Olive--Airport Road

One-story milk house

Mount Repose--Martin Luther King Street
Octagonal dairy building

Saragossa--Old Lower Woodville Road
Slave house dating to early nineteenth century.

Properties in neighboring counties or parishes that are significant for African-American history or have outbuildings associated with the domestic life of slaves

Jefferson County

Oak Grove--Highway 553
slave cabin

Wyolah
two slave cabins, commissary, kitchen building, corn crib, barn,
and carriage house.

Richland--Highway 553
one-story kitchen building

Concordia Parish, Louisiana

Taconey Plantation
Birthplace of slave John R. Lynch who became a famous
nineteenth-century politician; Lynch was the house servant of A.
V. Davis who owned both Taconey in Concordia Parish and
Dunleith in Natchez; Lynch was the first African American to hold
public office in Mississippi, Speaker of the Mississippi House of
Representatives, a United States Congressman, and
author.

Canebrake Plantation
Plantation owned by Gerard Brandon during the 1850s. The
plantation retains the only original overseer's house and slave
cabins in the Natchez region. The cabins are very deteriorated.

Tensas Parish

Winter Quarters Plantation
Louisiana plantation of Natchez planter Haller Nutt of Longwood.
Folk art painting at Longwood of Winter Quarters depicts house

and slave cabins. The interrelation of the plantation and suburban estate properties of the Natchez planter elite can be best interpreted at these two sites, at Dunleith and Taconey, and Brandon Hall and Canebrake.

