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Natchez National Historical Park  
Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop  
**Historic Structure Report**



June 2006

Historical Architecture, Cultural Resources Division

Southeast Regional Office

National Park Service



The historic structure report presented here exists in two formats. A traditional, printed version is available for study at the park, the Southeastern Regional Office of the NPS (SERO), and at a variety of other repositories. For more widespread access, the historic structure report also exists in a web-based format through ParkNet, the website of the National Park Service. Please visit [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov) for more information.

**Cultural Resources  
Southeast Region  
National Park Service  
100 Alabama St. SW  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
(404) 562-3117**

2006  
Historic Structure Report  
Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop  
Natchez National Historical Park  
Natchez, MS

LCS#: 091788

Cover image: Fort Rosalie Gift Shop, c. 1941

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## Foreword

We are pleased to make available this historic structure report as part of our ongoing effort to provide comprehensive documentation for the historic structures and landscapes of National Park Service units in the Southeast Region. This report was researched and developed by Tommy H. Jones, cultural resource specialist in the Regional Office. Special thanks to Kathleen Jenkins, acting superintendent of Natchez National Historical Park, for her interest in and support of this project and to the Historic Natchez Foundation for providing critical documentation on the building. We hope that this study of the Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop will prove valuable to park management in ongoing efforts to preserve the building and to everyone in understanding and interpreting this unique resource.

Dan Scheidt  
Chief, Cultural Resources Division  
Southeast Regional Office  
June 2006



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# Management Summary

Built late in 1940 or early in 1941, the Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop was part of a larger addition to Natchez National Historical Park in 2005. Currently used as a restaurant, the Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop is a log building in a prominent location on the edge of Natchez' central business district. The park commissioned this study to assess the building's condition and evaluate alternatives for treatment and use.

## Historical Data

Historical research for this project was limited but has established a construction date for the building late in 1940 or early in 1941. City directories, deed conveyance records, and Sanborn Fire Insurance maps have been thoroughly searched. The park provided a number of undated newspaper articles, including an obituary for the developer of Fort Rosalie as a tourist attraction. These provide crucial details, but additional research is needed to fully document the reconstruction of Fort Rosalie.

## Architectural Data

The Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop is a one- story, two- pen, log structure set on wooden and rock piers. The building encompasses less than 840 square feet of floor space. Original fenestration has been altered, and all but one window sash and one interior door have been replaced. The original wood- shake roofing has also been replaced with metal roofing.

There have been major alterations to the larger, northern pen, including construction of an entirely new floor system on top of the old and erection of a partition that divides the pen in half (the southern

pen was historically partitioned). Although sheets of plywood paneling and fiberboard cover the walls and ceilings, most if not all of the historic interior finishes remain intact, if hidden from view.

The lower three or four courses of the log walls are in poor condition from rot and termites and will require replacement but the remainder of the logs and most historic wall and roof framing remains in good condition. Although it could not be thoroughly inspected, as much as half of the original floor system appears to be badly deteriorated and will require rebuilding.

## Treatment and Use

Reconsideration of the Preferred Alternative in the GMP is highly recommended. The decision to remove the building from its historic location should be reversed and the building rehabilitated in situ. The proposed development plan (Figure 49) proposes nothing more than clearing the site of the Gift Shop, which seems needless considering that the Steitenroth House as well as the retaining walls along Canal Street south of the Gift Shop are proposed for retention. Constructed as a sort of entrance or visitors center for the reconstructed Fort Rosalie, the building is situated in such a way that it does not intrude on the integrity of the site as a whole and is in a zone that has already been selected for rehabilitation and adaptive use.

## Use

On- site adaptation of the building for "utility storage" has been recommended, although that would diminish opportunities for interpreting the building. If modern partitions were removed, the building could also provide excellent exhibit space, perhaps for interpretation of early twentieth

century Natchez and the genesis of its tourist industry in the 1930s. The nature of the building's construction would make it difficult to adapt the structure as a climate- controlled facility for display of museum artifacts, but the building could easily accommodate display of modern exhibit panels that could greatly expand the park's interpretation of Natchez.

Alternatively, a visitor contact station could be established in the Gift Shop, which could be adapted for that use, including the addition of handicapped- accessible facilities. This could be done with far less impact on the historic structure than would be the case if the Steitenroth House were adapted in a similar manner.

Among the options for use that might also be considered would be a return of the building to its original use, which was a gift shop for the c. 1940 Fort Rosalie tourist attraction. The building's location directly on Canal Street at the edge of the Fort Rosalie site would give the NPS and Eastern National a highly visible location on one of downtown Natchez's busiest thoroughfares.

## Treatment

As with many historic buildings, repairs and rehabilitation for adaptive use is the recommended treatment approach. Given the simplicity of the Gift Shop, repairs and rehabilitation should not be complicated or extraordinarily expensive, but the extent and nature of necessary changes and alterations will be determined by the new program of use for the building. In some instances, rehabilitation might include restoration of certain elements such as the windows if restoration of the original fenestration would benefit the new use.

## Summary of Recommendations

### Preservation

- remove chinaberry trees, stumps, and yucca from around front and southern end of building
- install monitors for termite infestation and treat as necessary
- remove earth from against rear of building and eliminate all wood- to- ground contact

- clear crawl space of debris and construct new piers as needed
- establish drainage system that will move rainwater quickly away from the building
- replace first three or four logs around perimeter of building and elsewhere as necessary
- repair floor systems as necessary
- repair and repaint metal roofing

### Rehabilitation

- replace electrical and plumbing systems to meet needs of new use
- install HVAC equipment in attic above store room
- install fire detection and suppression systems
- remove modern partitions, modern paneling, and added floor system from large pen
- remove fiber board on walls and ceiling and modern floor coverings from small pen
- if necessary, reconfigure south pen for new use, but maintain historic opening between the two pens
- establish handicapped access from parking lot to the rear doors; preserve front steps

## Administrative Data

### Locational Data

*Building Name:* Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop; originally called Fort Rosalie Gift Shop, but numerous subsequent names related to the building's changing use; presently known as Fat Mama's Tamales.

*Location:* 500 S. Canal Street, Natchez, MS

*LCS Number:* 091788

*Structure Number:* HS- 42

### Related Studies

Beha, Ann, and Associates. *Natchez National Historical Park, Natchez, Mississippi, Historic Resource Study.*

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1996.

Denver Service Center. *Draft General Management Plan, Development Concept Plan, and Environmental Impact Statement*. National Park Service, March 1993.

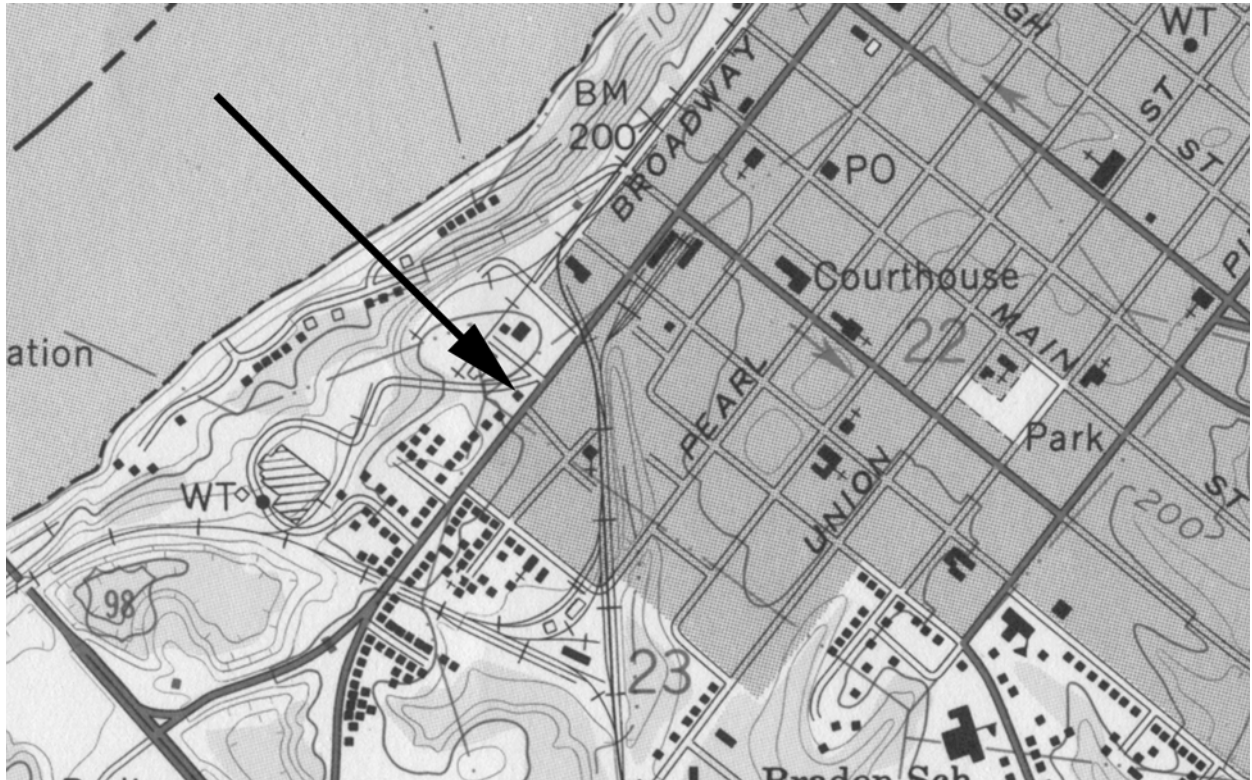
## Cultural Resource Data

*National Register of Historic Places:* The Mississippi SHPO determined the building to be eligible for the

National Register of Historic Places, with local significance. The building is within the boundaries of the Natchez Bluffs and Under- the- Hill Historic District.

*Period of Significance:* c. 1941- 46

*Proposed Treatment:* Rehabilitation and adaptive use



**FIGURE 1.** United States Geologic Survey map, 1976, with location of Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop, left of center, indicated by long arrow.



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# Historical Background and Context

The Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop was part of a reconstruction of the historic Fort Rosalie by a local resident around 1940. A short-lived venture meant to capitalize on the country's budding tourist trade, the reconstructed fort ceased operations during World War II and most of it was allowed to deteriorate. After the war, the building which had been the reconstructed fort's gift shop was adapted for residential use. Vacant in the early 1950s and through most of the 1960s, the building served a variety of uses before being rehabilitated as a restaurant, its current use, in 1989.

## Historic Fort Rosalie

Constructed in 1716, two years before the founding of New Orleans, the historic Fort Rosalie marked the beginning of permanent white settlement in the lower Mississippi valley. The palisaded fort stood on a high bluff at the southern end of what is now downtown Natchez, with a church, rectory, and warehouses located on the plateau below the fort. In

1729, the Natchez Indians massacred many of the French settlers and burned most of the fort, and not until the French destroyed the Natchez tribe in 1731 was the fort rebuilt.<sup>1</sup>

In 1763, the Treaty of Paris ended the Seven Years War and ceded control of the east bank of the Mississippi, except New Orleans, to the British. As part of British West Florida, Fort Rosalie was renamed Fort Panmure, and continued as a frontier outpost for the British until the Natchez District was seized by the Spanish in 1779. In 1795, by the Treaty of San Lorenzo, Spain agreed to transfer the territory that would become Alabama and Mississippi to the United States, although the Spanish did not evacuate Fort Rosalie until March 1798.

In 1799, Adams County was established in the southwestern part of the new territory with Natchez as county seat, and over the next two decades Fort

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1. Ann Beha Associates, *Natchez National Historical Park, Natchez, Mississippi, Historic Resource Study* (NPS, 1996), p. 12.

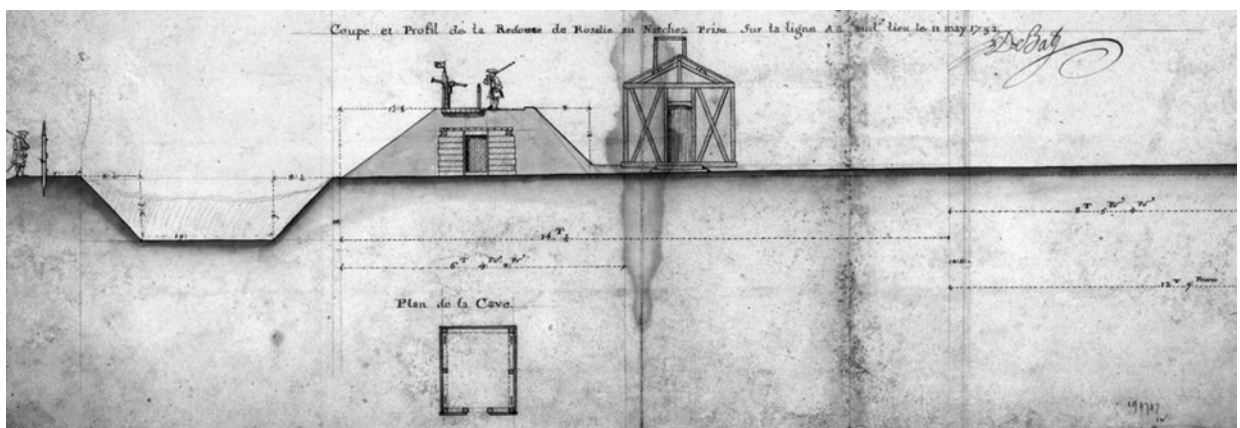


FIGURE 2. Part of a profile of Fort Rosalie after it was rebuilt in 1732, drawn by Alexandre de Batz. (Library of Congress)

## Historical Background & Context

Rosalie ceased to be used as a fortification. The blockhouse was moved into the town of Natchez in 1806 to serve as a jail. When the famous naturalist John James Audobon visited the area in 1820, he noted that the town gallows were located at the fort

and that the old moat was being used for burial of slaves. That same year, construction began on Rosalie, the great Classical Revival mansion built by Peter Little just northeast of the site of the old fort. The fort itself was largely abandoned and overgrown, so that when Joseph Holt Ingraham, a noted traveler and prolific author in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, saw it in the 1830s, he wrote of “the romantic ruins of Fort Rosalie, now enameled with a rich coating of verdure.”<sup>2</sup>

A map of Natchez in 1864 (Figure 3) indicates that the site of the fort itself remained essentially undeveloped, but that as many as six buildings had been built along the northwest side of Canal Street and the southwest side of what was once Compress Street.<sup>3</sup> Some or all of these buildings may have been residences, and one may even be the present Steitenroth House, which until recently was used as the park administrative headquarters. It is also possible that one or more of the buildings shown along Compress Street were warehouses or industrial predecessors of the large cotton

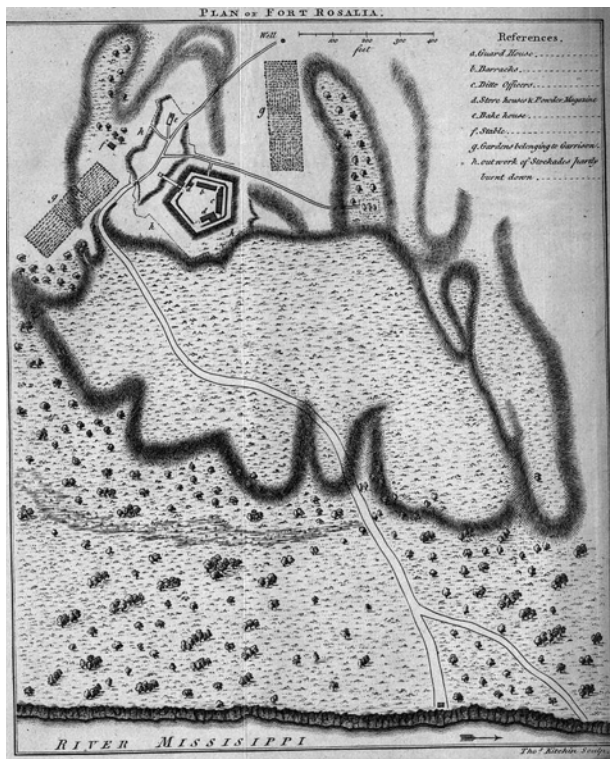


FIGURE 3. Plan of Fort Rosalie, 1770. (Library of Congress)

2. Beha, *Historic Resource Study*, p. 23.
3. *Map of the Defences of Natchez and Vicinity* (Library of Congress, reproduced in Randolph Delehanty and Van Jones Martin, *Classic Natchez, History, Homes, and Gardens* (Savannah and New Orleans: Martin-St. Martin, 1996), p. 39



FIGURE 4. Detail of 1864 map of the defenses of Natchez, with vicinity of the present building noted by the circular highlight left of center. (Library of Congress)



compressing company that was established below the bluff west of Rosalie in the 1880s.

Although the Civil War cost Natchez much of its wealth, the town remained one of the state's most important towns and continued to grow in the late nineteenth century. More residences were built along Canal Street near the site of the old fort, and completion of a railroad line into Natchez in 1882 spurred some industrial development, including the cotton compress mentioned earlier and a box factory, which was constructed on the plateau below the site of the old fort. Cotton warehouses were even constructed along Canal Street on the grounds of Rosalie. Even as late as 1897, however, Major Stephen Power was able to state that "the ruins of old Fort Rosalie still stand," but nearly 170 years after the fort was rebuilt in the wake of the Natchez Indian uprising and a century after it was abandoned for military use, there must have been little left of the old wooden fortifications of historic Fort Rosalie.

## Heritage Tourism

The collapse of the cotton economy brought on by the boll weevil in the early 1900s devastated the economy in Natchez and most of the rest of the South. According to one local historian, "new construction [in Natchez] stagnated, and historic old buildings were kept instead of demolished or even altered radically."<sup>4</sup> As in Charleston and Savannah, poverty proved to be preservation's best friend in Natchez and set the stage for development of heritage tourism as a significant component of the city's modern economy.

The genesis of the historic preservation movement in Natchez might be traced to 1901 when the Kellys first moved to Melrose with the intent of restoring and preserving one of the area's great Greek Revival mansions. Henry Bulkley's purchase of Glenburnie that same year is thought to have been the first time that an outsider moved to the city "specifically to live in an antebellum mansion."<sup>5</sup> Individual efforts to preserve the city's heritage continued both before and after World War I, and the city's demolition of the Spanish Market in 1924 sparked a concerted, if

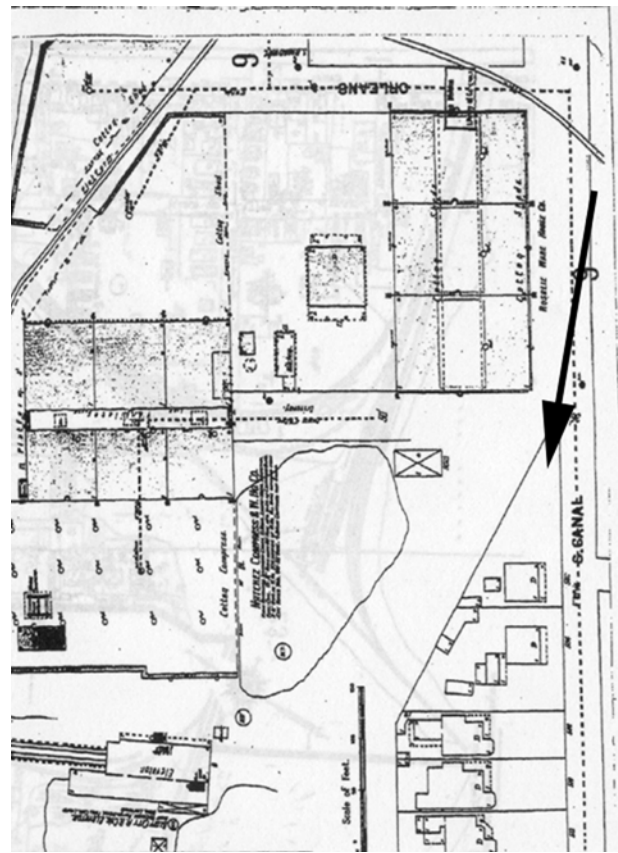


FIGURE 5. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1901, with arrow denoting future site of Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop



FIGURE 6. Sanborn Fire Insurance map, 1925, with arrow indicating future site of Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop.

4. Delehanty and Martin, *Classic Natchez*, p. 43.
5. Delehanty and Martin, *Classic Natchez*, p. 43.

## Historical Background & Context

failed, effort by some residents to take preservation into the public arena.

In 1929, a group of Natchez women organized the Natchez Garden Club, one of a number of such organizations nationally that grew out of the Progressive era's women's club movement. In



FIGURE 7. Undated photograph of Dickson and his wife.



FIGURE 8. Undated photograph of Jefferson Davis Dickson, Jr.

numerous cities and towns across America, these clubs became a great force for civic improvements. In Natchez, the garden clubs (the Pilgrimage Garden Club was formed in 1936) were largely responsible for creating a local historic preservation movement, which has had a tremendous impact on development of the modern city.

In 1931, the Natchez Garden Club hosted the annual meeting of the Mississippi State Federation of Garden Clubs and organized a tour of several of the antebellum homes around Natchez. Such was the response that the following year, the club held its first Spring Pilgrimage, opening twenty- six homes for a tour that is thought to have been only the second of its kind in the nation and remains the city's most important annual event. So successful was the Natchez Pilgrimage that in 1935 the Natchez Garden Club was able to buy and begin restoration of the House on Ellicott Hill, which at that time was mistakenly identified as Connelly's Tavern.

In 1938 the Pilgrimage Garden Club bought Stanton Hall for their club house, and that same year the Mississippi chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution bought and began restoration of Rosalie, adjacent to the site of the old fort around which Natchez had grown up. The publication of *Gone With the Wind* in 1936 and the premiere of the film version in 1939 "stimulated a nationwide wave of romantic interest in the Old South," one local historian has written, "and the Pilgrimage tours capitalized on the growing phenomenon. Tourism was becoming an important element in the local economy."<sup>6</sup> The significance of this was not lost on the city's entrepreneurs, including one Jeff Dickson.

## Jefferson Davis Dickson, Jr.

Born in Mississippi in 1896, Jefferson Davis Dickson, Jr., was, according to his obituary, "known internationally as a sports promoter" in the years between the World Wars. Serving as a photographer with the United States Army Signal Corps during World War I, Dickson remained in France after the Armistice and "rapidly built up French professional boxing, wrestling, and ice hockey." He operated Paris' Palais des Sports and was so successful as a

6. Delehanty and Martin, *Classic Natchez*, p. 44.

sports promoter that he was awarded the French Legion of Honor.<sup>7</sup>

According to his obituary, Dickson married Louise Wedell Mastbaum<sup>8</sup> of Philadelphia in July 1939, but it is not known where that occurred. They subsequently had at least one child, a daughter, Christine Lee Dickson. The obituary indicates that, after the outbreak of World War II in the fall of 1939, Dickson returned to America in 1941 and “began restoration of an old French fort and Indian village at Natchez, Miss., for the tourist trade.” It was, one source noted, to be an “exact replica of the early French fort [with] all buildings and furnishings of the fort . . . authentic and historically correct in every detail.”<sup>9</sup>

7. The main sources of information on Dickson’s life are an obituary, “Jeff Dickson Is Missing in Aerial Action,” *New York Herald Tribune*, July 24, 1943, and biographical information on the website of the International Boxing Hall of Fame at <<http://www.ibhof.com/dickson.htm>>.
8. According to University of Pennsylvania records, Louise Mastbaum Dickson was a 1927 graduate of the school and died in Beverly Hills, CA, in June 2001. Real estate transactions in 1949 mention the Dickson’s daughter.
9. Undated newspaper report in Historic Natchez Foundation collection.

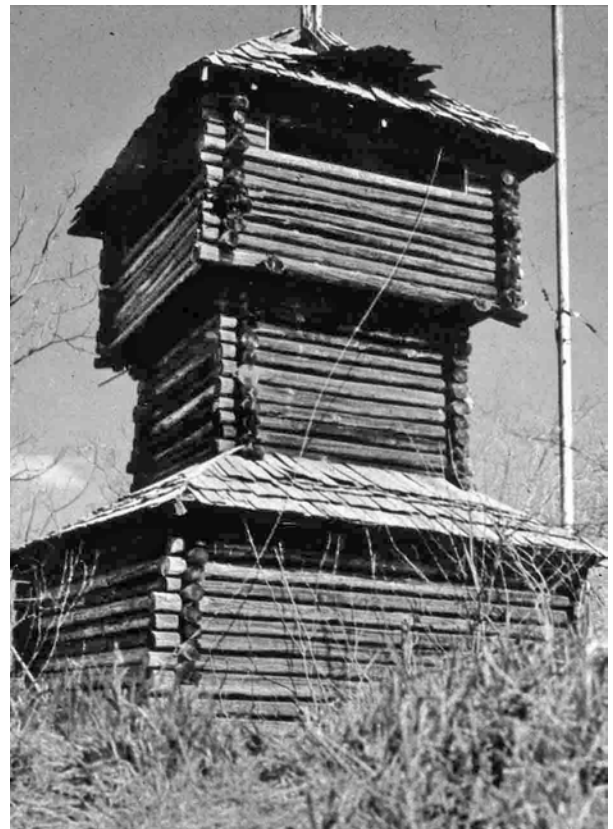


FIGURE 10. View of reconstructed blockhouse at Fort Rosalie.



FIGURE 9. View south of Dickson’s reconstruction of Fort Rosalie. (Coll. of Historic Natchez Foundation)

### Historical Background & Context

In fact, however, Dickson was most likely back in this country well before 1941. The Nazis occupied Paris in June 1940 and, according to Dickson, turned the Palais des Sports into a concentration camp. Dickson must have been in Natchez by May of 1940 when deed records show that he bought the tract of land at the top of the bluff on which he would build his reconstruction of Fort Rosalie. In addition, the 1941 Natchez City Directory states that “Fort Rosalie and White Apple Village restored by the Natchez Historical Association are open throughout the year,” suggesting that the projects were already complete and in operation by the time data was gathered for the directory, which probably occurred

in the fall of 1940. Quite likely, Dickson returned to Mississippi and began his “restorations” late in 1939 or early in 1940. Research into local newspaper archives could certainly help establish a more definitive chronology of his life and career.

After the United States’ entry into World War II in December 1941, Dickson rejoined the armed forces, probably in 1942. Stationed in England as an intelligence officer, he was attached to a flying bombardier squadron when he was reported killed in action over Germany in July 1943. Memory of him did not die, however, and he was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2001.

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# Chronology of Development and Use

On May 27, 1940, Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Cauthen, Jr., of Natchez sold a large tract of land on top of the bluff southwest of Rosalie to Jefferson Davis Dickson, Jr., and, as discussed in the previous section of this report, Dickson probably began his reconstruction of Fort Rosalie around that time.<sup>10</sup> On December 12, 1940, Dickson bought an additional tract of land along Canal Street on which he built a gift shop for the reconstructed fort.<sup>11</sup> In a manner typical of tourist attractions of the period, the Gift Shop appears also to have served as a sort of formal

entrance or visitors center for the reconstructed fort, and it was probably here that visitors paid for admission in addition to buying gifts and souvenirs.

No documentation for the actual construction of the fort and gift shop has yet been located, although the present owner, whose family bought the property from Dickson's widow in 1949, believes that the logs were cut from the site or nearby. Most likely the actual site of the fort at the top of the bluff was completely overgrown in the early twentieth century, and clearing the site might well have given Dickson logs for building his fort and/or gift shop.

10. Adams County, MS, Deed Book 4-Z, p. 307.

11. Adams County, MS, Deed Book 5-A, p. 144.



FIGURE 11. View of Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop in the 1940s. The sign at the front door reads "ENTRANCE FORT ROSALIE GIFT SHOP."

## Original Features

A single historic photograph (Figure 6) has been located that shows the Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop as it was originally constructed. Although there have been numerous alterations, evidence for most details of the original building remains in the present structure. Building investigation was non-destructive.

## Exterior

The historic photographs shows that the historic building was the same hipped- roofed, two- pen log structure that exists today. The historic photograph also shows the wood shakes originally used for roofing the building.<sup>12</sup> The double doors on both

the front and back sides of the building are not visible in the historic photograph, and all of these doors appear to have been replaced. The character of the original doors remains unknown, although the original strap hinges were remounted as dummy hinges on the present flush doors. Only one of four original, twelve- light, top- hinged window sash remains in the building. Two of these were located on the front of the building, one at the northeast end, and a fourth near the northeastern end of the rear side of the building. In addition, there were two small, four- over- four, double- hung windows lighting the two small rooms on the northwestern side of the small pen.

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12. Original roofing appears to have been split shakes rather than sawn shingles.

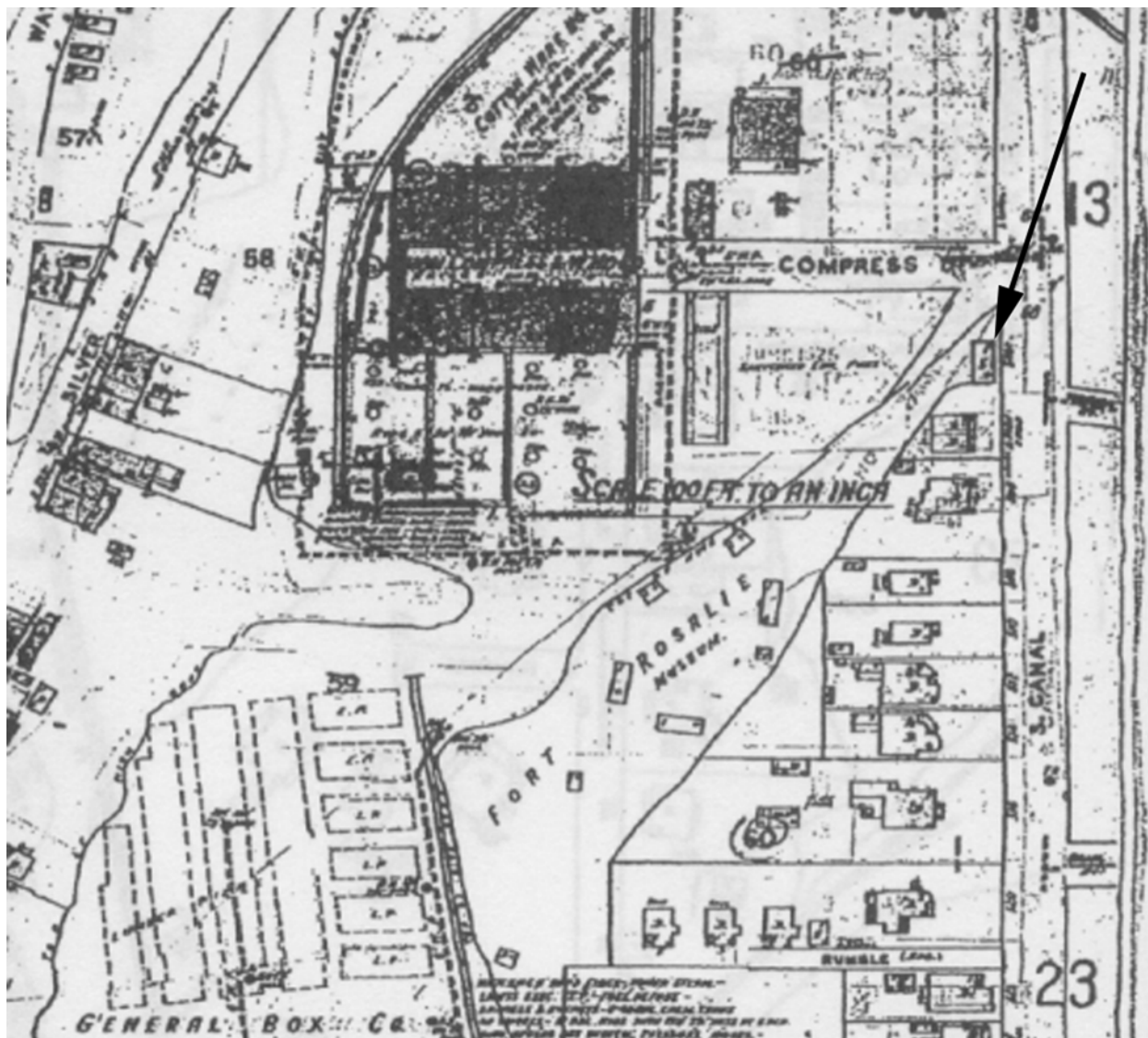


FIGURE 12. The Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from 1950, with the old Gift Shop indicated by the arrow.



## Interior

The building was constructed with two log pens which are clearly evident in the building today. The large pen was apparently a single open space, but the small pen was subdivided by wood- framed walls that created a small bath, a small kitchen, and what was probably a larger store room.

The larger pen would clearly have been the main sales area, with double entrances on both the southeast and northwest sides of the building. Probably finished in a rather rustic fashion, this pen was most likely originally open to the rafters in a manner similar to the reconstructed fort building shown in Figure 8. Flooring in the large pen was probably the 7"- wide boards that remain visible from the crawl space around the northeast corner of the building. The great brick fireplace that remains in the space today was the most prominent feature on the interior. Paint analysis might help determine if the brick were left unpainted or perhaps white-washed when the building was first opened.

The smaller pen would likely have been used as a stock room for the gift shop and would not have been accessible to the public. There is no evidence for a door in the opening between the two pens, which suggests that the smaller pen was originally partitioned as it exists today with a small vestibule or hall, without a door, providing access to a public rest room and to the private stock room.

In contrast to the large pen, the rooms of the small pen were finished in a more utilitarian manner since they were clearly intended as a service area. In these rooms, walls were finished with 1" by 7" boards installed horizontally over vertical battens nailed to the interior face of the log walls. Flooring was 3- 1/4" tongue- and- groove boards, typical of flooring in the mid- twentieth century. Ceilings were finished with 3- 1/2" double- beaded, tongue- and- groove boards, the use of which is one of the primary clues that the board walls, ceilings, and flooring in the rooms of the small pen are original, since double- beaded, tongue- and- groove boards were rarely used in the 1940s and almost never in the 1950s.

An early, cast- iron, wall- hung sink in the space behind the rest room suggests that it may have been used as a kitchen, perhaps for preparing drinks or other refreshments for sale to visitors.<sup>13</sup> The vent



**FIGURE 13.** The interior of one of the reconstructed buildings at Fort Rosalie, showing log walls and an open ceiling similar to what was probably originally present in the large pen of the Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop.

stack for that sink is visible above the roof line in the historic photograph, as is what appears to be a second vent stack at the opposite end of the building, which indicates a sink or other plumbing fixture may have been originally present around the northeast end of the large pen as well.

It is not clear exactly how long Old Fort Rosalie remained in operation as a tourist attraction, but it must have continued as late as 1947 when the city directory shows the "Fort Rosalie Gift Shop" at 500 S. Canal Street. No directory for 1948 or 1949 has been located and the 1950 directory lists the site as "vacant." Dickson's widow sold the property in August 1949, and Old Fort Rosalie probably ceased operation around that time.<sup>14</sup>

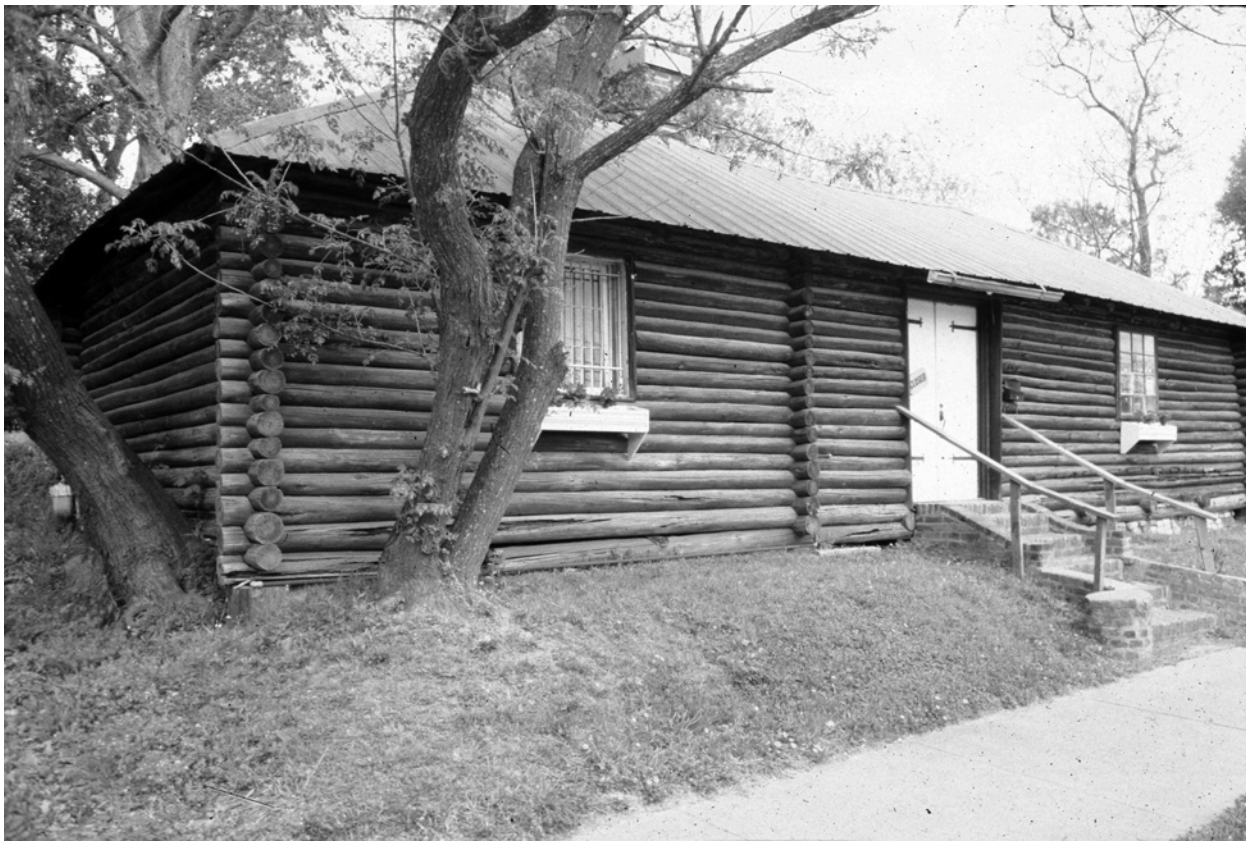
## Subsequent Alterations

The new owner of the property was D. A. Biglane, whose family owned the property until it was sold to the National Park Service in 2005. Biglane's life and career have not been documented, and there is no information as to his reason for purchasing the property, although it may have been bought simply as an investment.

The Gift Shop was listed as "vacant" in the city directories between 1950 and 1957, when a mission

13. The vent stack for this sink is visible above the roof in the historic photograph.

14. Adams County Deed Book 6-D, p. 388, 394.



**FIGURE 14.** Undated photograph of the Gift Shop, probably in the 1980s, prior to late-twentieth-century restaurant alterations.

of the First Baptist Church is shown occupying the building. The mission church remained in the building at least until 1960 and it was probably during that time that the front and back doors were changed and new windows created on either side of the back doors. The present metal roof was probably installed during that period as well along with the fiber-board paneling of the walls and ceiling in the old stock room.

The old Gift Shop remained vacant for most of the 1960s. The exception according to city directories was 1963 and 1964 when the Redwing Petroleum Company used the building for offices. No alterations can be associated with their tenure in the building, but there were a number of changes to the surrounding area that are evident from comparison of the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps in 1950 and 1966. A large part of the National Box Company complex just down the bluff from the fort was demolished prior to 1950, and by 1966 all of the plant was gone as were the buildings of the old Natchez Cotton Compress and Warehouse Company on the bluff below Rosalie. In addition, the old 1890s residence just south of the Gift Shop was converted

into a duplex prior to 1950 and removed entirely before 1966. The 1966 Sanborn maps continued to show the buildings of the “Fort Rosalie Museum,” and at least two of the structures were still in existence, although in “ruinous” condition, in 1972 when the entire area became part of the Natchez Bluffs and Under-the-Hill Historic District.<sup>15</sup>

In the 1970s, the old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop was again used for retail sales. From 1970 to 1972, the Serendipity Gift Shop occupied the building, but the building was then listed as “vacant” in 1973. From 1974 through 1977, city directories list arts and crafts shops at 500 S. Canal Street, with The Log Cabin shown in 1974 and 1975 and the Lollipop Shop shown in 1977.<sup>16</sup> In 1978, the building was again used as a church, this time the Lighthouse Baptist Church, which occupied the building until 1988 or 1989.<sup>17</sup>

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15. National Register of Historic Places, Natchez Bluffs and Under-the-Hill Historic District nomination, 1972.
  16. No city directory for 1976 has been located.
  17. No city directories have been located after the 1985 directory, but the last owners indicated that Fat Mama’s Tamales went into the building in 1989.



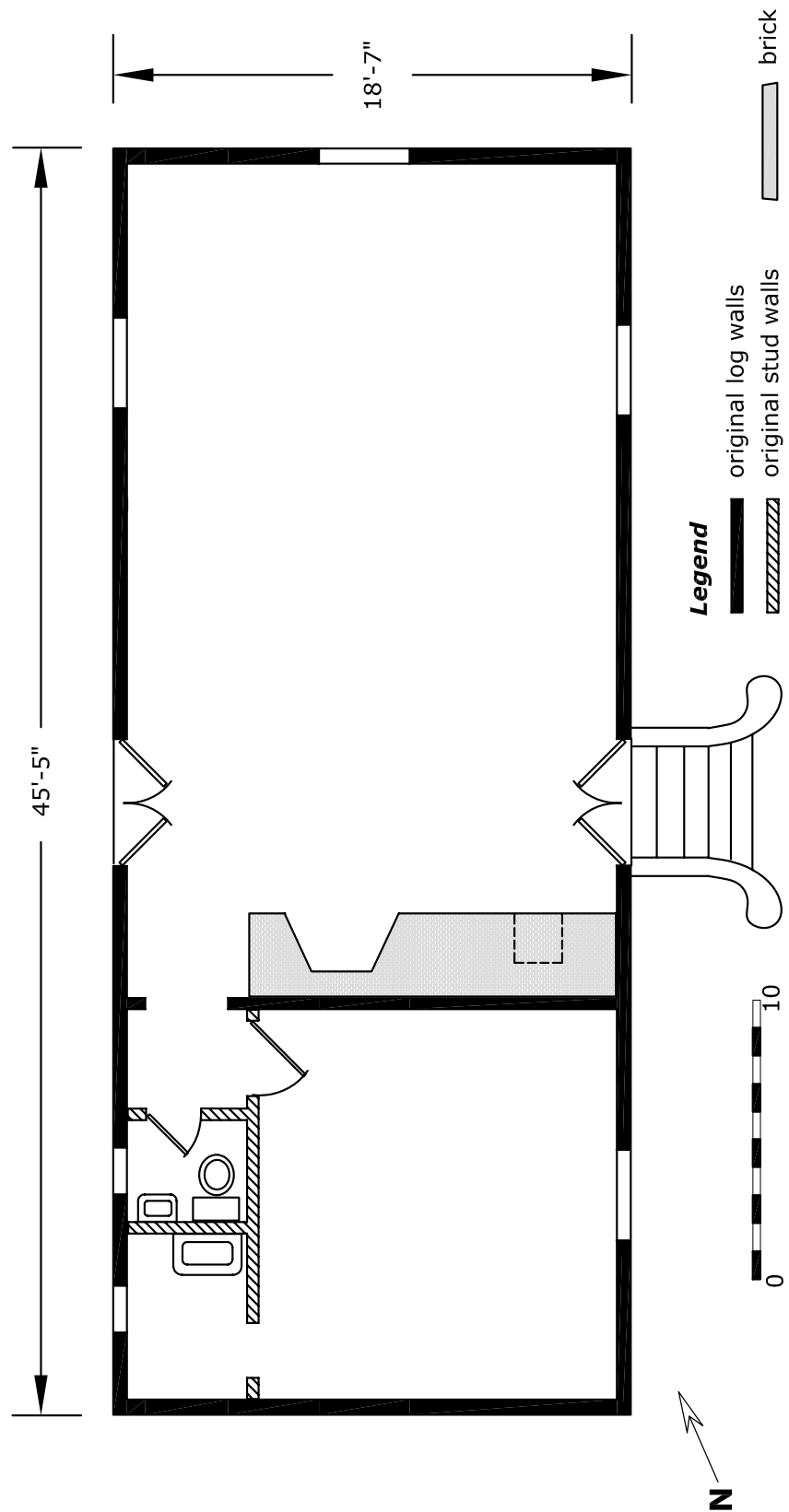
In the summer of 1989, the Biglanes leased the building to James and Britton Gammill who adapted and rehabilitated it as a restaurant called Fat Mama's Tamales. Among their changes were installation of a new vinyl- covered plywood floor laid on sleepers on top of the original floor, creation of a new window on the front of the building, and perhaps

**Part I: Developmental History**  
replacement of some of the other original window sash. In addition, the large pen was divided to create a kitchen at the northeast end of the building and a bar opposite the fireplace in the center of the building. They also installed wood sheet paneling on the walls and ceiling and built the present terrace behind the building.

## Chronology of Development and Use

# Probable Original Floor Plan

**Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop**  
Original Floor Plan  
May 2006



## Chronology of Development and Use

## Time Line for Fort Rosalie

1716	French establish Fort Rosalie
1729	Natchez Indians massacre French at fort
1732	Natchez tribe eliminated and fort rebuilt
1763	British take over fort and rename it Fort Punmure
1779	Spain seizes British West Florida
1797	Spain cedes British West Florida to United States
1798	Spain abandons Fort Rosalie
1820	Town gallows located at abandoned fort and moat used for slave burials
1830s	Fort overgrown and abandoned
1864	Six buildings are present in vicinity of present building
1870s-1880s	Several houses built along northwest side of S. Canal Street
1882	Railroad completed to Natchez, perhaps including spurs in the vicinity of old Fort Rosalie
1896	Jefferson Davis Dickson born in Mississippi
1897	"The ruins of the old Fort Rosalie still stand....," Major Stephen Power, <i>The Memento, Old and New Natchez 1700 to 1897</i>
1920s	Box factory constructed on plateau below Fort Rosalie
1925	Demolition of old City Market sparks local historic preservation movement
1929	Natchez Garden Club founded
1932	Natchez Garden Club begins hosting annual "Natchez Pilgrimage"
1934	Federal government begins survey of proposed Natchez Trace Parkway Natchez Garden Club acquires House on Ellicott Hill (mistakenly known as Connely's Tavern) and initiates city's first historical restoration project (Richard Kock, architect)
1937	National Park Service acquires Mt. Locust and Emerald Mound
1938	Pilgrimage Garden Club acquires Stanton Hall
1939	Construction begins on Natchez Trace Parkway
May 1940	Jefferson Dickson buys land on which to reconstruct Fort Rosalie
December 1940	Dickson buys land on which to construct the Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop
early 1941	Dickson constructs Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop
July 1943	Dickson reported missing in action in Europe
1946-1947	Mrs. Cleo Rosethal operates "Fort Rosalie Gift Shop"
1949	Dickson's widow sells Old Fort Rosalie to D. A. Biglane
c. 1949-c. 1955	Building is vacant
1954	Natchez adopts ordinance for historic preservation
c. 1956-c. 1960	Building serves as Mission of First Baptist Church; new metal roof and interior fiberboard wall covering probably installed at this time

## Chronology of Development and Use

c. 1961-1962	Building vacant
c. 1963-c. 1964	Building serves as offices for Redwing Petroleum Company
c. 1964-c. 1969	Building vacant
c. 1970-c. 1972	Building used as Serendipity Gift Shop
c. 1973	Building vacant
c. 1974-c. 1975	Building used as The Log Cabin, Arts and Crafts
c. 1976-c. 1977	Building used as The Lollipop Shop, Arts and Crafts
c. 1978-c. 1988	Building serves as Lighthouse Baptist Church
1988	Natchez National Historical Park established
summer 1989	Building rehabilitated for a restaurant called Fat Mama's Tamales

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# Physical Description

Located at 500 S. Canal Street in Natchez, Mississippi, and oriented toward the southeast, the Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop is a one- story, double- pen, log building constructed about 1939. Set on low rock piers, the building measures about 45'- 5" north to south and 18'- 7" east to west, with a foot print encompassing some 844 square feet of area. The following description of the building is based on a non- destructive investigation in May 2006. All photographs in this section were taken at that time by the author of the present report.

## Site

The building is located at the corner of Canal Street and D. A. Biglane Street, with the latter street created in the 1990s, greatly reducing the size of the site

and eliminating a parking area on the northeast side of the building. Customers now use the vacant lot on the southwest side of the building for parking. A low reinforced- concrete retaining wall, which is

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*A plan of the existing building can be found at the end of this section. All photographs in this section were taken by the author on 16-17 May 2006.*

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probably contemporaneous with Biglane Street, forms an arc that passes within two feet of the east corner of the building. Behind the building, the ground rises gradually to the west and the top of the bluff above the river, with a more- or- less level



FIGURE 17. View to west of Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop.

## Physical Description

building platform having been created out of the hillside.

Uncontrolled rainwater runoff from the roof has caused severe erosion at the southwest end of the building, but behind the building, run-off has been managed by a shallow concrete trough on the ground below the building's roof drip line. Dense stands of yucca on the northeast and southeast sides of the building have grown up since the 1980s and have helped deter erosion on those sides of the building.

Around the back door, the grade has been raised to eliminate a step and, in the process, has buried the sill log for as much as ten or twelve feet of its length. As a result there has been severe deterioration of the log walls in that area. Immediately behind the building is a stone terrace, reached by a flight of steps from the building's rear entrance. Constructed by the present tenants after 1989, the terrace provides seating for the restaurant's patrons.<sup>18</sup> The rear of the site is shaded by a large oak tree located on the southwest side of the terrace. Three chinaberry trees

have volunteered near the south corner of the building, where the stump of a larger tree remains partially under the building's southwest wall.

A curb cut from S. Canal Street is located just south of the building, with a driveway running along that end of the building. The drive continues up the hill-



FIGURE 18. View of chinaberry tree stump at southwest end of building.

18. A brief interview with the present owner provided documentation for the terrace and other recent alterations to the building.



FIGURE 19. View to northwest of Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop.



side to the residence and other structures at the top of the bluff south and west of the building. The site of the old duplex next door to the restaurant is now used as a parking lot.

The brick stairs to the main entrance appear to be an original feature of the building. There are five steps, approximately four feet wide, rising between two brick bulkheads that arc out from the two bottom steps to form a wide entrance from the sidewalk

**Problems of Repair.** The chinaberry trees around the south corner of the building provide attractive shade for the building but their proximity to the building is causing severe damage. In addition, the changes to the historic grade level at the rear of the building has caused some of the worst damage to the structure, as will be discussed in more detail below.

## Foundation

The building may have been built in a traditional way by setting the logs that form sills for the front and rear walls on what were originally low stacked-stone piers, most likely without footings. The close proximity of the building to the ground makes it

impossible to fully characterize the number and location of these piers, but they were certainly located at each corner of the building. Two low stacked-stone piers appear to remain along the southeast side of the building and there were probably two corresponding piers on the northwest side. In addition, there is probably at least one pier around the center of the log cross wall. Additional support for individual joists has been added in the



FIGURE 21. View of front steps.



FIGURE 20. View north east showing driveway at southwest end of the building. The terrace at the building's rear is visible at center left in this

## Physical Description



FIGURE 22. View of south corner of building.

form of short wooden posts that appear to sit directly on the ground.

**Problems of Repair.** At the east and south corners of the building, the original piers have been replaced by short lengths of what appear to be creosoted poles of the sort used for telephone and electrical transmission lines. In addition wooden posts appear to have been added to provide support under some of the joists around the center of the building.

## Structure

The building is a log structure but has some interior stud walls, none of them load bearing. The roof and floor of the building are also wood framed.

## Logs

The building's exterior and one interior walls are log, mostly pine, ranging from around 4-1/4" to nearly 8" in diameter and rising to a height of about



FIGURE 23. View south of rear of building.

seven feet above the finish floor inside the building. In addition, similar logs form a crosswall that divides the building into two unequally sized rooms. Like the gable- end log walls, the log cross wall rises to the roof ridge. At five or six foot intervals, logs run between the tops and bottoms of the front and rear walls of the building act to tie the structure together. The ends of these logs are visible on the exterior, except where they have been buried along with the sill around the middle of the building's northwest (rear) side.

Logs were peeled of bark and generally left in the round, but in order that the interstices between the logs be kept to a minimum, there was some flattening to accommodate natural curvature of the logs. Logs were notched over one another using the most rudimentary saddle notch, which historically was used for the simplest log cabins, corn cribs and other such structures. Traditionally only the lower side of the log was notched in order for the logs to shed water more effectively, but on the present



FIGURE 25. View of deteriorated logs around building's north corner.

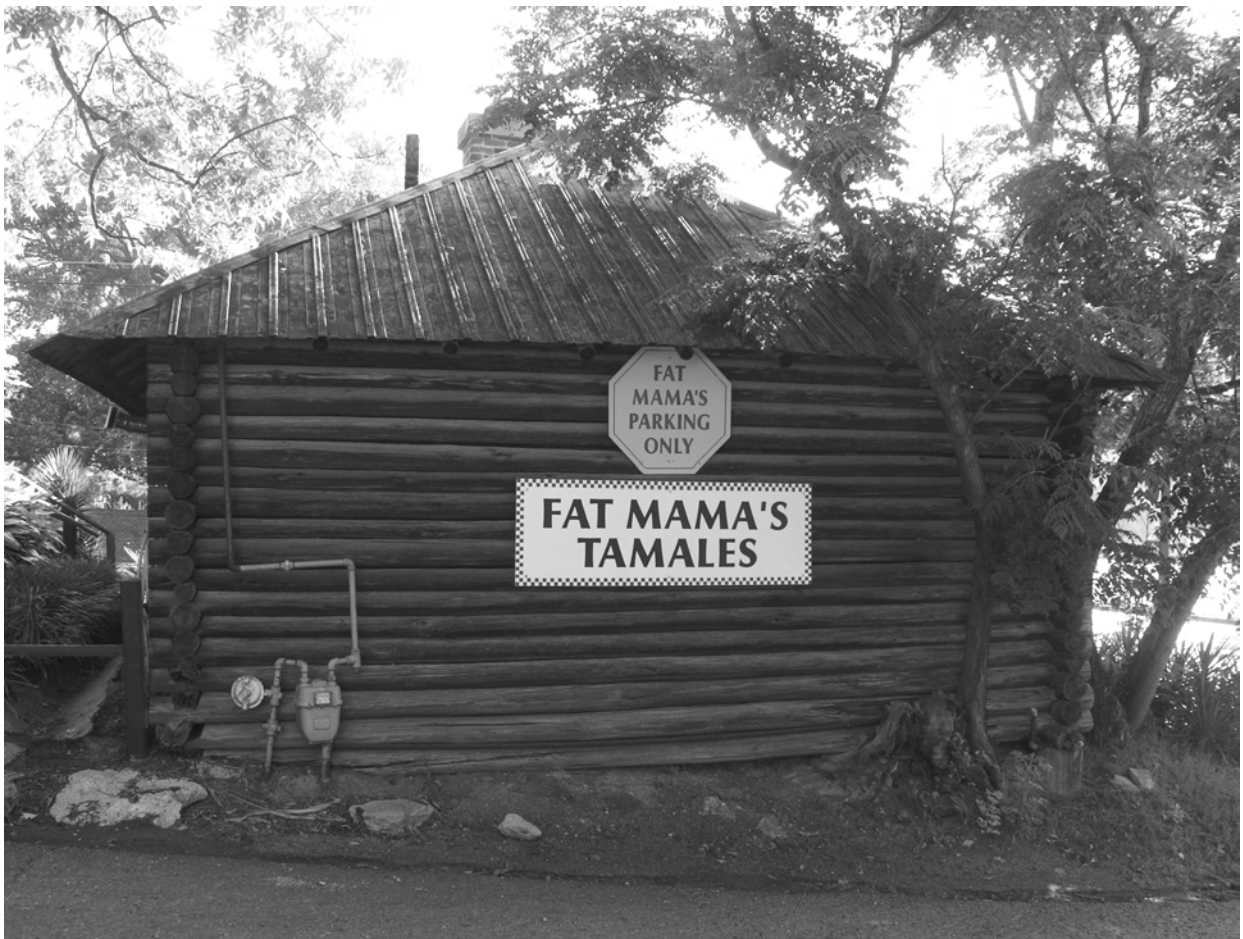


FIGURE 24. View north of building.

## Physical Description



FIGURE 26. View of partially buried, badly deteriorated logs near back door. The sill log is

building, the pattern was reversed, with the notching done on the upper side of the log.

**Problems of Repair.** The soft pine log walls on all sides of the building are severely deteriorated due to a combination of rot and termites. The northeast corner of the building remains elevated, as much as 18" above grade, so that most of the southeast (front) and northeast sides of the building are not in contact with the ground. However significant portions of the log walls on the other two sides are in direct contact with the ground, and because of erosion and fill behind the building, much of the sill on the northwest (rear) of the building is covered with earth and has deteriorated completely. Except close to the north end, most of that sill is currently resting on the ground, which has also allowed part of the southwest wall to come into ground contact as well. In addition, long-term exposure of the unpainted wood to UV light, wind-blown sand, and rain has caused especially significant degradation of the logs on the unshaded northeast and southeast sides of the building.



FIGURE 27. View of northeast end of building.



## Wood Framing

**Floor:** Much of the floor framing is inaccessible and so can not be fully characterized. Part of the floor framing under the northern pen can be seen and suggests that the floors are framed like the ceiling of the south pen, with widely spaced log joists acting as tie beams and more closely spaced joists of sash-sawn 2" by 4" lumber.

**Roof:** The building's hipped roof is framed with pole rafters, generally 3" to 4" in diameter. Rafters are on approximate 24" centers and are nailed directly to the top logs around the perimeter of the building.

**Interior Walls and Ceilings:** In addition to the wood-framed floor and roof, conventional wood-framed walls and ceilings in the smaller southern pen of the building also appear to have been part of the original construction. The ceilings use 2" by 4" joists, and although wall framing could not be examined directly, wall studs appear to be the same. These walls divide the smaller pen into a large store room and, along the northwest side of the pen, into what was originally a small kitchen, a rest room, and a hall connecting the large pen with the store room. All of these spaces have a ceiling at about seven feet above the floor. The large pen was probably originally open to the rafters. The present ceiling, which is about 10'-7" above the floor, may have been added when the building was rehabilitated in 1989. In 1989, the present occupant of the building constructed the wood-framed wall that partitions the northern pen. Constructed to create a space for a kitchen, the wall rises only to the top of the outside walls, with the remainder of the into two more- or- less equal halves.

**Problems of Repair.** The roof and wall framing appears to be in mostly good condition, but the same is not true for the floor framing. Much of the floor framing could not be inspected, but it is clear from what can be seen that it has been severely compromised, particularly across the northwest side of the building where joists are resting on or close to the ground. In addition, wood-to-ground connection provided by the wooden posts under some of the joists at the center of the building has probably precipitated significant termite damage, particularly through the southern and western sides of the building.



FIGURE 28. View of ends of logs forming the building's crosswall.



FIGURE 29. View of roof framing at southwest corner of building.



FIGURE 30. View of tie logs (indicated by arrows) and ceiling joists at southern end of building.



FIGURE 31. A view toward the west of the crawl space under the building.



FIGURE 32. View of western hip of roof, showing typical metal roofing.



FIGURE 33. View of southwest corner of roof.

## Exterior

Three elements finish the exterior of the building: the roofing, the windows, and the doors. The doors and some of the windows were part of the original building.

### Roofing

The roof rafters were decked with 1" by 4" boards spaced 8" to 10" apart. These boards were probably part of original construction and were the lath on which the original wood shingles were laid. The original wood-shingled roofing was replaced by the present metal roofing after World War II, perhaps in the mid- 1950s when the building was adapted for use as a church. The ribbed seam roofing is galvanized iron in sheets 32" wide that may have been painted brown at one time. Formed metal ridge caps finish the hips and roof ridge. This type of roofing was often installed with cleats, but these were not observed. The sheets and ridge caps are fastened to the shingle lath using screws or nails. A 10' or 12' run of metal gutter drains the center shed of the roof over the main entrance. There are no other gutters.

**Problems of Repair.** Although the roofing has lost some fasteners, it remains in fair condition with no evidence of leaks observed. Paint has disappeared from much of the roof, and much of the galvanized coating has worn away, allowing the surface of the metal to begin oxidation.

### Windows

The building has nine window openings, four of which (A, C, D, and E) appear to be original, although only one (C) retains its historic sash. The presence of exterior casing on the frames and of double-hung windows suggests that windows H and I may not be original, although both might have been added at an early date.

The original openings seem to have been finished without exterior casing of window and door frames, similar to what remains at windows A and C, and with similar interior casing (see below). The original building appears to have had two windows (A and C on the plan in Figure 18) on the front (southeast); one window (D) on the northeast end; and one window (E), now blocked by an air-conditioning unit, on the rear (northwest) side of what is now the kitchen, all of which were similar in size and configuration. Each of these window openings was proba-

bly around 3'-7" by 3'-4" but all but one have been altered to accommodate modern sash or air-conditioning units. Surviving mortises for hinges at windows A, D, and E indicate that each window had a single, top-hinged, twelve-light sash similar to the one that survives at window C. In addition, windows H and I, which open into the two small rooms on the northwest side of the southern pen were probably original features. Both windows are now covered with plywood but portions of Window I are visible. Both windows were probably similar, and the double-hung four-over-four sash may remain behind the plywood on both windows.

The two window openings (F and G) on either side of the back doors are of a similar size, and although the sash has been removed from window G, both windows probably had the same three-light sash that survives in window F. It is likely that these windows were added in the mid-1950s when the building was adapted for use as a church.

Window A: 3'-3" by 3'-5" opening reduced from original; six-light, single sash; original opening but sash is modern; mortises for hinges in top of frame indicate that this is an original opening.

Window B: 3'-3" by 2'-8", double-hung, 6/6; installed as part of restaurant conversion in c. 1989.

Window C: 3'-4" by 3'-7", single twelve-light, top-hinged sash, probably original.



FIGURE 35. View of Window C, the only relatively unaltered original window in the building.

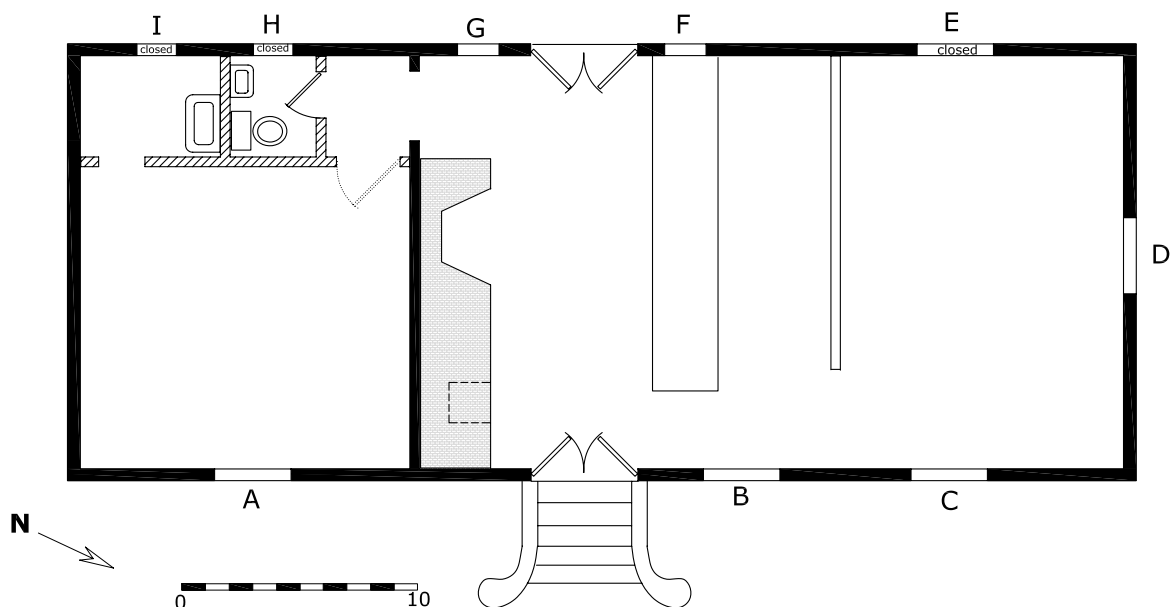


FIGURE 34. Plan of windows.

## Physical Description



FIGURE 36. View of Window A, which is an original opening that has been altered to fit modern sash.



FIGURE 37. View of Windows H and I.

Window D: 3'-0" by 3'-0" reduced from original opening; nine-light, single sash is modern.

Window E: original opening around 3'-4" by 3'-7", sash missing, window partially boarded to accommodate window air-conditioning unit.

Window F: 1'-9" by 2'-4", fixed sash with three vertical lights; opening probably created in the 1940s or 1950s.

Window G: 1'-9" by 2'-4"; original sash missing; window air-conditioning unit fills the opening; opening probably created in the 1940s or 1950s.

Window H: 1'-8" by 3'-9", double-hung, 4/4, covered with plywood; presence of sash uncertain but probable; opening may have been added during the historic period.

Window I: 1'-8" by 3'-9", double-hung, 4/4, covered with plywood with vent for water heater run through the sash; opening may have been added during the historic period.

**Problems of Repair.** In addition to the added window on the front facade, which compromised the character of the historic building, the other windows have a variety of problems. As noted above, four windows, one of which is historic, are completely boarded up, and another is partially obstructed by a window air-conditioning unit. All of the remaining windows except window C have been altered for new sash. The one remaining original sash, in window C, is degraded but remains in fair condition.

## Doors

The building has double doors on its front (south-east) and rear (northwest) sides. Both openings are around 4'-10" by 6'-10", although the latter dimension may have originally been closer to 7'. The doors are modern flush doors and each leaf is generally 2'-3" by 6'-7", which is significantly smaller than the openings and suggests that, like many of the windows, the doors themselves are not historic. They may have been added to provide better security when the building was used as a residence after World War II or, perhaps, when the building was adapted for use as a church in the mid-1950s.



Each leaf of the doors is mounted using three, 3- 1/2", butt hinges, although the middle hinge on one leaf of the back doors is missing. However, dummy strap hinges are also mounted on both sides of each leaf. Installation is not uniform from door to door, and some of these hinges have been altered by removing the eye for the pintle or hook with which the original doors were probably hung.

**Problems of Repair.** Although the doors are in fair condition, they are most likely not the original doors. In addition, all of them have been shortened to accommodate the raised floor in the northern end of the building (see below).

### Chimney and Fireplace

The building features a single fireplace with an inside chimney and extended chimney breast that includes a representation of a medieval oven. Brick, which are painted except inside the firebox, are around 4" by 8" by 2- 1/2". The entire structure, which must be original, is around 13'- 2" long, 3'- 0" deep, and 3'- 4", except the chimney stack, which is



FIGURE 39. View of front doors.



FIGURE 38. View of fireplace and oven.

## Physical Description



FIGURE 41. View of fireplace.



FIGURE 40. View of chimney.

corbeled to a stack approximately 2'-6" by 1'-10 1/2" that rises through the roof. Above the roof line, the chimney rises approximately 2-1/2" and is capped by a metal cover which obscures the corbeled courses at the top of the chimney.

The firebox opening is around 3'-10" wide, with a relieving arch that rises from 28" to 33-1/2". The oven opening is 1'-7" wide with a shallow relieving arch rising from around 1'-1" by 1'-5". A wooden shelf or bar is mounted above the fire box and runs the length of the brick chimney breast. It was added to provide additional table space for restaurant clientele. In addition, the remains of what appear to have been four brick brackets are visible above the fire box. They were probably originally intended for a mantel shelf and appear to have been broken off.

Mounted on the right cheek of the fireplace is a wrought-iron crane on which iron pots could be hung during the cooking process. Openings in the left cheek would allow hot air to enter the "oven" area. In addition, a 3/4" pipe, capped at the end, runs out from the left rear of the firebox and was apparently a gas line for a heater, stove, or other fire.

**Problems of Repair.** The raised floors in the large pen (see below) are higher than the firebox floor and probably cover a brick or stone hearth, but that is not certain. The floor of the firebox has been raised to meet the altered floor level by dry-laid brick laid flat over the original firebox floor. In addition, what appear to be the remains of four brick supports for a mantel shelf, which no longer exists, are evident on the chimney breast just above the fireplace opening. In its place, a long wooden slab, around 3" by 10", is mounted a few inches above the firebox opening and runs the length of the brick structure.

## Interior

The interior of the building has undergone numerous alterations. The floor plan has been altered and, although most of the original interior finishes probably remain intact, the original wall and ceiling finishes are largely obscured by later materials.

## Walls and Ceilings

Walls and ceilings in the Bar Room and the Modern Kitchen (see plan at the end of this section) are cov-

ered by modern plywood paneling, which may be installed directly over the original log walls. Walls and ceilings in the Store Room are covered with fiberboard panels with wood battens, materials that probably date to the 1950s. Only in the Hall and the Original Kitchen do the original wall and ceiling finishes remain exposed. Walls in those spaces are finished with plain, tongue- and- groove boards around 7" wide. Ceilings in these rooms are finished with 3"- wide, double- beaded, tongue- and- groove boards. Board walls and ceilings are painted.

**Problems of Repair.** While in mostly sound condition, the modern materials covering most of the walls and ceilings almost totally obscure the historic character of the interior. In addition, these modern materials make it impossible to fully assess the condition of the walls and ceilings and probably hide significant areas of deterioration.

## Flooring

Seven- inch- wide board flooring is visible from the crawl space around the northeast end of the building, but none of it could be observed inside the building because of the presence of modern floor coverings. This may have been the original flooring in the large pen. In the old Kitchen in the western corner of the small pen, 3- 1/4"- wide, tongue- and- groove flooring can be observed under two layers of linoleum, and this material appears to continue under modern vinyl floor- coverings in the Store Room and was probably typical of original flooring throughout the small pen.

According to the present tenants in the building, the poor condition of the original floor system prompted them to install a second floor system over the floors in the large pen and in the Hall and Bath. Two- by- four sleepers were apparently laid directly on the original flooring and decked with plywood. A wood- pattern vinyl floor covering gives the illusion of real wood floors.

**Problems of Repair.** The close proximity of the floor system to the ground, especially along the northwest and southwest sides, virtually guarantees significant if not severe damage to the floor system and probably to much of the flooring as well. As with walls and ceilings, modern materials covering the floors make it impossible to fully assess their condition.



FIGURE 42. View of board walls in hall, typical of original wall finishes in the small pen.

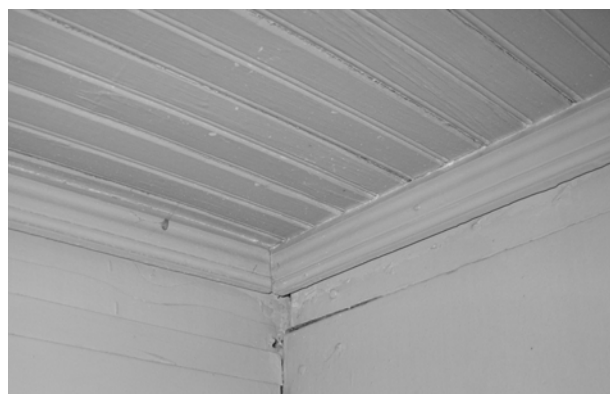


FIGURE 43. View of a corner of the hall showing what was probably the typical ceiling finish in the building's smaller pen.



FIGURE 44. A glimpse of typical original flooring under the building's large pen.



FIGURE 45. View of typical original window casing.



FIGURE 46. View of cast-iron sink in original Kitchen.

### Trim

The two- panel door to the rest room is probably an original feature of the building. A similar door was probably present at the door into the store room as well, but it is now missing. There is no evidence that a door was ever hung at the opening to the Original Kitchen at the west corner of the smaller pen or at the opening between the two pens.

Windows and doors were cased with plain 1" by 6" boards, and similar material was used for a base-board in the rooms of the small pen. In those rooms, too, an unusual 2" ogee bed molding is used as a crown molding.

**Problems of Repair.** Replacement of original window sash, installation of new flooring, creation of new window openings, and installation of plumbing and gas lines has damaged or destroyed a significant portion of the original interior trim.

### Fixtures

The character of the building's original light fixtures, if there were any at all, is unknown. All of the existing light fixtures are modern.

The original wall- hung cast- iron sink remains in the small original kitchen at the southwest corner of the small pen. The original cast- iron lavatory remains in the rest room as well, but the original toilet has been replaced.



FIGURE 47. View southeast in Bar Room.



FIGURE 48. View north in Bar Room.

## Physical Description



FIGURE 49. View northwest in Kitchen.



FIGURE 50. View south in kitchen.



FIGURE 51. View southeast in kitchen.





FIGURE 52. View west in Storage Room.



FIGURE 53. View south in Storage Room.



FIGURE 54. View north in Storage Room



FIGURE 55. View northeast in Storage Room.



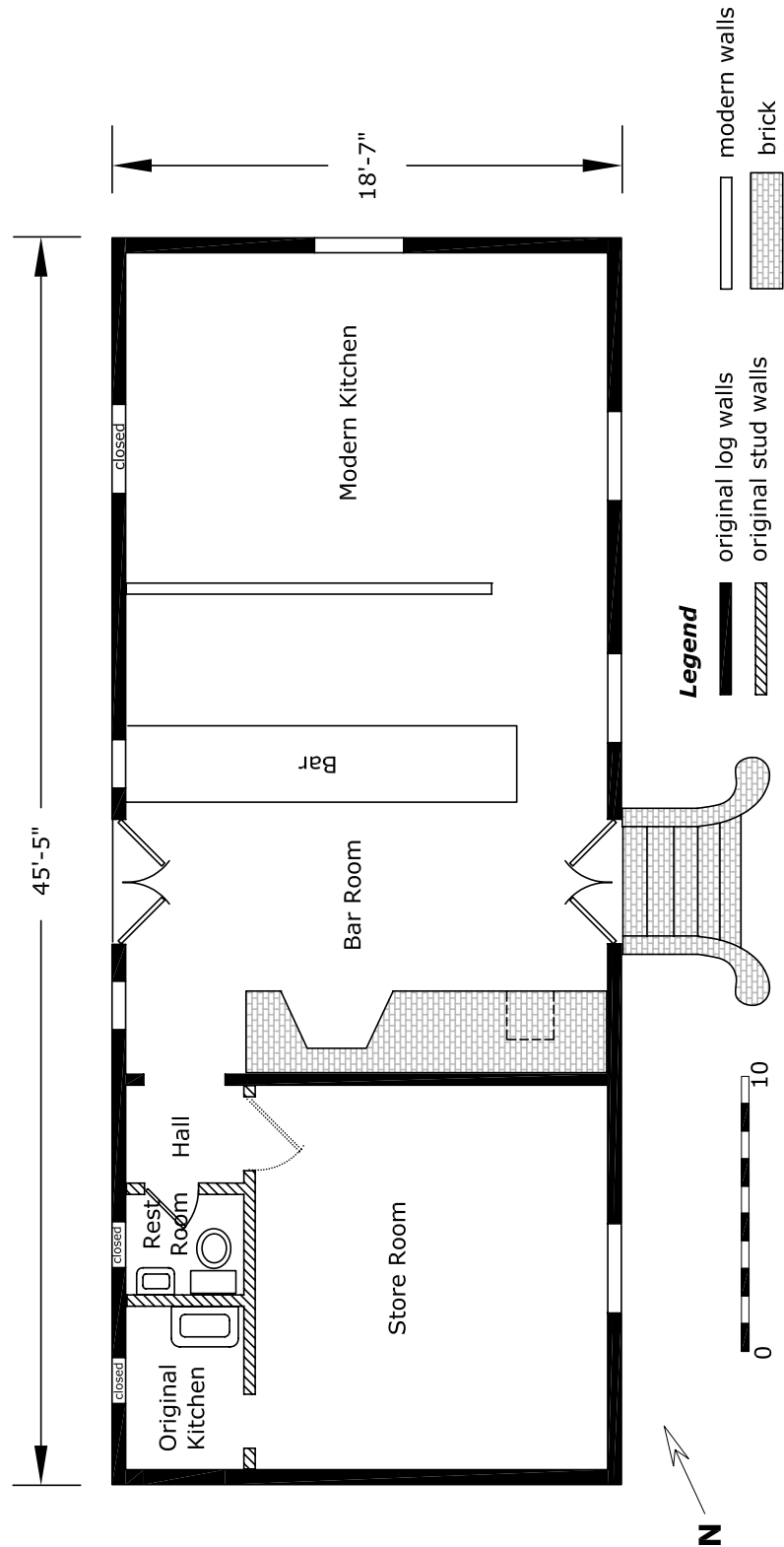
FIGURE 56. View south of Rest Room.

## Physical Description



# Floor Plan of Existing Building

**Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop**  
Existing Floor Plan  
May 2006



## Physical Description

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# Treatment and Use

Probably built early in 1941, the Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop is a National- Register- eligible property locally significant for its associations with the development of tourism in Natchez in the first half of the twentieth century. The main purpose of the present study has been to assess the building's condition and to provide recommendations for treatment and use.

## Requirements for Treatment and Use

### Legal Requirements

A number of laws and regulations circumscribe treatment and use of the Gift Shop and the other historic structures in our national parks. In addition to protecting the cultural resource, these requirements also address issues of human safety, fire protection, energy conservation, abatement of hazardous materials, and handicapped accessibility.

**Authorizing Legislation.** The first and foremost of these laws and regulations is Public Law 100- 479 establishing Natchez National Historical Park, which was passed by Congress in 1988. Among the stated purposes for the park is to “preserve and interpret the sites and structures associated with all the peoples of Natchez and its surrounding area from earliest inhabitants to the modern era . . . .” Although the Act calls for “particular emphasis on [the region’s] pre- and post- Civil War eras,” preservation of the Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop and interpretation of Natchez’s development as a tourist destination in the first half of the twentieth century could be a useful component of the park’s program for visitors.

**National Historic Preservation Act.** The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended (NHPA) mandates Federal protection of significant

cultural resources. In implementing the act, a number of laws and authorities have been established that are binding on the NPS. A routine step in the park’s planning process for the treatment of historic structures is compliance with Section 106 of NHPA, which requires Federal agencies “to take into account the effect” of any undertaking involving National Register properties. To satisfy the requirements of Section 106, regulations have been promulgated (36 CFR Part 800, “Protection of Historic Properties”) that require, among other things, consultation with local governments, State Historic Preservation Officers, Indian tribal representatives, and others with an interest in the property.

**Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990.** The Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) establishes comprehensive civil rights protection for disabled Americans, both in employment and in their right to free, unaided access to public buildings. While people with restricted mobility have most frequently benefited from ADA, protection also extends to those with other disabilities. This would include visitors with impaired vision or hearing, for whom printed tour scripts and audio tours allow interpretation of the site.

Requirements for full compliance with ADA regulations are extensive and easiest to apply to new construction. Full compliance for historic buildings is more difficult and sometimes would require significant alterations to the historic character of the property. There is little, however, that would prevent making the Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop fully accessible while still maintaining the historic character of the building.

**International Building Code.** Building codes are generally applicable to all buildings whether they are historic or not. As a matter of policy, the NPS is guided by the International Building Code, which

includes this statement regarding codes and historic buildings:

3406.1 Historic Buildings: The provisions of this code related to the construction, repair, alteration, addition, restoration and movement of structures, and change of occupancy shall not be mandatory for historic buildings where such buildings are judged by the building official to not constitute *a distinct life safety hazard* [emphasis added].

Threats to public health and safety should always be eliminated, and the simplicity of the present building should facilitate full compliance with modern codes.

**NFPA Code 914.** The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has promulgated codes for historic buildings, most notably NFPA 909, “Code for the Protection of Cultural Resources Properties - Museums, Libraries, and Places of Worship,” and NFPA 914, “Code for Fire Protection of Historic Structures.” If the building is rewired and a sprinkler system installed, the latter being required by NPS policy (see below), fire protection will revolve around fire *prevention* through prohibiting storage of flammable materials and smoking inside the building. Portable fire extinguishers should also be maintained on site, especially while any work is being done on the building.

## DOI and NPS Policies and Regulations

NPS policy requires planning for the protection of cultural resources “whether or not they relate to the specific authorizing legislation or interpretive programs of the parks in which they lie.” Thus, the Gift Shop must be understood in its own cultural context and managed in light of its own values.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to NPS- 28, “Cultural Resource Management Guideline,” which has guided development of this historic structure report, the Secretary of the Interior and the Director of the National Park Service have issued other policies and regulations that circumscribe treatment of historic buildings. NPS-58, for example, requires installation of systems for fire detection and suppression whenever a building is undergoing rehabilitation.

**Secretary's Standards.** The Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* have established a framework in which to plan and execute treatment of historic structures. Guidelines for interpreting the *Standards* have been issued, and the NPS has also published forty- two *Preservation Briefs* that provide detailed direction for appropriate treatment of a variety of materials, features, and conditions found in historic buildings.

In general, regardless of approach, the *Standards* follow the old dictum: “Better preserve than repair, better repair than restore, better restore than reconstruct.” A high priority is placed on preservation of existing historic *materials* and not just the architectural form and style. Replacement of an entire log, for example, even when replacement is “in kind,” diminishes the authenticity of the building, if for no other reason than the elimination of the evidence of the passage of time. The *Standards* also require that any alterations, additions, or other modifications be reversible, i.e., designed and constructed in such a way that they can be removed or reversed in the future without the loss of existing historic materials, features, or character.

**General Management Policies.** Finally, the NPS General Management Policies (2001) guide overall management of historic buildings in the parks, especially Chapter 5 “Cultural Resource Management.” Based upon the authority of some nineteen Acts of Congress and many more Executive orders and regulations, these policies require

planning to ensure that management processes for making decisions and setting priorities integrate information about cultural resources, and provide for consultation and collaboration with outside entities; and stewardship to ensure that cultural resources are preserved and protected, receive appropriate treatments (including maintenance), and are made available for public understanding and enjoyment.<sup>20</sup>

Section 5.3.5, “Treatment of Cultural Resources,” provides specific directives, including a directive that “the preservation of cultural resources in their existing states will always receive first consideration.” The section also states that

treatments entailing greater intervention will not proceed without the consideration of interpretive alternatives. The appearance and

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19. “Cultural Resource Management Guidelines,” (1997), p. 1

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20. NPS General Management Policies (2001), p. 50.

condition of resources before treatment, and changes made during treatment, will be documented. Such documentation will be shared with any appropriate state or tribal historic preservation office or certified local government, and added to the park museum cataloging system. Pending treatment decisions reached through the planning process, all resources will be protected and preserved in their existing states.<sup>21</sup>

## Treatment and Use

According to the park's General Management Plan (1994), "All structures [at the Fort Rosalie unit] will be removed except the Steitenroth house and one or two other historic buildings that would be used for visitor contact, NPS staff quarters, or other park purposes." The GMP also states that any NR-eligible properties would be moved or, if that was not possible, appropriate use would be made of them on site.<sup>22</sup> Treatment and use of the Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop are not specifically addressed in the GMP.

21. NPS General Management Policies (2001), p. 56

22. Natchez NHP, *General Management Plan* (1994), p. 56.

### Part II: Treatment and Use

In 1995, a memorandum of agreement (MOA) was signed by the City of Natchez, the Historic Natchez Foundation, the Mississippi SHPO, the National Park Service, and the President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation that outlined disposition of the historic structures on the Fort Rosalie site. Like the GMP, the MOA stipulates preservation in place and adaptive use of the Steitenroth House "as a visitor contact station." The MOA further stipulates that the Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop "will be relocated and repaired on the Fort Rosalie site and used for utility storage, or a similar park use."

However, more than a decade has passed since that agreement was reached, and changing circumstances during that period necessitate a re-evaluation of the decisions made in the GMP and the MOA. In particular, since that time the park has negotiated a cooperative agreement to maintain park headquarters in the City's visitors center, instead of in the Steitenroth House as suggested in the GMP. In addition, there is now a better understanding of the condition and significance of the log building referred to as "Fat Mama's" in planning documents and now known as the Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop.



FIGURE 57. Preferred alternative for redevelopment of the Fort Rosalie site, as depicted in the park's GMP. The arrow at right indicates the site of the Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop, which was proposed for removal. The building designated "1" is the Steitenroth House; the area designated "2" is a proposed staff parking lot. The park's headquarters are in a structure connected to the now defunct "Toll Plaza" at lower left.

## Use

Perhaps the most important consideration in the preservation of historic structures is that of use, since use largely determines the extent of required alterations to the building. For that reason, the first of the Secretary's Standards states that "a property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships."

Reconsideration of the Preferred Alternative in the GMP would allow the park to develop a plan that more nearly achieves the goal of that standard, which is especially important for the Old Fort Rosalie Gift Shop. The decision to remove the building from its historic location should be reversed and the building rehabilitated in situ. The proposed development plan (Figure 49) proposes nothing more than clearing the site of the Gift Shop, which seems needless considering that the Steitenroth House as well as the retaining walls along Canal Street south of the Gift Shop are proposed for retention. Clearly there is no compelling reason to remove the building from its current location, especially since it is difficult to envision another location on the site that would retain any sense of the building's historic context along Canal Street. Constructed as a sort of entrance or visitors center for the reconstructed Fort Rosalie, the building is situated in such a way that it does not intrude on the integrity of the site as a whole and is in a zone that has already been selected for rehabilitation and adaptive use.

On-site adaptation of the building for "utility storage" remains a feasible option for use, although that would diminish opportunities for interpreting the building. If modern partitions were removed, the building could also provide excellent exhibit space, perhaps for interpretation of early twentieth century Natchez and the genesis of its tourist industry in the 1930s. The nature of the building's construction would make it difficult to adapt the structure as a climate-controlled facility for display of museum artifacts, but the building could easily accommodate display of modern exhibit panels that could greatly expand the park's interpretation of Natchez.

Alternatively, a visitor contact station could be established in the Gift Shop, which could be adapted for that use, including the addition of

handicapped-accessible facilities. This could be done with far less impact on the historic structure than would be the case if the Steitenroth House were adapted in a similar manner.

Among the options for use that might also be considered would be a return of the building to its original use, which was a gift shop for the c. 1940 Fort Rosalie tourist attraction. The building's location directly on Canal Street at the edge of the Fort Rosalie site would give the NPS and Eastern National a highly visible location on one of downtown Natchez's busiest thoroughfares.

## Treatment

Even with necessary repairs, preservation of the building in its present state is probably not an option, unless the building continues to be used as a restaurant. Modern partitions and other alterations make the building ill-suited for most of the uses discussed above.

Restoration of the building to its original appearance might be considered. In addition to removing modern additions, restoration would require, among other things, removal of three added window openings, replacement of modern sash, and replacement of the metal roof with wood shakes. Restoration of log walls to close an added window opening is no easy task and would require replacement of entire logs if evidence for the opening is to be eliminated entirely. More important, restoration is normally considered only for its interpretive value, and little if any value would be gained for interpretive purposes by attempting a full-blown restoration of the Gift Shop. Nevertheless, treatment might include restoration of some original features when any one of them, such as the roof covering, requires replacement.

As with many historic buildings, repairs and rehabilitation for adaptive use is the recommended treatment approach. Given the simplicity of the Gift Shop, repairs and rehabilitation should not be complicated or extraordinarily expensive, but the extent and nature of necessary changes and alterations will be determined by the new program of use for the building. In some instances, rehabilitation might include restoration of certain elements such as the windows if restoration of the original fenestration would benefit the new use.

## Recommendations

The following preliminary recommendations are divided into two groups. The first pertains to actions or treatments that are necessary to preserve the structure no matter the use to which it is put. The second are general recommendations to be considered in rehabilitation once an ultimate use for the building is determined. As a practical matter, the distinction between these types of treatment is not hard and fast, and logistics and other considerations will determine the precise sequence in which these tasks are performed.

### Preservation

- remove chinaberry trees, stumps, and yucca from around front and southern end of building
- install monitors for termite infestation and treat as necessary
- remove earth from against rear of building and eliminate all wood- to- ground contact
- clear crawl space of debris and construct new piers as needed

### Part II: Treatment and Use

- establish drainage system that will move rainwater quickly away from the building
- replace first three or four logs around perimeter of building and elsewhere as necessary
- repair floor systems as necessary
- repair and repaint metal roofing

### Rehabilitation

- replace electrical and plumbing systems to meet needs of new use
- install HVAC equipment in attic above store room
- install fire detection and suppression systems
- remove modern partitions, modern paneling, and added floor system from large pen
- remove fiber board on walls and ceiling and modern floor coverings from small pen
- if necessary, reconfigure south pen for new use, but maintain historic opening between the two pens
- establish handicapped access from parking lot to the rear doors; preserve front steps





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# Sources of Information

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Delehanty, Randolph, and Van Jones Martin. *Classic Natchez: History, Homes, and Gardens*. Savannah and New Orleans: Martin- St. Martin Publishing Company, 1996.

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Natchez City Directories, 1938- 1985, collection of Historic Natchez Foundation.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1892- 1966.





As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

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