

Gilreaths Hill Tavern
Ellicots Inn
Natchez, Miss.

H.A.B.S. No. ~~17-4~~
17-4

HABS
MISS.
1-NATCH

2-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI

Historic American Buildings Survey
A. Hays Town, District Officer
Jackson, Miss.

HABS
MISS
1. NATCH
2.

GILREATH'S HILL TAVERN
ELLICOTTS INN
Natchez, Adams County, Mississippi

Owner (Or Custodian)

Natchez Flower Pilgrimage

Date of Erection

1796

Architect

Builder

Present Condition

Good

Number of Stories

Two

Materials of Construction

Foundation

Brick and Wood Frame

Floors

Lower floor, brick; Second floor, wood;
Basement, Brick floor.

Exterior Walls

Interior Walls

Roof

Other Existing Records

Ellicotts Inn has vaulted ceilings with
long narrow galleries.

Additional Data

This Inn was named for Colonel Andrew Ellicott
of Penn., who here raised the American flag for
the first time in this territory, unofficially
and in defiance of Spanish Governor Gayoso in
1797. It was once a famous inn on the Natchez
Trace.

pw 8/1/57

GILREATH'S HILL (TAVERN)

Canal Street Natchez Adams County Mississippi
Within one block of Old Natchez Trace

The first authentic deed found on "Gilreath's Hill" was made in 1795, at which time the property was granted to one Solomon Sweazie by the Spanish Governor, Manuel Gayoso de Leanos. This was a re-grant and historians will note that the date is significant. It was in 1795 that a treaty was signed between the United States and Spain, making parallel 31 the dividing line between their possessions.

.Gilreath's Hill was passed from Sweazie to Patrick Connolly in 1797. The same year Andrew Ellicott, the Commissioner named by the President to survey the line between the United States and Spain's possessions, reached Natchez. According to two historians he made his camp on Gilreath's Hill, where he raised "Old Glory" for the first time over the Natchez country.

.The house is said to have been built between 1795 and 1798. After a time it became a tavern, not one that entertained the uncouth boatmen or sailors, but a select inn for rich planters and visitors from the north. Tradition says Heman Blennerhasset stopped here with his family on their arrival in Natchez in 1807, and soon after Blennerhasset was joined here by Aaron Burr, who came for a conference with his confederate.

Samuel Brooks, of Exeter, New Hampshire, who bought the place in 1810, came to Natchez with his family in 1801, making the journey in flat boats down the Mississippi. Enroute they met William Henry Harrison, then a young officer stationed at Cincinnati, who entertained them for a time in his quarters at the garrison. Mr. Brooks was made the first mayor of Natchez following its incorporation under the laws of the United States.

The next prominent owner of the old house on Gilreath Hill was Doctor Frederick Seio, a medical graduate of Philadelphia. When the Natchez Hospital was incorporated in 1805, he, with several other doctors, became one of the first hospital directors in the state.

The old building is now owned by Mr. J. W. Sanders, Jackson, Mississippi, and is uninhabited because of its dilapidated condition.

Compiled from data of
Stewart Outhbertson
Mrs. Wyatt Moore
Mrs. Balfour Miller

GILREATH'S HILL TAVERN

Canal Street Natchez Adams County Mississippi
Within one block of Old Natchez Trace

Even if there were no official mention of "Gilreath's Hill Tavern" in early Natchez records, its approximate date of construction might well be established from its architectural characteristics. The method of construction, together with the ornamental wood work and roof lines, definitely gives it a place in the Spanish Dominion. Its likeness in detail to "The Evans Home," the early portion of "Windy Hill Manor," and ~~information from~~ pictures of "Concord" may even indicate the possibility of the same builders.

The house is directly on the edge of a precipice, ~~and~~ some sixteen feet above the street. Its ceilings are low; the first story is brick, stuccoed; the second story sides and rear are sided with wood; the front is stuccoed on wood lath above its gallery's wood wainscot. Across the front is a two story gallery with an exposed stairway on one end parallel with the wall. The original columns and bannisters are gone and have been replaced with four by six posts and rough railings. With proper imagination one might reconstruct the original picture, using some of the Louisiana Spanish Colonial houses, with their turned columns, as a guide.

The most characteristic detail is perhaps the roof line. The central portion or major house is roofed with a forty-five degree pitch; the galleries, together with the side rooms and original rear porch, break off of the central roof, somewhere near its quarter points, with pitches ranging from five to twelve and seven to twelve. This condition is prevalent in most Spanish houses in Mississippi, on Louisiana plantations and in New Orleans. The ceilings under the low pitched roofs are vaulted, following the rafter lines to the center of the rooms.

.The framing is hand-hewn, cross-braced, mortised and tenoned, and pegged with wood -- the lath are hand-split wood lath of varying widths and thicknesses. The exterior wood cornice is cut and shaped from solid cypress logs, and is pitched all around the house toward the underground cistern. Most of the wood used was poplar and cypress.

.The grade, about six or eight feet from the rear, rises vertically to the second floor level, and is retained by a brick wall. There is evidenced by the plan the existence of an original rear porch, perhaps with a bridge to the high grade point. There is even a possibility that this was the original main entrance.

.The entrance doorways, the mantels, the wood cornices and wood wainecots are exquisite in detail, and are perfectly executed. The doors, typical of that period, are flush-paneled on one side with separating bead, and raised-paneled on the other -- some of the raised panels with mouldings, others without. It is interesting that such delicate detail should appear in a finished building with so much rough hand-cutting in its structural portions.

The house is very dilapidated -- much of the stucco is off of the brick work; a portion of the rear wall has broken, and has almost crumbled away; the siding has suffered from lack of painting; and the pine posts and galleries, changed from the original in late years, are in bad repair. For several years the roof was not covered, so much of the interior woodwork and plaster has deteriorated, in most cases beyond repair.

.While in its present state of repair, "The Tavern" would not attract the casual passer, but it must have been a beautiful structure in its original state, and certainly should not be overlooked by one seeking inspiration for a home thoroughly adaptable to this climate and this section of the South.