

James T. Butler House
Old Natchez Trace
Tishomingo Vicinity
Tishomingo County
Mississippi

HABS No. MS-175

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

JAMES BUTLER HOUSE

Location: On the Old Natchez Trace, 0.5 mile northwest of Mackeys Creek, 5.0 miles southwest of the intersection of State Routes 25 and 30, 4.4 miles southwest of Tishomingo, Tishomingo Vicinity, Tishomingo County, Mississippi.

USGS Paden SE 7 1/2' Quadrangle, UTM Coordinates:
16.380780.3830500.

Present Owner: United States of America (January 1979).

Present Use: Vacant.

Significance: The James Butler House, built in 1913, is an example of the persistence of nineteenth century plan types and stylistic details in the southwestern part of Tishomingo County, Mississippi. The central hall plan used in the house had its greatest popularity during the first half of the nineteenth century while the turned porch columns and brackets were of a type extensively used during the later part of that century. The dwelling was the home of James T. Butler (born 1855), who was Tishomingo County's oldest citizen at the time of his death in 1957.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The Butler House was built in 1913. (Interviews with Carrie Shackelford Wilemon and Ruby Butler Caldwell) The date "1913", written in blue, appears on the chimney at the east end of the house.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Butler House is located in the Southeast Quarter of Section 25, Township 5 South, Range 9 East, in Tishomingo County, Mississippi. References to the title of this land may be found in the Old Tishomingo County Deed Records located in the Office of Chancery Clerk, Tishomingo County Courthouse, Iuka, Mississippi.

1860 Warrant Deed. J. W. Morton et al. to William Butler, February 15, 1860. Recorded in Old Tishomingo County Deed Book W, p. 324.

Conveyance of the "South East Quarter Section Twenty Five in Township Five of Range Nine East of the Basis Meridian containing one hundred and sixty (160) acres more or less," for \$200.

- 1889 Deed. G. G. Butler to James T. Butler, October 14, 1889. Recorded in Deed Book P 1, p. 488. G. G. Butler conveyed his interest in the estate of William Butler, deceased, to William Butler's son James who built the house. In addition to the 160 acres described above, the estate also included 60 acres in the northeast portion of the southwest quarter of Section 25, Township 5 South, Range 9 East. The land remained in the Butler family until 1978.
- 1978 Warranty Deed. Rubin Rex Butler and Ruby Butler Caldwell [grandchildren of James Butler] to the United States of America, June 21, 1978. Recorded in Deed Book B-92, pp. 681-686. 160 acres for \$94,000.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Unknown.
5. Original construction: Although the Butler House has been recently renovated, its basic plan and configuration remain the same (See floor plan, included with Part II., Architectural Information.) The original plan consisted of two rooms on either side of a central hall. A front porch extended across the south side of the house. A two-room ell extended north from the northwest corner of the house, and a back porch, continued out from the central hall along the east side of the ell. The back porch was screened above a low wall. A "side room," was located off the back porch along the northeast side of the house. ("Side room" is a local term denoting a shed room formed by enclosing a portion of a porch. The only access to the room is from the porch.) The present living room, to the west of the central hall, was originally James T. Butler's bedroom. The bedroom in the ell, to the north of this room, was originally the dining room. The kitchen remains in its original location at the north end of the ell. The house was constructed with a roof of "bought shingles." (Interview with Carrie Shackelford Wilemon)

6. Alterations and additions: Most of the changes to the house occurred in 1971 when it was renovated under Ruby Butler Caldwell's direction. The house had previously been wired for electricity in the late 1940s. In 1971 interior paneling and linoleum were added. Plumbing was installed, and the "side room" was converted to a bathroom. The screened back porch along the east side of the ell was enclosed at this time. The original house had had no closets, so Ruby Caldwell added three. Most of the work was done by her husband, James, and Alf Crane. (Interview with Ruby Butler Caldwell)

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Structure:

1. James T. Butler (1855-1957) was the son of William Butler and Mary Parilee Butler, who came to Tishomingo County, Mississippi, from Itawamba County, Mississippi in 1857. (Old Tishomingo County Deed Records; Iuka Vidette, January 5, 1956) James Butler was married to Margaret Anne Davis (1859-1934) around 1877 (U.S. Census of Population, 1900). In addition to raising his own younger brothers and sisters, Butler had five surviving children. These children included Connie Butler Shackelford, Mittie Butler McClung, Madge Butler Carroll, and Alvin and Sidney Butler. (Interview with Carrie Shackelford Wilemon) He was active until suffering a stroke one year before his death. Butler was at that time Tishomingo County's oldest citizen. (Memphis Commercial Appeal, January 8, 1956)

2. James Butler farmed the land, growing cotton and corn, and raising horses, mules, cows, chickens, turkeys, and geese. The livestock was pastured but the fowl were allowed to run. (Interview with Ruby Butler Caldwell) All ploughing was done with mules. (Interview with Carrie Shackelford Wilemon)

3. Alvin Butler and his family also lived in the house with his father. After Alvin's wife's death in 1965, Alvin left the house which was then occupied by his daughter, Ruby Butler Caldwell, and her husband. He moved back in 1972 and lived there until his death in 1974. (Interview with Carrie Shackelford Wilemon)

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed Records, Office of Chancery Clerk Tishomingo County Courthouse, Iuka, Mississippi. Office of Chancery Clerk, Alcorn County Courthouse, Corinth, Mississippi, and Natchez Mississippi. There is no reference to the Butler House in the Trace Archives despite the age of the structure and its location on the Old Natchez Trace. There are references to the Jackson Camp Church.

Interviews:

Rubin Rex Butler, Huntsville, Alabama. Telephone conversation, August 15, 1979. He is the son of Alvin Butler and the brother of Ruby Butler Caldwell. He offered information about the Butler farm.

Ruby Butler Caldwell, Iuka, Mississippi, August 25, 1978. Ruby Caldwell is the daughter of Alvin Butler and the present occupant of the house. She provided general information about the property and about alterations to the James Butler House.

Carrie Shackelford Wilemon, Burton, Mississippi, August 9, 1978. Mrs. Wilemon is in her seventies and is the granddaughter of James Butler. She furnished information about the original state of the house and about the Butler family.

Cemeteries:

Jackson Camp Cemetery, Jackson Camp Church, Old Natchez Trace, Tishomingo County, Mississippi, about 5 miles southwest of Tishomingo. Most of the Butlers have been buried at this cemetery. All birth and death dates used in this history have come from tombstones.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Memphis Commercial Appeal, January 8, 1956. Collection of Carrie Shackelford Wilemon. Available on microfilm in the Library of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi.

U.S. Census of Population, 1900, Tishomingo County, Mississippi, p. 211 B. Available on microfilm in the Library of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson Mississippi.

Prepared by: Betty K. Bird
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Historic American Buildings
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August 1978

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January 1979

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Butler House is typical of early twentieth century vernacular rural dwellings whose design exhibits certain characteristics of architectural styles popular during the nineteenth century. The full porch with turned columns and brackets, the pediment with simple returns, and the quarter round moldings below the eaves are typical of those decorative features applied to rural domestic architecture up to World War I.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is in good condition, with no apparent deterioration.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The building as originally constructed was L-shaped. The main section measures approximately 40' (three-bay front) by 14'. The ell is 22' long and 14'-6" across. The enclosed porches inside the L measure 22' by 10' and 6' by 12'. (See floor plan, below.)
2. Foundations: The original section of the house rests on brick piers. The porches sit on concrete piers.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The walls are sheathed with weatherboards painted white, with dark red trim and corner boards.
4. Structural system, framing: The house is of wood frame construction.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: A full porch extends across the south (front) side of the house. The porch has a shed roof of corrugated metal supported by turned wood columns with decorative wood brackets. The porch rests on brick piers and has a wood floor. Two concrete steps lead up to the porch opposite the entrance.
6. Chimneys: Two exterior end chimneys are constructed of a light buff-colored brick. The chimneys have corbeled caps and stepped shoulders and bases.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The main front entrance in the south facade is paneled. The upper half of the doorway was apparently at one time glazed but is presently covered with a piece of plywood. The door is framed by plain boards painted red. There is a second paneled wood door into the northeast rear room.
- b. Windows and shutters: The windows on the main section and ell have two-over-two-lights double hung sash. Window frames are plain boards painted red. The enclosed rear porch has a pair of windows, each consisting of a single sash with four lights. On the north side of the ell the original window has been removed, leaving a break in the siding, and a similar pair of single sash windows has been installed.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The gable roof on the main section of the building is covered with standing seam metal sheeting, except for the northeast rear slope, where asphalt shingles are used. The gable-roof on the ell and the shed roofs of the enclosed porches are covered with standing seam metal.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Plain fascia boards with quarter round moldings forming a cornice are nailed into place below the eaves and form returns on the gable ends. Both the fascia and molding are painted dark red.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The main section of the house has a central hall floor plan with a single room on each side of the hall. The room to the west opens onto the first of the two rooms in the ell. The second of these two rooms at the rear of the ell is the kitchen. The rear of the central hall, which at one time opened on to a back porch, now provides access to the long room along the east side of the ell. This room in turn provides access to the rear room at the northeast corner of the house, utilized as a bathroom. (See floor plan.)
2. Stairways: None.
3. Flooring: The original wood floors have been covered with vinyl.

4. Walls and ceiling finish: The walls are covered with veneered wood siding. The kitchen walls are tile and plywood. The ceilings are covered with plaster board and acoustical tile.
5. Doorways and doors: The wood doors are paneled.
6. Decorative features and trim: There is a mantel surrounding the brick fireplace in each of the rooms off the central hall in the main section of the house. The mantel in the west room appears to be original. The mantel shelf is formed by a plain board with chamfered pilasters. The entire mantel is painted white. The mantel in the east room has a mirror set on a wood panel above the shelf. Plain wood boards form the vertical supports. The mantel is painted dark brown. An electric heater with a metal frame and a decorative metal heat shield has been installed inside the fireplace.
7. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: Electric heaters and wood burning fireplace.
 - b. Lighting: Incandescent.
 - c. Water supply: An electric pump enclosed in a small pumphouse by a spring approximately ten yards from the rear of the house provides spring water to the house.

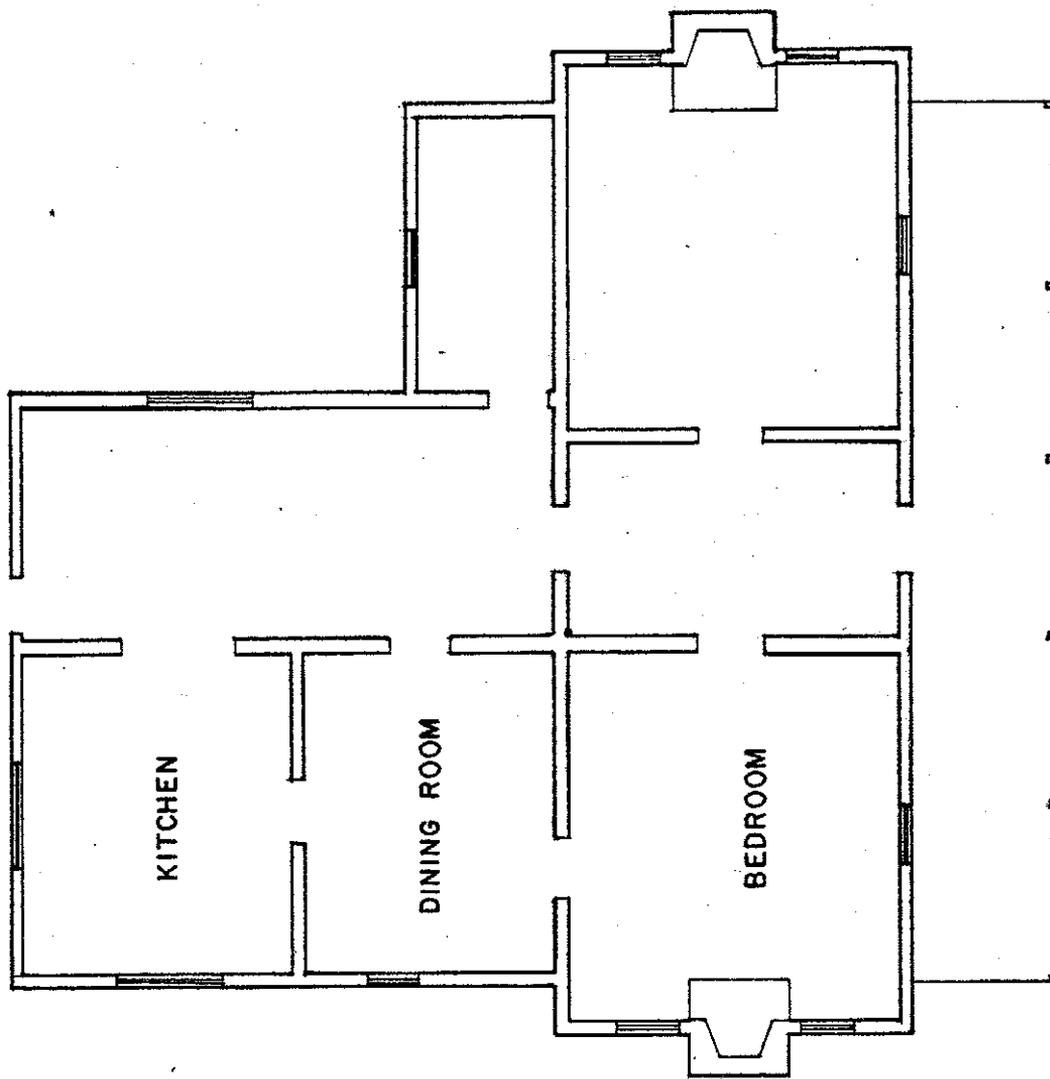
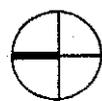
D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces south with the ridge of the roof running east-west. About 100 feet in front of the house is the Old Natchez Trace. Much of the surrounding area is heavily wooded with shortleaf and loblolly pine, red and white oak yellow poplar, sweetgum, hickory, walnut and wild pecan trees. About 15 acres of the 160-acre site have been cleared for cropland, about 15 acres for pasture.
2. Outbuildings:
 - a. About 30' northwest of the house is the Butler Dogtrot (See HABS No. MS-183)
 - b. About 210' northeast of the house is a frame storage shed, 11' by 12', with a corrugated metal gable roof.

- c. About 210' west of the house is a transverse crib barn, 24' (three-bay front) by 26', flanked by two 7' side sheds. The barn is built of hardwood lumber, sheathed with horizontal boards, and has a gable roof, covered with corrugated metal sheeting. It was built in 1926.
- d. About 40' farther west is another transverse crib barn, 24' (three-bay front) by 24', flanked by two 7' side sheds. The barn is built of pine lumber, sheathed with vertical boards up to the level of the eaves and with horizontal boards above. It has a gambrel roof, covered with corrugated metal sheeting. The barn was built in 1939 and has been used most recently for the storage of corn.
- e. Several hundred yards north of the house is a one-story frame house 36'-4" (three-bay front) by 24'-8". It faces south and has a front porch 31' by 5'-11". The house sits on stone and concrete block pilings and is of lightweight stud construction. The walls are sheathed with asbestos sheets, stamped with a brick pattern and colored dark red. The house has a broken-pitch gable roof, with ridge line running east-west--the lower pitched shed like sections of roof extending over the front porch and the rooms at the rear. There is a central chimney, constructed of brick taken from the two exterior end chimneys of the Butler Dogtrot. The main part of the house has a double-pen (two-room) plan, the west room measuring 19'-9" by 16'-5", and the east room 16'-7" by 16'-5". A door at the northeast corner of the west room leads to the northeast rear room, measuring 24' by 8'-6". A door in the west wall of this shallow room leads to the northwest rear room, measuring 12'-6" by 8'-6". The front door enters the west room in its southeast corner. A second door enters the east end of the northeast rear room. There is one front and one end window in each of the two front rooms. There are two windows in the long northeast room, one in the smaller northwest room. The windows have double hung four-over-four or two-over-two sash.

- f. Near this house is a born, facing south, that began as a single-pen structure, 11'-6" (one-bay front) by 12'-11". This section, of log construction, with half dovetail corner timbering, was originally a separate structure, moved to this location at the time the nearby central-chimney farmhouse was constructed. Attached to the east and west sides are stalls measuring 7'-5" by 12'-11". These are of horizontal plank construction. The central pen and flanking stalls are under a single gable roof, with ridge line running north-south. (The covering, presumably metal sheeting, is gone.) Along the entire north side of the barn is an added animal containing two stalls, with overall dimensions of enclosure 26'-6" by 7'-2". It is also of horizontal plank construction and has an open end, facing east. This rear addition has a gable roof that is an extension of the main gable roof, covered with corrugated metal sheeting.

Prepared by: Sally K. Tompkins
Project Historian
Historic American Buildings
Survey
January 1979



PART II. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the documentation done during the 1978 Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Project, undertaken by HABS in cooperation with the Interagency Archeological Services, Atlanta, and cosponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile and Nashville Districts, in compliance with Executive Order 11593, as a mitigative effort in the construction of the waterway. Records were made of eighteen historic sites and structures in the region between Gainesville, Alabama, and Iuka, Mississippi.

The project was executed under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief, and Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect, of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Project Supervisor was James Murray Howard of the University of Illinois. Project Historian was Betty K. Bird of the University of Virginia. The Assistant Historian was Michael Ann Williams (University of Pennsylvania). Foreman was Ruthie D. Whiley of the University of Florida. Student Architects who prepared measured drawings for the project were Carol J. Crandall (Carnegie-Mellon University), Richard J. Cronenberger (University of Miami), Peter G. Darlow (McGill University), Daniel M. Gaines (University of Tennessee), and R. Bradley Mellor (Rice University). The inventory of sites within the project area was carried out by Inventory Supervisor J. A. Chewing of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Assistant Historian for the inventory was Pamela J. Wolf (George Washington University). One structure was recorded during the winter of 1979 by project supervisor Peter G. Darlow (McGill University), Sally K. Tompkins, Project Historian, and Staff Architects Bethanie C. Grashof, Rudy Massengill, and Janet Hochuli (The Cooper Union). Drawings for this structure were completed during the spring of 1979 by staff Architects Peter G. Darlow, Janet Hochuli, James F. Speake and Reginald A. Berry (Howard University). Photographs were taken by David J. Kaminsky in the summer of 1978 and by Gil Ford in the spring of 1979.