

JOHNSON & McCALLUM HOUSES, WILLIAM JOHNSON HOUSE
Johnson & McCallum Houses
Natchez
Adams County
Mississippi

HABS NO.: MS-270-A

HABS
MISS
1-NATCH,
32A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
National Park Service
Department of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

ADDENDUM TO:
JOHNSON & MCCALLUM HOUSES, WILLIAM JOHNSON HOUSE
Natchez National Historical Park
210 State Street
Natchez
Adams County
Mississippi

HABS No. MS-270-A

HABS
MISS
1-NATCH,
32A-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WILLIAM JOHNSON HOUSE

HABS No. MS-270-A

HABS
MISS
1-NATCHEZ
22A

Location: 210 State St. (south side State Street between Canal and Wall Streets), Natchez, Adams County, Mississippi 39121. Located on .1419 acres of Block 5, Lot 3 (tract 103-1) in downtown Natchez. UTM coordinates, Natchez quadrangle: 15:651310.3492580

Present Owner/
Occupant: National Park Service

Present Use: Awaiting restoration, remodeling for use as interpretive site.

Significance: William Johnson, a successful free black entrepreneur in antebellum Natchez, built this substantial brick townhouse in 1840-1841 as a commercial property and primary residence. Within this building, Johnson maintained a diary documenting his life, his business enterprises, social relationships and status in the Natchez community. This significant document is the first known complete diary to chronicle the life of a free black person in the antebellum South. With Greek Revival details typical of business and residential buildings in the 1820s to 1860s, this house represents Johnson's aspirations within the community. Members of Johnson's family owned and lived in this building until 1975.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1840-41.
2. Architect: none known; probably designed by the builder, George Weldon, and owner, William Johnson. Alteration and restoration by New Orleans firm of Koch and Wilson, 1977-1986.
3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants and uses: Two 1991-92 archaeological investigations have revealed the presence of between two and four previous structures located on the premises.¹ Deed books prior to 1820 describe a much larger property (Lot 4, Square 2, 162' x 162'), upon which stood several buildings. The earliest building on this site probably dates to circa 1795.²

The first excavations found evidence of two and possibly three separate subsurface structural components. The first consists of two brick floors separated by a thin sandy layer of clay, located at the south corner of the building. The floors may indicate separate buildings or merely the leveling of ground for a final brick flooring for one house, but both date to the late eighteenth century. The

¹A physical description of the resources examined by the archaeological investigation follows in Part II, C. 1. "Floor Plans."

²Lot dimensions for Lot 4 Square 2 calculated from deed transactions, Deed Books L: 590-593; P: 451; U: 379, Chancery Court, Adams County Courthouse, Natchez, Mississippi.

upper floor represents a portion of a 21' x 14' house built by previous owner George Overaker, or possibly Gertrude Solibellas. This floor may have extended farther southwest, but any evidence was obliterated by an 1839 builder's trench for the present building's foundations. Two hollow, rectangular post cavities on the southeast edge of the floor indicate that a series of wall posts extended along the upper edge of the floor, and were probably sided with horizontal board. This level of excavation is associated with a 6"-thick strata filled with a high concentration of pottery fragments.

Construction of the subsequent pier-foundation house has been dated to the early 1800s. This building, described as Harriet Battles' "old" house by William Johnson in 1836, was probably built before 1829. It was replaced when Johnson had a new structure erected for his mother-in-law in 1836². Five piers with scorched upper courses are found within the southeast half of the Johnson interior floor. They describe a wall 32' long, laid perpendicular to State Street. It is assumed that piers for the parallel northwest wall were removed by Johnson during his cellar excavation work in 1841. The archaeological study determined that the piers belonged to the pre-1836 frame house, and were re-used during 1836 construction. The piers are associated with a 14"-deep fire zone deposit of burned artifacts, including brick rubble, charcoal, burned ceramics, and melted glass.³

1793: 13 February. Warrant: Spanish Government to Doña Maria Gertrudis Solibellas for Lot 4, Square 2, surveyed by William Dunbar, February 2, 1793, and confirmed by Carlos de Grand-Pre, February 24, 1794⁴.

²Johnson's reference to Harriet Battles' first residence as "old" suggests a structure pre-dating Battles' 1829 purchase of the lot. Although impossible to prove with certainty, 1796, 1806 and 1820 deeds refer to structures built by George Overaker on lot 2. An 1822 landscape by John James Audubon shows a building with horizontal siding and an end gable chimney situated roughly in this location, directly across from the three-story brick Southern Exchange Hotel. Its gable is set at a right angle to the street. However, Battles paid only \$2.00 for the lot, which suggests that few improvements had been made. Conversely, Battles' previous owner, and the grantor of this land, Tichenor, may have sold the lot and an extant building at a low price in partial fulfillment of his agreement to provide for her welfare following manumission. James Tooley's ca. 1835 landscape from the same location shows a different, larger structure, with a gable axis set parallel to the street. This second building has a central chimney. If Tooley in fact recorded Harriet Battles' second house, built by William Johnson, then the painting dates to at least 1836. An 1837 survey of the city recorded structures at the north and east corners of the block, but did not include Battles' house. See John James Audubon's untitled Natchez landscape, 1822, slide detail of original in possession of Marion Ferry, Grosse Point, Michigan, Historic Natchez Foundation, Natchez, Mississippi; James Tooley, Natchez on the Hill, From the Old Fort, lithograph ca. 1835, the Scharff Collection on loan to the Judge George W. Armstrong Library, from the Historic Natchez Foundation, Natchez, Mississippi; Mary W. Miller, "Notes on the 1837 Natchez Survey by George T. Olmstead and C. G. Forshey," n. d., Historic Natchez Foundation, Natchez, Mississippi.

³Investigations on the Johnson House were conducted from December 2 to 18, 1991, and January 8 to 17, 1992. See Jim Atkinson, "Trip Report: Summary of Archaeological Investigations at Natchez National Historic Park," 27 December 1991, and Atkinson, "Results of the Second Phase of Archaeological Field Work at the William Johnson House," 29 January 1992, draft memoranda to George Smith, Johnson House Files at Natchez National Historical Park, Natchez, Mississippi.

⁴William T. Johnson and Family Memorial Papers, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collection, Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge, Folder 14; Mary McBee, Natchez Court Records, Claim No. 1612 (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 1979), 480.

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- 1796: 27 February. Sale: Gertrude Solibellas to George Overaker, Lot 4, Square 2, "with house thereon," for \$150⁵.
- 1806: U. S. Patent: Lot 4, Square 2, to George Overaker by virtue of the sale to him by Gertrude Solibellas in 1796 and that he improved and built a house upon the lot in 1795⁶.
- 1820: 30 December. Deed of Partition: George Overaker Estate to daughters Elizabeth [Overaker] Tichenor and Maria Overaker. Margaret Overaker [widow] and Lewis Evans [trustee] to daughter Elizabeth Tichenor, Lot 4 of Square 2 "with the tenements and buildings thereon."⁷
- 1822: 27 June. Notice: Gabriel Tichenor, Concordia Parish, Louisiana, emancipates his "mulattress" Harriet, age 30+ in the state of Louisiana.⁸
- 1826: 27 April. Notice: Gabriel Tichenor of Natchez manumits Harriet Battles, 34, and her daughter, Ann, 11, "lately of Natchez . . . but now of and at Cincinnati" Ohio⁹.
- 1829: May. Sale: Gabriel and Elizabeth Tichenor to Harriet Battles, a lot 32' x 140' on first South Street, opposite "Traveller's Hall," for \$2.00. Bounded to the southeast by Gabriel Tichenor; to the southwest by Mr. Griffith (deceased), Judge Turner and Peter Lapice; and to the northwest by Peter Lapice.¹⁰
- 1836: 16 April. Johnson pays \$18 to "Mr. Rowes" (Rose) for a draft done by carpenter Deadsmore of his intended house.
- 8 November. William Johnson intends to have a lot "opposite of Mr. Parkers Hotel" surveyed by "Mr. Whales" (probably B.L.C. Wailes, register of the land office at Washington, 1826-1835).
- 22 November. Mrs. Battles "moves out of her House to have another put up in the place of the old One."

⁵Spanish Records Book C: 377, Adams County Courthouse, Natchez, Mississippi.

⁶Land Claims Book E, 446, Adams County Courthouse; Claim No. 1612, filed March 30, 1804, Certificate No. B-13 from McBee, 480--no copy on file at the Mississippi Secretary of State Records.

⁷Deed Book L: 590-593, Adams County Courthouse. George Overaker was the father of Elizabeth Tichenor, recorded in Will Book I: 201-203, Adams County Courthouse. Gabriel Tichenor married an Elizabeth Wallace on April 10, 1810, but as early as 1802 (the year of the earliest extant marriage records) there is no record of an Elizabeth Overaker marrying a Wallace. See "Index to Marriage Records, White," 162, Adams County Courthouse, Natchez, Mississippi.

⁸Johnson Family Papers, LSU, Folder 15; Deed Book O: 36, Adams County Courthouse.

⁹Johnson Family Papers, LSU, Folder 15.

¹⁰Deed Book R: 489-490, Adams County Courthouse.

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5 December. "To Day Mr Rowes Raises the new Frame of the House hireer [higher]--it was said to be too low." Between November 22, 1836, and July 8, 1837, Johnson had a new building constructed for Harriet Battles. It apparently served as both commercial and rental space. The building was a two-story frame house with two rooms per floor. It sat on brick piers, and had brick chimneys and brick exterior pavement. The brick pavement was laid by the Snider brothers. There was a fireplace in each room. A separate one-story kitchen was located to the rear. Total costs came to \$2,970. In 1837, Johnson paid Rose an additional \$1,675 for construction costs¹¹. Battles moved in on June 6, 1838.

Harriet Battles retained legal title to the land on State Street until her death. However, construction, tax assessments on Battles' "House and Lot" and insurance on this and the subsequent building were paid for by her son-in-law, William Johnson. He also received rent from the property. After 1851, 210 State St. was assessed as part of the "William Johnson Estate," although Battles did not die until 1874.¹²

1837-39:

The building rented to a number of tenants. In March 1837, the firm of (A.) Greene and (George W.) Blake rented the building for \$125 a month. From May 11, 1837, to at least August 1838, the building was rented to P. McGetterick's "Southern Exchange" coffee-house for \$79 a month. From October 1, 1838, to September 24, 1839, Carroll & Evans paid a lease of \$50 a month.¹³

Johnson may have moved his family to the building as early as December 11, 1838, when Johnson noted that he had "moved Down to Mrs Battles this Evening."¹⁴ However, he was also paying rent for a house owned by "Mrs. Mitchell" that same year.¹⁵

1839: ca. 24 September. Building destroyed by fire, and Johnson collected \$2,000 insurance on Policy No. 208 from the Natchez Insurance

¹¹Johnson Ledger, 1835-39: 84, 112; and Natchez Insurance Company policy, from Johnson Family Papers, Folder 16; 1836 Johnson Diary entries: December 5, 13, 19, 21, 24; 1837 Diary entries: February 16; March 9, 10, 25; April 1; July 8; June 6, 1838.

¹²Book of Wills, Book 4: 63, Adams County Courthouse; Johnson Family Papers, LSU.

¹³1837 Johnson Diary entries: March 11, 16; June 22; September 16; October 23; November 23; December 26; 1838 Diary entries: January 23, August 31.

¹⁴Unless otherwise indicated, specific dates are from the William Johnson Diary, 1835-1851, from William Ransom Hogan and Edwin Adams Davis, eds., William Johnson's Natchez: The Antebellum Diary of a Free Negro (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951).

¹⁵Johnson Diary, and receipts in the Johnson Family Papers.

Company.¹⁶

1840: Plans for the present building began on January 3, 1840, when Johnson had the State Street lot surveyed. Brick materials were salvaged from a neighboring building also destroyed in the 1839 fire. Construction began on May 21, 1840, and continued through 1841. Outbuildings and landscaping were finished by October 10, 1842.

Johnson rented space to Joseph Barbieri for dancing classes at \$30/month from November 3, 1841, to at least February 23, 1842. However, family history maintains that the building was continually used as a family residence. Johnson's ledgers and daybooks contain no later entries for rental or commercial income from the building. In 1851, Johnson expanded his holdings by the purchase of Lot 2, Square 2, to the northwest, measuring 101' on Canal Street and 162' on State Street. It was sold by his children to the Natchez & Eastern Railway Company in 1906.¹⁷

1851: Johnson died intestate. Following his death, his widow, Ann, became administratrix of the estate.¹⁸

1874: 28 October. Will: Harriet Battles bequeaths her estate, including the house and lot on State Street, 32' x 104', to her five granddaughters: Anna L., Katherine, Alice, Josephine and Eugenia Johnson¹⁹.

1870s-1910s:

Census figures show the Johnsons accepting between two to four adult boarders.

1892: 16 January. Deed of Conveyance: Eugenia (Johnston) Garrus conveys her undivided 1/5 interest in the State Street property, 32' x 140', to sisters Anna, Katherine, Alice and Josephine Johnston²⁰. (William Johnson's children alternately use the name "Johnson" and "Johnston" in legal transactions after 1880.)

1901: 18 March. Will: Katherine Johnston bequeaths all of her property to sisters

¹⁶ Johnson Diary entries September 18, 25, 1839; March 7, 1840; 1841-1843 Diary, unnumbered page 10; Natchez Weekly Courier & Journal 27 September 1839; Mississippi Free Trader 7 October 1839; Johnson Daybook 1830-1840, Johnson Family Papers, LSU.

¹⁷Mary Louise Miller, telephone interview by author, 21 July 1992, transcript, Natchez National Historical Park, Natchez, Mississippi; Deed Books HH: 525-527; 4-B: 638, 821-823; 3-G: 546-547, Adams County Courthouse.

¹⁸ Deed Book KK: 128; Probate Real Estate Records Book 2: 232-239, Adams County Courthouse.

¹⁹Will Book 4: 63-64; Deed Book 3-G: 546-547, Adams County Courthouse.

²⁰Deed Book 3-G: 546-547, Adams County Courthouse.

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Anna, Alice and Josephine Johnston.²¹

1924: 12 April. Deed of Conveyance: Alice and Josephine Johnston sell the State Street property, 32' x 140', to Dr. William R. and Sallie H. [Welch] Johnson, with stipulation that Alice and Josephine may reside there until their deaths²². Dr. Johnston grew up in the house with his father and mother, Clarence and Catherine (Lynch) Johnson, and his siblings²³. He practiced for a time in California, then returned to Natchez about 1920 at the request of his aunts. He lived at State Street with his aunts Alice and Josephine, prior to and after his marriage to Sallie Ray Welch in 1921. The two took in their niece, Mary Louise Taylor, in the late 1920s²⁴.

1939: 18 January. Will: Dr. W. R. Johnston bequeaths all property to wife, "Sallie F. Johnston."²⁵

ca. 1963:

City re-numbers lot from Lot 4, Square 2, to Block 5, Lot 3.²⁶

1975: 25 August. Will: Sallie Feltus Johnston bequeaths her entire estate to great nephew Spencer Griggs and great niece Mary Louise Miller.²⁷

1976: 12 July. Deed: Mrs. M. L. Miller and Spencer Griggs sell State Street Property, Lot 3, Block 5, to the Preservation Society of Ellicott Hill for \$35,148.53. Of that amount, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) provided a grant of \$17,500²⁸. Building no longer occupied.

²¹05, Adams County Courthouse.

²²Deed Book 4-J: 456, Adams County Courthouse.

²³"Population Schedules of the 10th Census of the United States (1880)," 1, Adams County, National Archives and Records Service, microfilm; "Population Schedules of the 12th Census of the United States (1900)," 1, Adams County, National Archives and Records Service, microfilm.

²⁴Marriage Records, Colored, KK-42: 181, Adams County Courthouse; Patti Carr Black, "Notes on Mary Louise Miller's Connection to the William Johnson House," 17 July 1989, to Elbert Hilliard, Johnson House Files, Natchez National Historic Park, Natchez, Mississippi.

²⁵Will Book 8: 344, Adams County Courthouse.

²⁶Date based on a revised 1951 city tax map at the Chancery Court, Adams County Courthouse. No records, or additional tax maps can be found at the city planner's, tax assessor's, or city engineering's offices noting the exact date of renumbering.

²⁷Mary Louise Welch married James Earl Miller in 1934. Will Book 34: 199; Marriage Records, Colored, OO: 72, Adams County Courthouse.

²⁸Deed Book 13-J: 431, Adams County Courthouse. The state received retroactive funding April 11, 1977, for the grant approved September 14, 1976. See William C. Allen, 25 September 1978, to W. Brown Morton III, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, MS.

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- 1987: 19 March. The Mississippi legislature passes Senate Bill 2179 establishing an Historic Properties Trust Fund, and empowers MDAH to purchase, restore and administer the Johnson House through an Historic Properties Trust Fund when sufficient funding becomes available. MDAH uses funds to produce pamphlets on the Johnson House to distribute to potential donors. Because insufficient funding prevented the purchase of 210 State St. by MDAH, \$10,000 in raised funds was granted to the city of Natchez to aid in the building's acquisition and ultimate donation to the National Park Service.²⁹
- 1989: Mississippi legislature approves House Bill 3 to provide an appropriation of \$1 million through the issuance of general obligation bonds to be used to match local and federal funds to acquire and improve property necessary for the development of and access to the Natchez National Historical Park, provided the creation of the park was authorized by the U. S. Congress.³⁰
- 1990: 5 June. Mississippi Legislature approves bill, passed as S12847, to acquire William Johnson House.³¹
- 1991: 29 March. Warranty Deed: The Preservation Society of Ellicott Hill sells Lot 3, Block 5, to the City of Natchez for \$85,964.07, with the stipulation that the property be transferred to the National Park Service as a gift. The city used some of the \$1 million in the 1989 state appropriation to provide the remaining necessary funds for the purchase of this building and the adjoining structure at 212 State St.³²
- 1991: 21 May. Donation Deed: The City of Natchez donates Lot 3, Block 5--tract 103-01--to "The United States of America," National Park Service, Department of the Interior³³. Building not occupied.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers:

William Johnson served as general contractor for materials, and used his slaves for labor. He also plastered, painted, and excavated the basement. The following workmen were listed in Johnson's Diary:

²⁹Preservation Society of Ellicott Hill, 1 June 1990, to Stuart Johnson, William Johnson House Files, Natchez National Historical Park; Elbert Hilliard, telephone interview by author, 20 July, 1992; Hilliard, 5 August 1992, to Dena Sanford, Natchez National Historical Park, citing Laws of the State of Mississippi 1987 Ch. 374.

³⁰Hilliard, 5 August 1992, citing Laws of the State of Mississippi 1989 Extraordinary Session Ch. 2.

³¹"Johnson Acquisition" file, William Johnson House, Natchez National Historical Park, Natchez, Mississippi.

³²Deed Book 18-T: 257, Adams County Courthouse; Hilliard, 5 August 1992.

³³Deed Book 18-U: 601, Adams County Courthouse.

Carpenters: George Weldon and Mr. Tucker, Natchez
Gallery Roof Carpenters: St. Clair and Shaw
Brick Masons: [James?] Reynolds, James C. Fox, Natchez
Brick Layer: [Charles Graves?] Greaves, Natchez
Plasterers: James Brown, [Charles?] Barbee, George Evans, Natchez
Cypress Lumber: Andrew Brown, Natchez
Lumber and brick: William Parker, Natchez
Brick: James C. Fox, Natchez
Cistern Contractor: Mr. M. Oblemis³⁴

5. Original plans and construction:

The rectangular floor plan has a northeast-southwest axis. The first floor was apparently open, and the second floor had a central rear hall opening onto four rooms and a garret staircase. The garret (a term used by Johnson) is open.

The building was two-and-a-half stories, with windows and doors on the northeast, northwest and southwest walls. The northeast front facade facing State Street had three double doors on the ground floor and three windows directly above. Two windows were on the second floor of the northwest wall, and one was on the garret level. On the southwest wall, two windows flanked central doors on the second floor, while the first floor apparently had no door. The house was built with a full-width, unroofed gallery on the southwest which provided access to the second floor.³⁵

6. Alterations and Additions:

The Johnson House has undergone two major interior space alterations, and two significant alterations to its facade. The first major exterior alteration occurred about 1925 on the northeast front, with the replacement of the two outer doors

³⁴The names mentioned in Johnson's diary that could be traced through census records were all white artisans. There was no "St. Clair," or "Barbee" listed in Adams County from 1830 to 1850, although an "Anderson St. Clair" was living in Lafayette County, and a "Charles Barbee" in Jackson in 1850. "M. Oblemis" also appears in Jackson in 1850. "James Shaw" listed himself as an Adams County planter in 1850. A "George Tucker," age 24 in the 1850 census, would have been too young to be an accomplished carpenter at the time of the Johnson House construction. George Evans was a 46-year-old machinist in 1850. The name "Greaves" does not appear in the 1840 or 1850 census, although a Charles Graves is listed in 1840. Daybooks of Andrew Brown list both a "Graves and Johnson" and "Greaves and Johnson" purchasing lumber from his mill in December 1840. The connection of Graves to other Johnson house plasterers may be indicated in the 1850 census, when James Brown, a British plasterer with five family members, also listed "Ann Graves," age 22, in the household. None of the artisans appears in the 1858 Natchez business directory. See Andrew Brown Daybooks, 1837-1840, photocopies, Historic Natchez Foundation, Natchez, Mississippi; "Population Schedules of the 5th Census of the United States (1830)," National Archives and Records Service, microfilm; "Population Schedules of the 6th Census of the United States (1840)," 1, Adams County, microfilm; and "Population Schedules of the 7th Census of the United States (1850)," 1, Adams County, The National Archives and Records Service, microfilm.

³⁵Removal of the first-floor partitions revealed that earlier plaster continued behind and above all partitions. See Pamela Hawkes, Mary Oehrlein and Mary Jane Wells, "Historic Structures Report: William Johnson House, Natchez, Mississippi," Tms. (report by Building Conservation Technology for the Preservation Society of Ellicott Hill, April 1979), Natchez National Historical Park, Natchez, Mississippi, 31.

with windows. The original double door-sized openings survived, however, including wood lintels and flat arches. On the interior, plaster remains to indicate the location of the original door trim. The exterior was restored from 1981 to 1983.

Structural evidence suggests that the roof and garret space were redone during or shortly after construction. Two windows in the southeast common wall are plastered over on the Johnson side, suggesting that the owner of the adjacent building at 212 State St. expected Johnson to build a shorter building³⁶. In addition, the upper visible courses of the chimneys are of a better quality than the rest of the brick, and the southern chimney shows evidence of enlargement--perhaps an indication that the chimneys were enlarged and/or increased in height to accommodate a larger garret and attic space. Finally, joist pockets for northwest-southeast joists are found on the common wall and the external northwest wall, although the present garret joists span northeast/southwest.

Another design change may have occurred on the second floor, north room. The baseboard on the brick bearing wall of the front room continues behind the frame partition wall. Other baseboard junctions within the north room and remaining second-floor rooms have mitered corners, and do not continue through the wall. This suggests that the dividing wall was added later. Johnson remarks in his February 19, 1841, diary entry that the plasterers had completed "the Large front Room . . . in the second story and commenced on the other Back Room." However, the moldings are identical, and the wall junction has curved plaster. No cracks appear in the ceiling plaster to indicate later changes.

- 1842: April 29. The center window of the first-floor southwest wall changed to a door; cost: \$20.
- 1844: March 12. Three interior doors with molded panels grained to simulate oak by Mr. Dillon, who lost a \$6 horse-racing bet with Johnson (also noted in diary entry December 1, 1843).
- 1844: May 16-20. Carpenters St. Clair and Shaw construct a second-level roof over the rear gallery. Five square posts with balustrade supported joists let into pockets on the southwest wall. The roof was originally board, later shingled, and met the exterior wall below the brick cornice.³⁷

ca. 1844:
Based on paint-layer analysis, windows installed on first-floor northwest wall. The moldings match the gallery railing. This analysis is supported by

³⁶The 1991 and 1992 archaeological studies by Atkinson on the foundations concluded that the foundations of the common wall were built before 1839. The above-ground wall, however, was estimated to have been built after the 1839 fire. Destruction of the buildings on the 212 State Street lot are confirmed in newspaper articles in the Natchez Weekly Courier and Journal, 27 September 1839, and the Mississippi Free Trader and Natchez Weekly Gazette, 1 October 1839.

³⁷Henry Gurney, "SC-25-4 x 5-G," photo of Natchez from old Fort Rosalie area, ca. 1864 (xerox included below), Myrtle Bank Galleries, Joan W. and Thomas H. Gandy Collection, Natchez, Mississippi; Hawkes, 9, 22-30.

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Johnson's November 28, 1844, diary entry, in which "Glass Frames" were moved from his brick store to the "House in State St."³⁸

1865-80:

Rear gallery roof-framing changed. A 1979 structural analysis found joists placed parallel to house walls, and the gallery roof raised to connect above the brick cornice, 2' beyond eave.³⁹

ca. 1870-1900:

The first-floor interior is divided into three rooms, with the front two rooms opening onto State Street. Access to the front northwest room was through the two northernmost doors on the front facade. Behind the front rooms, a larger "all purpose sitting room" occupied the width of the building, and included an 11" x 11" or 12" x 12" central support post. There was one door opening onto the rear room from the north room, close to the partition wall between the front rooms. The east room also connected to the rear room with a door that had an upper glass pane. Prior to the 1920s, the north room served as a bedroom, the east as a kitchen/dining room⁴⁰.

1892-97:

Brick dividing wall built between rear yards of 210 and 212 State St.⁴¹

1897: Two-story dependency with one-story porch replaces earlier kitchen.⁴²

1905-10:

Dependency porch receives second-story roof.⁴³

1924-25:

Roof shingles of house and dependency replaced with metal, bridge built connecting house and dependency at second floor.⁴⁴

ca. 1924-30:

³⁸Hawkes, 14, 40-43.

³⁹Gurney photo; Hawkes, 10, 15-18.

⁴⁰Mary Louise Miller, telephone interviews by author, 21 July and 7 August 1992, transcript, Natchez National Historical Park, Natchez, Mississippi.

⁴¹Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

Two outer first-floor doors on the northeast facade remodelled to accommodate six-over-six-light double-hung windows. A door with sidelights replaced the center opening. The second-floor center window was enlarged for a doorway to provide access to a new second-floor gallery. Turned wood posts supported the gallery. Facade stuccoed and scored to resemble ashlar. Cornice covered with flashing and stucco.⁴⁵

ca. 1930:

First floor partitioned into six rooms. Behind the two front rooms, four rooms were symmetrically arranged around a central rear hallway. The date of partitioning based on newspapers located between original ceiling and partition wall sills. Entire first-floor and second-floor hallway flooring probably replaced about this time. Additional framing installed on the rear gallery, and the ceiling finished with tongue-in-groove beaded board. Latticework applied to southeast side of gallery. Electricity and water installed.⁴⁶

1950-60:

Bathroom installed in rear gallery. Probably also at this time, the rear gallery columns were shifted, second-floor balusters replaced, original gallery stairs removed, second-floor gallery floorboards replaced, and bridge removed.⁴⁷

1977: Structural engineering evaluation by Neil Jeffrey; front porch removed. Existing plans developed by Koch & Wilson of New Orleans for restoration work. Grant-in-aid of \$15,000 awarded in December from MDAH for restoration work⁴⁸.

1978: Koch and Wilson design restoration work proposal, "Phase I," on rear gallery, including design for bridge between house and dependency [not done], brick paving [not done], removal of concrete stucco, restoration of brick facade, restoration of interior brick walls [not done], and creation of a lattice screen on rear retaining wall [not done]. Work accomplished by 1979 included restoration of gallery, the installation of a raised-seam metal roof, and gutters. "Phase II" work begun including an archaeology study of the courtyard by Thomas J. Padgett for \$7,349; an architectural investigation by Building Conservation Technology, Inc., for \$9,332; restoration work on southeast wall dependency by contractor Dix Fowler for \$8,075. Grant from MDAH for work totaled \$12,370, and was

⁴⁵Mary Louise Miller, telephone interview 21 July 1992; Hawkes, 10-11, 33-35, 47-50.

⁴⁶Mary Louise Miller, telephone interview 21 July 1992.

⁴⁷Ibid.; Hawkes, 11, 15-18.

⁴⁸"William Johnson House, Preservation Society of Ellicott Hill CN 1239A 1977-78-79," Koch and Wilson Papers, Southeastern Architectural Archives, Tulane University Library, New Orleans, Louisiana; "William Johnson House" files, Koch and Wilson, New Orleans, Louisiana.

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completed in 1980⁴⁹.

- 1979: The Preservation Society of Ellicott Hill spends \$21,724.41 on the Johnson House. A \$10,000 matching grant-in-aid, Grant Number 28-10095 from the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Department of the Interior, is awarded to fund carpentry, millwork, masonry and painting. Expenditures eventually totaled \$10,680. Koch and Wilson revise work on the Johnson House, budgeted for \$25,704, and prepare a sketch for the potential use of the dependency [not done]. Contractor Roy Sather proposes a reduction of \$2,653 of work, including deletion of brick pavers and the lattice, for a budget of \$21,697. Bricks for southeast wall of kitchen supplied from the Old Carolina Brick Company. Work amounts to \$8,753.77.⁵⁰
- 1980: The Preservation Society of Ellicott Hill spends \$9,467.53 on the Johnson House. Discovery of first-floor gallery board-and-batten ceiling during porch restoration, and milling of identical elements. Removal of some first-floor partition walls reveals 1930 newspapers. Koch and Wilson develop details of the rear porch stairs, with square balusters.
- 1981: The Preservation Society of Ellicott Hill spends \$25,671.02 on the Johnson House. Within the house, the first-floor flooring is removed. Koch and Wilson develop "Phase III" restoration of the northeast wall, including replacement of doors and second-story center door. Exterior millwork specified Honduran mahogany. Bid for work given to Galler Construction Company. Engineer Neil Jeffrey conducts a structural study.
- 1982: Ellicott Hill spends \$10,975.18. Three doors for the ground floor, and second-floor window milled by Scanlon-Taylor Millworks. The standing-seam metal roof is painted "Tinter's Red." Facade restoration completed by October.
- 1983: Ellicott Hill spends \$17,736.55. Koch and Wilson develop a scope of work for the design of the first floor as residential space [not done].
- 1986: Ellicott Hill spends \$4,100.00 on the house. Koch and Wilson develop a scope of work for the maintenance and continued restoration of the Johnson House.

⁴⁹Ibid.; Kenneth P'Pool, 22 August 1990, to Brad Chism, William Johnson House Files, Natchez National Historical Park; Thomas J. Padgett, "Final Report on the Test Excavations at the William Johnson House," TMs 1978, Preservation Society of Ellicott Hill, Natchez, Mississippi; Yvonne Williams, 8 June 1980, to Tom Taylor, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi. Padgett's excavations found evidence of pre-1836 occupation. They also revealed the foundations of the first brick kitchen built by Johnson, and was evidently destroyed by fire. There was a crushed brick walkway extending underneath a balcony on the west side of the kitchen. Pearlware ceramics--popular in the United States in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries--were found in a variety of glazes and designs. There were also sherds of creamware, ironstone or similar tableware, and domestic earthenware.

⁵⁰Explanation of the work done in 1979-86 found in "William Johnson House," Southeastern Architectural Archives, Tulane; "William Johnson House" files, Koch and Wilson office; P'Pool 1990.

B. William Johnson and Nineteenth-Century Natchez

William T. Johnson became one of Natchez's prominent black citizens prior to his murder in 1851. At the time of his death, he owned seven slaves, more than 2,000 acres in Adams County, and five city lots in Natchez⁵¹. Local newspapers lauded his character and mourned his passing, and reported on the unsuccessful trial to prosecute his murderer for three years. Today, however, William Johnson's fame springs from his and his family's extensive collection of written documentation that provides insight into the lives of one free black Natchez family from 1830 to 1939.⁵²

Johnson entered his daily observances from within this building, the only surviving structure associated with the Natchez barber. In addition to the building's importance as the most prominent physical tie to this intriguing individual, 210 State St.'s style, materials, siting and use provide invaluable insight into Johnson's life and his relationship with the community.

William Johnson, born a slave in 1809, was emancipated by owner William Johnson when he came of age in 1820⁵³. The elder Johnson had previously manumitted his mother, Amy, in 1814, and his sister, Adelia, in 1818⁵⁴. As was the custom, Amy and her children took Johnson's surname upon manumission. Little is known of the white William Johnson, who appeared in Mississippi tax rolls between 1816 and 1820, and owned eight slaves in 1823. Young William Johnson was described in his manumission papers as a "mulatto boy," and was probably the elder Johnson's son.⁵⁵

Natchez's slave population grew rapidly after 1795, when the first cotton gin began operation in the area, although French settlers had imported black slaves as early as 1720 to harvest tobacco and indigo⁵⁶. Subsequent occupation by British, Spanish and later American settlers greatly expanded the practice of slavery for the developing cotton

⁵¹Receipt for City and State Taxes, February 10, 1851. From the Johnson Family Papers, LSU; Deed Records, Adams County Courthouse; Edwin Adams Davis and William Ransom Hogan, The Barber of Natchez (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1954), 54.

⁵²The Johnson Family Papers at the Louisiana State University Archives, include 1,310 items, including 62 bound volumes, personal and business letters, account books, and legal and financial documents. William Johnson's diary, published in 1951, has been described by Hodding Carter as "the most unusual record ever kept in the United States," from Hogan and Davis, eds., 1951, preface.

⁵³The Mississippi legislature approved the petition by Adams County resident Johnson on February 10, 1820. See Laws of the State of Mississippi, Passed by the General Assembly, 3 Sess. (Natchez, 1920), 38.

⁵⁴Amy was freed in Louisiana, and Adelia was freed in Philadelphia. Deed Books I: 243-245; K: 223-224, Adams County Courthouse. Both returned to Natchez despite state laws to the contrary.

⁵⁵Hogan & Davis (1951), 17-18. Johnson's diary and financial records never clarify their relationship, although Johnson makes occasional obscure references to "Cap" Johnson, and "Old Dad and his wife" in his 1836 entries. In granting Amy's family their freedom, Johnson followed the usual terms of manumission, and pledged support in the event of sickness, insanity or old age, and to educate William Johnson.

⁵⁶J. F. H. Claibourne, Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State (Jackson, MS, 1880), 38; Mary W. Miller, "A History of African-Americans in Natchez," TMs, lecture of 12 January 1992, Historic Natchez Foundation, Natchez, Mississippi.

plantation system. Although Congressional action halted the importation of slaves directly from Africa in 1808, the domestic slave trade continued to grow⁵⁷. After 1811 and the inauguration of steamboat service on the Mississippi River, slaves were brought upriver to Natchez--the primary Mississippi slave market⁵⁸. By 1840, cotton plantations occupied nearly every inch of land in Adams County, and the slave population outnumbered whites nearly three to one. The prosperous Natchez area boasted nearly a dozen millionaires before 1860.⁵⁹

Manumitting favored slaves was a common occurrence in early nineteenth-century Natchez, and in other antebellum southern states, although Mississippi required a state legislative act for manumission as of June 18, 1822⁶⁰. Manumission fell off dramatically in the 1830s and 1840s as pressure increased to end the practice of freeing slaves, and resulted in restrictive laws passed in 1831, 1842 and 1857. A law established in 1831 required all adult free blacks to leave Mississippi, and was vigorously encouraged by Adams and Wilkinson county residents⁶¹. In 1842, the state legislature declared that no slave could be set free by will even if this was conditional on permanent vacation of the state⁶². And in 1857, the emancipation of slaves by will or other documents, or by their removal from the state, was absolutely forbidden.⁶³

Despite these restrictions, the number of free African-Americans grew in Natchez and Adams County through the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1820, there were 69 free

⁵⁷The Constitutional Convention of 1787, Article II, Sect. 9 prohibited the migration or importation of slaves after 1808. The Texas Republic made importation of African slaves illegal in 1836. By the 1830s, most Mississippi slaves came not from Texas, but via Virginia and the northern Southern states, and were mainly American-born. From Davis, 13-15, 93-128; and John Michael Vlach, By the Work of Their Hands: Studies in Afro-American Folklife (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 96.

⁵⁸In 1810, roughly 8,000 blacks were living in Adams County. In 1860, the number had risen to 14,292. Joseph Ingraham reported in 1835 that slaves in Natchez were sold "on nearly every street," on the town courthouse steps, in auction houses, and at the landing Under-the-Hill. See Manuscript Population and Slave Schedules, Adams County Courthouse; Davis, 21; Mary W. Miller, January 1992, 4-5.

⁵⁹Davis, 19; Hogan and Davis (1951), 5.

⁶⁰Charles Sackett Sydnor, "The Free Negro in Mississippi," American Historical Review 32 (1926-1927): 773. Authors Hogan and Davis note that Adams County probate court records show that Natchezians regularly freed favored slaves before 1840. Nearly 100 emancipations were recorded between 1830 and 1804, but less than 10 between 1840 and 1850. See Hogan and Davis (1951), 13, 217. For discussions on manumissions in the south, see also John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), 142-144; Larry Kroger's Black Slaveowners, Free Black Slave Masters in South Carolina, 1790-1860 (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland's Company, Inc., 1985), 31-34; and Luther Porter Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holdings in Virginia, 1830-1860 (1842; repr., New York: Atheneum, 1969), 172.

⁶¹Adams and Wilkinson counties had generated the petition that induced the legislature to pass the law. See Sydnor, 785.

⁶²Mary W. Miller, "William Johnson House, Natchez, Mississippi: Significance, Restoration and Interpretation," TMs, 3 January 1990, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 12; Sydnor, 769-88.

⁶³Melissa McRaney, "William Johnson, 1809-1851: The Life of a Free Black in Natchez, Mississippi, and the Cultural Link between Natchez and New Orleans," TMs, 15 December 1988, Thomas H. Gandy Collection, Natchez, Mississippi, 9, citing Laws of Mississippi Ch. 33, Art. 9 (1857).

blacks residing in Natchez. The total number grew to 81 in 1830, and 207 in 66 households by 1840. The 1840 census recorded that Adams County had the highest free black population in the state--283, or about 21 percent of those in the state. By the 1850s, almost one-half of the state's free black population was living in Natchez⁶⁴.

These "free people of color" could not vote, hold public office, testify against whites, serve on juries, or testify in or bring direct litigation against whites. Nor could they carry or keep weapons without a license, operate taverns or grocery stores, or travel without carrying certified proof of their freedom. Their station did guarantee, however, that they could never be sold, frequently abused, or routinely victimized⁶⁵. Their occupations were limited to certain service-oriented fields, with most freedmen working as carpenters, draymen, servants, laborers or barbers. Free black women worked as seamstresses, dressmakers, and laundresses⁶⁶. Within these rigid boundaries, free African-Americans found themselves liberated from the slavery system that had largely contributed to Natchez's growth.

Within this dichotomic society William Johnson achieved a status enjoyed by few other freed persons. Johnson's rise began with a legacy given him by his former owner. William apprenticed in the barbershop of his brother-in-law, James Miller, in 1820. He later operated his own establishment in Port Gibson for twenty-two months before returning to buy Miller's Main Street shop in 1829⁶⁷. Johnson's all-white clientele numbered among Natchez's wealthiest and most powerful citizens, to whom Johnson frequently lent and brokered money. The enterprising barber translated profits from his first shop and moneylending activity during the 1830s speculation boom into this building, two additional barbershops, a bathhouse, rental property, slaves and a 242-acre plantation known as Hard Scrabble.⁶⁸

Johnson's success placed him within the small, free black "aristocracy" of Natchez's

⁶⁴Thereafter, the number of free African-Americans diminished until the Civil War. In 1861, 208 of the 225 free blacks in Adams County were living in Natchez. From D. Clayton James, *Antebellum Natchez* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 163. Manuscript Population and Slave Schedules, Adams County Courthouse; Ronald L. F. Davis, "The Black Experience in Natchez," draft TMs, Natchez National Historical Park, Natchez, Mississippi, 73.

⁶⁵Davis, 66-67; McRaney, citing *Laws of Mississippi*, Ch. 73 S 2, 12, 73, 80 (1823) and Ch. 13 (1823).

⁶⁶Davis, 73; Sydnor, 771.

⁶⁷Deed Books do not record a transaction between the two men, as Johnson and Miller were probably renting the land. By 1829, Miller's barbershop was the most widely patronized in Natchez. See Davis and Hogan (1954), 19.

⁶⁸Johnson retained five lots during his lifetime, although he speculated on two more. Beginning in 1833 he bought a 78'-9" x 68'-9" plot of land on Square 11 on Main Street. In 1836, purchased Lot 9, Square 4, measuring 50'-8" x 60'-0" at the corner of Canal and Jefferson, and in 1844, he bought two lots, numbers 19 and 20, on Magnolia Street. The Johnson Estate completed purchase of the last two lots in 1854. In 1846, Johnson began purchasing land that would become Hard Scrabble, and that remained in contention until an out-of-court settlement decided in favor of Johnson in 1851. His speculative ventures included a lot on Pine Street, bought in 1834, and sold at a \$300 profit one year later, and 162 acres which he sold one month later at double his investment. From Deed Books W: 133; EE: 314, 494; KK: 246; FF: 81, 452; W: 270; CC: 271, Adams County Courthouse.

distinct social and economic classes⁶⁹. As a member of this select group--and by extension, a "role model" for the black community--Johnson's deportment and activities were subject to the scrutiny of the white community. Johnson's 2,000-page diary reveals a personality and character willing to accept the limitations placed on him. Johnson was unquestionably aware of his position, and demanded the most circumspect and irreproachable behavior of himself, his family, employees and slaves. He perceived the status quo as a standard for measuring business success and recognition. In fact, William Johnson aspired towards the affluence, mannerisms and values of the dominant upper class⁷⁰. As a result, the barber enjoyed privileges accorded few other free black persons. Johnson traveled the area at will, and often carried firearms for hunting. He made frequent business and pleasure trips to New Orleans, and employed white overseers and laborers.

C. Appearance and Use of the William Johnson House

The William Johnson House served a complex variety of uses appropriate to Johnson's social and economic situation. As a residence, the house was intended to provide well-appointed, comfortable living space for twelve family members. The Johnson family occupied 210 State St. from 1841 to 1975. From 1841 to 1851, twelve family members lived in the upper two floors of the house. The family included William Johnson, wife Ann, mother-in-law Harriet Battles, and children William C., Richard, Byron, Anna L., Katherine, Alice, Josephine, Eugenia and Clarence. An additional five to eight slaves were probably sheltered in the original rear kitchen dependency, as was the custom⁷¹. The fenced yard to the northwest served as a kitchen garden to supplement the family's varied and well-stocked larder.

In addition, the first floor of the building was originally intended as commercial space. Johnson's long-term plans for 210 State St. will never be known, and early references to the building during construction variously identify the building as "my new House," the "dwelling house," or "the building." To obscure matters, Johnson often referred to his various properties as "the House." In comparison, he referred to his brick store on Main Street as "the brick store" or "the shop."⁷² Only in one entry, November 3, 1841, does Johnson identify this building as "the State Street Store." Shortly after the building was completed, it was leased by dance instructor Joseph Barbieri for about four months.

⁶⁹Historians Hogan and Davis identified five social levels of free black people in Natchez, stratified primarily by wealth. The seven families comprising Johnson's caste included the McCarys, the Barlands, the Fitzgeralds, the Fitzhughs, the Woods, and the Robert Smiths. They are distinguished by their ancestry and wealth. All the men were products of miscegenation, and three had legacies of property and money from white men. All were slave owners. Hogan and Davis (1951), 11; Mary W. Miller, January 1992, 13.

⁷⁰Hogan and Davis (1951), 40. Johnson also performed civic services, and contributed money to public and philanthropic acts.

⁷¹See for example, Richard C. Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 57-79; Mary W. Miller, January 1992, 8; Mary Louise Miller telephone interview, 21 July 1992. The garret was known to double as a secure overnight area for one slave, Steven, who regularly ran away. Johnson Diary entry December 31, 1843.

⁷²For examples of references, see 1840 diary entries on August 17, September 8; 1841 entries on March 17, June 9; and 1842 entries on April 29 and August 16.

Beyond these fundamental roles, the house served as a physical symbol of Johnson's status in Natchez. Limited by Johnson's finances, the style, materials and use of 210 State St. describe a prosperous yet conservative individual attentive to the community's social and economic activities.

Johnson's 1840-41 Greek Revival townhouse is centrally located within the town of Natchez. The building stands only a few blocks from the location of Johnson's barbershop, now the location of the Eola Hotel parking lot. Although in succeeding eras, earlier construction has been replaced in materials, style, size and lot density, the general division between commercial and residential neighborhoods has changed little since Johnson's lifetime⁷³.

Immediately surrounding the Johnson House were a mixture of residential, business and governmental structures, including the 1840-41 Adams County Courthouse. Residential neighborhoods extend to the southwest and southeast, and north of the commercial area. The houses abutted each other and faced directly onto the sidewalk. Fenced yards contained outbuildings, cisterns and occasionally a stable. Two blocks northeast of the Johnson House, then as now, lies the commercial business district, densely developed along Main and Franklin streets. The district is bounded to the northwest by Broadway Street, to the northeast by Commerce Street. To the northwest lies Broadway Street and the Natchez Bluffs. Two hundred feet below, at the foot of the bluffs, is Natchez-under-the-Hill, a former bustling commercial area catering to Mississippi River traffic.

The substantial two-and-a-half-story brick building represented Johnson's desire for prosperity and permanence, while the lack of elaborate exterior and interior detailing denied associations with flamboyant excess. The house is comparable to contemporary residential and commercial structures owned by whites and blacks of equivalent economic standing. With its pilastered dormer cornerboards, dentiled cornice, flat brick arches and tripartite facade, the Johnson House was more substantial than the one-story frame structures held by citizens of a lower social and economic scale, but could not compare to the extravagant plantation manors of Natchez's elite⁷⁴. The inclusion of commercial-type ground-floor openings and the house's proximity to the business district suggest Johnson's readiness to turn a profit should the occasion arise.

⁷³John James Audubon's 1822 landscape shows a town of late eighteenth-century brick colonial and Federal-style buildings, interspersed with log and galleried homes in the French colonial "raised cottage" style. The ca. 1835 Tooley lithograph details a community of one- and two-story frame and brick Greek Revival style-inspired townhouses and commercial structures. See also Mary W. Miller, "Natchez-On-Top-of-the-Hill" National Register Nomination, 31 May 1979; Captain John Wilson, "Map of Defenses of Natchez and Vicinity," prepared and surveyed under direction of Captain P. Hains, U.S. Engineers, 1864; Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1886, 1892, 1897, 1901, 1904, 1916, 1925.

⁷⁴It is difficult to compare Johnson's house to contemporary structures owned and built by free blacks in 1830s and 1840s Natchez due to the low number of extant buildings. Identifying specific buildings through historic photographs depends upon the chance that pertinent images were recorded by photographers, and that these images survive and are available for examination. The 7,000+ photographs in the Norman Collection, in possession of Dr. Thomas and Joan Gandy, is the most promising collection for Natchez. Yet even identifying homes occupied by black families does not prove that the buildings were constructed by the occupants, who may have moved into previously owned structures. Time constraints for this study prevent a close examination of this aspect of African-American material culture. It is a little-researched but potentially highly enlightening area of study that deserves further research.

Johnson acted as his own general contractor, hired local white artisans, and with his slaves, did much of the rough labor. It can be assumed that he had some input into the building's appearance. Considering his aspirations, it is not surprising that Johnson chose to detail his vernacular rowhouse form with a style then newly in vogue among wealthy white business people. The Johnson House is similar in style and massing to surviving contemporary Greek Revival examples in Natchez, Port Gibson and Jackson--towns that had achieved prosperity in the early nineteenth century. It is also similar to contemporary buildings in New Orleans. Natchez in particular boasted a high concentration of Greek Revival-style buildings, a result of its status as a major nineteenth-century Mississippi River port, and a regional economic, social and political center. It was rivaled only by Memphis and St. Louis to the north, and New Orleans to the south.⁷⁵

The Greek Revival style dominated domestic architecture from the 1830s to the 1860s in the Gulf States. Southern planters brought the style with them as they moved westward from the Old South into Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, with the largest concentration found in states with rapid population growth during the 1820s to 1860s. Roman and Greek architecture formed the basis for the eighteenth-century Classical Revival movement, embodied first in Georgian, and later Federal, then Greek Revival styles. The forms were applied to public buildings in Europe and the United States, subsequently popularized for residential construction by the use of carpenters' guides and pattern books. As its formality, symmetry and associations with permanence and grandeur appealed to wealthy southern plantation owners, high style Greek Revival became the predominant type for southern mansions, and less elaborate commercial versions appeared in urban areas. In the southern states, heat and humidity prompted regional modifications to the national style. These included high ceilings, full-width porticoes, galleries, verandas, jalousies, louvered blinds, jib windows and triple-hung floor-length sashes--elements with Mediterranean precedence.⁷⁶

The Johnson House first-floor facade was designed as commercial property. Conversations with Johnson House resident Mary Louise Miller, and a ca. 1900 photograph in the Norman collection, taken at an oblique angle, unquestioningly prove that the openings were equipped with full-height double doors, of the dimensions commonly used in nineteenth-century Natchez commercial architecture. Henry C. Norman photographs of the mid-nineteenth century show that the vast majority of commercial structures utilized a double door system of glass panes in wood frames with a lower raised wood panel. When outside temperatures were cool, the glass doors provided views of interior goods; during hot weather, the open doors provided cooling cross-ventilation. Often the doors were fitted with full-length shutters for added heat protection and security.

Few of these doors survive in Natchez to serve as a basis for comparison. For example,

⁷⁵Mary W. Miller, 1979, Sect. 8-1; Dawn Maddox, "Bluffs and Natchez Under-the-Hill" National Register Nomination, 11 April 1972; "Port Gibson Partial Inventory," April 1979, and "Historic Resources of Vicksburg, Mississippi," April 1992, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi; Vieux Carré Survey, 27-28, Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, Louisiana.

⁷⁶Virginia and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Homes (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1984), 182; Mary W. Miller 1979, Sect. 7-3; Vlach, 196; Hodding Carter, The Past as Prelude, New Orleans 1718-1968 (New Orleans: Tulane University, 1968), 79-85.

one block northeast of the Johnson House, the ground-floor openings of the early nineteenth-century, two-story, gabled Greek Revival store at 200 Main St. have been re-oriented at least once. Flat arches now set incongruously in fully-bricked areas and continuous vertical mortar lines indicate the original door placements⁷⁷. An historic photograph shows a section of this building with the original double doors of glass pane and lower raised panels⁷⁸. Similar remodelings have occurred on the first-floor openings at 321 and 323 Main St. to the east, both built in the early nineteenth century, and 212 State St., built in 1840.

Three Greek Revival structures at unnumbered addresses on Silver Street Under-the-Hill provide the best basis for comparison to the Johnson House as a commercial structure. All have brick dentil courses, gable roofs, brick end-wall chimneys and first floors isolated from the second floor--access is or was via an exterior gallery staircase. All were built about 1840, following the May 5, 1840, tornado which destroyed the river landing area. In addition, nineteenth-century double glass doors with lower raised wood panels exist on the first building on the east side of Silver Street. The first-floor interior of the fourth building, commonly known as the Riverboat Gift Shop, shows particular similarity to the Johnson House in its rear fireplace location--designed as a separate warming area for the business people⁷⁹. Two buildings to the south, the newly restored "Blue Cat" has a first-floor bay organization reminiscent of the Johnson House.

The Johnson House is also similar to Greek Revival-style residential buildings constructed in Natchez between the 1830s and the 1860s. These structures have less obvious exterior alterations than their commercial counterparts. Two blocks to the northeast, for example, a well-maintained row of two-story brick townhouses follows the traditional two-thirds Georgian House type--a plan that was retained through the Federal and Greek Revival styles. These residences are at 125, 127 and 129 South Commerce St., and were built about 1835. Like the Johnson House, the Commerce Street residences lack elaborate detailing, and are distinguished by low-pitched roofs and six-over-six-light shuttered windows. Unlike the Johnson House, the townhouse entrances are finished with stylish, narrow, raised-panel doors with fanlight transoms. Another example of the style which once filled Natchez city lots is found at 312 North Union, built in the early 1850s. The three-bay townhouse with jack arches is the survivor of a series of three Greek Revival townhouses on adjacent lots, and appeared very much like the Commerce Street buildings. The townhouse was built for the widow of stonecutter Thomas Dixon.

A more elaborate, free-standing example exists at 107 S. Broadway, one block northwest of the Johnson House. Free black hackman (taxi driver) Robert Smith built this gabled brick residence in 1852. It features a gabled dormer and a second-floor porch, although the wrought-iron porch is a later addition. Once again, the plan is a side-hall plan, and the doorway is enhanced with a flat transom and sidelights.

⁷⁷An historic photograph, date unknown, shows a section of this building with the original double doors of glass pane and lower raised panels. See "Conner Scrapbook" file, Historic Natchez Foundation, Natchez, Mississippi.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Mary W. Miller, Series of interviews by author, July-August 1992.

Even more detailed examples survive in the stuccoed residence at 510 Washington and 311 N. Pearl streets. The stuccoed Van Court townhouse on Washington is scored to imitate ashlar, and has detailed eaves on the main massing and two north-facing dormers. The door is emphasized with a fanlight and sidelights. The townhouse was built by merchant James Ferguson in 1834. Dentist Charles H. Dubs, originally from Philadelphia, had his hipped-roof Greek Revival-style residence and office built on Pearl Street in 1852, with a rear addition and kitchen added in 1854.

The majority of these examples were built for prosperous white Natchez citizens. The buildings are by no means an accurate cross-sampling of business and residential ownership of the 1830s and 1840s, but rather chance survivors of more than a century of development. What should be noted here is that most free blacks--4 percent of the town's population in the 1840s and 1850s--lived in dwellings apart from white households, in locations throughout town. During Johnson's lifetime, Natchez did not have the obvious race segregation of the twentieth century⁸⁰. With the exception of very wealthy white plantation owners who constructed mansions apart from the city center, whites and blacks lived in close proximity, with no visible clustering in neighborhoods, blocks or districts⁸¹. Johnson's neighbors were affluent white businessmen⁸².

Comparisons of Johnson's house to those of his prosperous free black contemporaries is made difficult by their small number, and their even smaller survival rate. Extensive title research by Mary W. Miller on free black property ownership has pinpointed only a few such residential structures. Of these, two survive, and two are gone, without any form of known descriptive documentation. Another is documented in historic photographs. In addition to Robert Smith's Greek Revival townhouse, the frame Kyle House stands at the northwest corner of High and Rankin. The building was occupied by Caroline Baptiste and purchased by her white lover, lawyer John Midderhoff. Nelson Fitzhugh is known to have lived in a two-story frame and brick French Colonial "cottage style" structure with full-width gallery, once located on the south corner of Pine and Orleans. The Hoggatt family lived south of town, although no structure is known to survive. Robert McCary's house, which stood at the corner of Franklin and Rankin, burned on February 15, 1843.⁸³

In comparison to contemporary structures, then, the Johnson House's public-oriented exterior is noteworthy for its conservative and conforming detailing. The interior is equally modest in plan and detailing. Yet the room organization reveals a greater

⁸⁰This is not to say, however, that housing was not distinguished by income. In the 1840s, free blacks in agricultural endeavors lived on small farms in poor-soil areas including the edge of Butler's Swamp. See James, 163. Small, one-story frame cottages with full-width porches found today in areas such as the 300 block of Orleans and north of East Oak -- once the perimeter of town -- were built on previously unoccupied land near natural drainage areas. They appeared in the 1890s, undoubtedly influenced by Jim Crow legislation.

⁸¹Davis, 73; Mary W. Miller, 1992. This antebellum housing distribution was an element of every southern city. Conversely, historian D. Clayton James claims that Johnson was situated "in one of the better white neighborhoods." See James, 170. Wade maintains that the purpose of such housing distribution was not to integrate the community, but to prevent the growth of a cohesive black community. See Wade, 75.

⁸²Deed Books, Adams County Courthouse.

⁸³Johnson Diary entry. The Natchez Weekly Courier and Journal reported on February 16, 1843, that two of McCary's buildings had burned.

divergence from prevailing traditional standards. Johnson's residence was a private sphere accessible to a limited number of friends and acquaintances. In the highly class-conscious and segregated society of the antebellum South, it was not a space into which many white people would enter. As in no other location, Johnson had the opportunity to deviate from his structured and very often limiting role, and to express materially his own perception of an ideal spatial organization. Overall, the impression is restrained conformity to predominant styles. But it also suggests a dichotomy between Johnson's public and private life that Johnson found acceptable in meeting his personal needs.

The Johnson House plan does not follow the traditional Georgian and Greek Revival residential townhouse floorplan. Instead of the typical side hall/parlor arrangement, documentary and physical evidence suggests that the three double doors opened onto one large open space, with the second floor centrally supported by one 11" x 11" or 12" x 12" column⁸⁴. Second-floor access was by an exterior gallery staircase, rather than in an interior side hall. An open arrangement would have been beneficial for commercial space, and for a short time the building was leased to a dance instructor--suitable space for such an activity. Perhaps Johnson intended to use this space for rental purposes once his children had grown. Mary L. Miller recalled that family history attributed the ground floor to storage during the Civil War⁸⁵. Neither does the second floor, with a central rear hall opening onto four rooms, conform to the townhouse side hall/parlor plan. The need for living space for twelve family members required an alteration to the traditional form through the addition of a front and rear room.

Because of his African-American heritage, and his participation in the building's construction, the question arises regarding the potential contribution of an African building tradition to the Johnson House design. As has been discussed, the facade followed the traditional nineteenth-century American styles common to Natchez. The division of the interior space suggests another influence, but that factor was probably more economic circumstance than cultural heritage. Despite the implicit privacy of residential space, Johnson's overall design and detailing was comparable to the styling preferred by the local well-to-do. Division of rooms by use into eating, sleeping, cooking and domestic activities appears to follow American standard forms. Johnson's division of first and second floors into storage/commercial space and living space continues an urban commercial tradition of both United States and Europe⁸⁶.

Judging from his character and goals evidenced in his diary, it is doubtful that Johnson would choose to integrate elements of a African vernacular building tradition. Johnson

⁸⁴Mary Louise Miller interview, 21 July 1992. Room divisions in the first floor, removed in 1981, had different moldings and doors than the second floor, and date to the early twentieth century. According to an engineering study done by Neil Jeffrey in 1981, the minimum dimensions of the columns necessary to support the double joist would have to be 6" x 6". See Neil Jeffrey to Koch and Wilson, 8 April 1981, "William Johnson House, Natchez, Preservation Society of Ellicott Hill CN 1239A, 80-81-82," Tulane University.

⁸⁵Mary Louise Miller interview 21 July 1992.

⁸⁶It should be noted that there are numerous African vernacular building traditions, and mitigating factors of time, acculturation and available materials and space may have had an influence on the house which is not apparent. For examples of African architecture, see Denyer, African Traditional Architecture (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1978), and Vlach, 186-235.

was born and raised in Natchez, and at least one generation removed from Africa. He probably first lived in the house of his master, William Johnson, then in town with his mother and sister. He worked in local commercial structures, and himself hired white artisans for the construction of this building, as well as for Harriet Battles' first house, and his property on Main Street⁸⁷. Johnson was also careful to limit his relationships to a specific circle of well-established freepersons, and disdained from mingling with his employees and slaves. Indeed, state law proscribed any business transaction between free blacks and slaves⁸⁸. Johnson maintained his domestic space as he would his public activities, and used the house to uphold the standards of dignity and aspirations he strove to achieve--standards he sought to instill in his family, and to display to visitors.

Johnson enjoyed leisure time in a variety of activities inside and outside the house. He often went gambling, riding, hunting, cardplaying and during the early 1830s occasionally attended the theater. But he also hosted social functions at home, particularly in the form of elaborate dinners with his friend Robert McCary, or brother-in-law James Miller, during the Miller family's frequent visits from New Orleans. Johnson's liquor supplies included a selection of domestic and imported whiskey, ale, gin and wine. On at least one instance in 1847, the Johnson home was the location of a party attended by nine adults and children, and the Johnson children.⁸⁹

As the primary sphere in which to influence his children's values,⁹⁰ and social center for entertaining close friends, the house interior was appointed following current fashion dictates. The house was furnished with a variety of decorative items, furniture, musical instruments, books and magazines. Johnson recorded purchases of a sofa, mahogany chairs, large mirrors, pier glasses, bookcases, floor carpeting and a \$25.00 painting. Several rooms were wallpapered. His probate records list a well-furnished house, including two sofas, nine mahogany chairs, a center table, a pair of side tables, a rocking chair, four pictures, a pianoforte, a work stand, two "mantle glasses," two bookcases with books, a bureau, a writing desk, two "longs" [chaises longues?], three small stands, a mahogany armoire, two small cherry armoires, a trundle bed, twenty-four common

⁸⁷Johnson had hired his friend, Thomas Rose, to construct the previous frame building on this site. Rose (white) would later build the high-style Greek Revival Stanton Hall in 1857. Mary W. Miller, interviews July-August 1992.

⁸⁸Johnson also makes occasional superior reference to "darkey parties" attended by his slaves in his diary, entries February 19, 1847, and December 18, 1850. He refused to attend the theater--segregated into black and white seating--following bad behavior of the patrons noted in his diary entry of April 12, 1836. Johnson's isolation removed him from the sources that might have contributed to an obvious African influence on his building. In comparison, research on the perseverance of ethnic material culture--including building construction--of slaves in Texas suggests that elements of African heritage remained strong, and were passed on to succeeding generations when close social groups existed to reinforce those traditions. See Vlach, 97.

⁸⁹Hogan and Davis (1951), 48-49. The August 19, 1847, partygoers were described as "old Mrs. Brustee, old Miss F, and young Miss F., Mrs Amie & two daughters, Miss Henrietta, Some other Miss of Jerman Extraction, Mr Brustee and all our own children."

⁹⁰The concept of the home as a nurturing and educational tool was not widely ascribed to until the late nineteenth century, and Johnson never implies in his diary that the purchases were for his children's benefit. However, the children received elements of a classic education, including piano lessons, and were read to by their father. The appreciation of their surroundings was suggested later in 1865 and again in 1873, when daughter Katherine lamented their economic downfall in her own sporadic diary, and wished for a return to a lifestyle they had previously enjoyed. See Johnson Family Papers, LSU, Vol 31.

chairs, a small side board, and three dining tables⁹¹. William Johnson's personal library contained novels, French and Spanish grammars, historical works, and Shakespearean drama. He subscribed to five or six Mississippi and New Orleans newspapers, a New York newspaper, the Saturday Evening Post, the New Yorker, the New York Mirror, and the Spirit of the Times. Beside the piano, he also owned a guitar, a flute, at least one violin, and a \$30.00 music box⁹².

Johnson apparently assigned room use along traditional American townhouse residential designs, although little written documentation exists in the Johnson Family Papers to describe room use. Based upon typical room arrangements at that time, wall finishes and degree of elaboration, the principal public receiving room and family activity space--the parlor--was located in the north corner room of the second floor. This was probably the "Large front Room," to whose wallpapering Johnson referred in his March 11, 1841, diary entry. The parlor, east room, west room, and hallway were papered, although the exact dates for papering are unknown. The parlor had three curtained and valanced windows, providing the most light in the house and the best view of the street. It was finished with simulated oak, paneled doors⁹³.

The location of Johnson's bedroom is suggested by the barber himself in a January 29, 1843, diary entry. Johnson awoke at six o'clock that morning to see the property of his neighbor, Judge Quitman, on fire. Quitman's two buildings, including a white frame house, were located on the Bluff, probably on a plot of land measuring 57' x 82' on State Street (First Street South in 1843) west of Canal. Quitman had purchased the lot from Jefferson College in 1828⁹⁴. Assuming that Johnson was not using the ground floor as his residence,⁹⁵ and that he was in bed with a view out of the window when he saw the flames, Johnson's bedroom was either in the front east room or the rear west room.

This is supported by Katherine Johnson's diary entries in the 1860s. She wrote on November 1, 1864, that her mother's room (presumably the bedroom she had shared with William Johnson) was near the parlor, placing it either in the east room or the west room. Since this room looked over the street, from which Katherine observed a visitor "coming off] the street,"⁹⁶ "Ma's" room was located in the east corner--a room which opens to the clothes press under the garret stairs.

⁹¹Probate Records, Box 136, Office of Records, Adams County Courthouse. Admittedly, some of these items may have been located in his barbershops.

⁹²Hogan and Davis (1951), 48; James, 234.

⁹³This room is the only room to have windows fitted with permanent curtain-rod holders.

⁹⁴An examination of Quitman's purchases and sales show that this property, half of Lot 2 in Square C, was not sold prior to 1843 -- the only Quitman property near the Johnson House at the time of the fire. Quitman paid \$500 to Jefferson College for the land, with the provision that he would never "sink a cellar" in the lot. Deed Book Q: 205, 207. Location of Square C identified on undated map in collection of Jordan, Kaiser and Sessions, Engineers, Natchez, Mississippi.

⁹⁵The idea that the family lived upstairs is strengthened in a July 30, 1841, entry in which an abashed Johnson reports fleeing to the "Back House" during a storm, leaving his family "up Stairs."

⁹⁶Katherine Johnson diary entry October 31, 1864. Johnson Family Papers, LSU, Volume 31.

At least two of Johnson's daughters shared a room on the second floor--probably the south room. This is based upon a November 3, 1864, entry in Katherine's diary, when Katherine wrote that she provoked a fight with Alice, whereupon both "ran in the passage. And I got angry then and we had quite an earnest bitter struggle. And after the . . . struggle I took her [needle] work and threw it down stairs. . . ." ⁹⁷

Specific room use for the remainder of the building is less clear. The remaining second-floor room, equipped with a fireplace, probably belonged to Harriet Battles. Mary Louise Miller was told that the boys had a common bedroom in the garret. At the time of Miller's occupation, the second floor was divided into three bedrooms, with a living room in the north corner. This floor was occupied by Alice Johnson, who used the kitchen dependency for cooking, and the garret as storage.

Another integral activity space for the Johnson family was the back gallery. Facing into the private back yard, the gallery was used both as a dining area and a community gathering space on warm evenings. Johnson wrote that he was plastering the porch for a dining area on July 22, 1841. It was roofed on May 16, 1843, providing a sheltered yet open area. Katherine wrote over twenty years later that the gallery was a relaxed gathering spot, where "we were all sitting . . . laughing and talking." ⁹⁸

Perhaps it could be argued here that the gallery shows an African influence on the Johnson House design, although the form was a standard residential element throughout Natchez and the south by the 1840s. John Michael Vlach and Carl Anthony attribute the gallery's appearance in the United States following the arrival of African slaves and their European masters to the new world. Vlach points out that the southern form of the front porch has no antecedents in England or Europe, while verandas are common to African house design. Anthony notes that the veranda is a widespread element in West African rain forest architecture, and is "an important locus of social and ceremonial life in the extended family compound." ⁹⁹

The relationship between the Johnson House, its original dependency and the yard also reflected prevailing attitudes to building siting, massing and property ownership. The building group conformed to historian Richard C. Wade's conclusion that because of the constrictions of small city lots, the urban main house of the South was built close to the street, with a small yard and slave quarters located to the rear. The dependencies were "long and narrow and usually two stories high, either adjoining the master's house at right angles or . . . at the back of the lot overlooking a small open area." ¹⁰⁰ The Johnsons' first dependency was built behind and at right angles to the main building. It was two

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸The July 22 entry may have been a reference to the brick kitchen dependency gallery, which was also under construction at this time. See also Katherine Johnson Diary entry October 31, 1864. Johnson Family Papers, LSU, Volume 31.

⁹⁹John Michael Vlach, "Afro-Americans," *America's Architectural Roots*, ed. Dell Upton (Washington, D.C., Preservation Press, 1986), 45; Carl Anthony, "The Big House and the Slave Quarters, Part II: African Contributions to the New World," *Landscape* 21, no. 1 (Autumn 1976): 13.

¹⁰⁰Wade, 57.

stories, of brick, and had a frame gallery overlooking the yard behind the house. A tall fence surrounded the yard at about the turn of the twentieth century¹⁰¹. Wade attributes the use of such tall property boundaries as a tool to emphasize the dominance of the master, with the objective to isolate the bondsman from outside contact¹⁰². However, Johnson does not give the impression of attempting to create a isolated “compound” in his diary. He regularly allowed his slaves to attend social functions and entertainment and to travel overnight.

A subject of critical importance to the Johnson House is the first-floor room use from about 1843 to 1851. The house was designed with first-floor commercial space, with residential second and third floors. Yet the Johnson family diaries and financial records give no other evidence of renters at 210 State St. after Barbieri. Reference to commercial lessees in his diary and daybooks can be traced to other properties owned by Johnson. Perhaps a worrisome lease situation with Barbieri, who owed \$90.00 in rent after three month’s occupation, discouraged Johnson from continued rental space in his residence. Perhaps he intended it as flexible investment property, to be used when his children had grown and moved away.¹⁰³

At some point prior to the 1920s, the first floor had been subdivided into three rooms. The division may date as early as the 1870s, when census manuscripts list three adult boarders rooming at the house. The Johnson family economy had experienced a decline following William Johnson’s murder and the effects of the Civil War and Reconstruction. After William Johnson’s death, his widow, Ann, became head of the household. She was succeeded by son Byron upon her death in 1866. Byron was in turn succeeded by his sister, Anna L., after his murder in 1872. Without Johnson’s business acumen and his enterprising nature, the family income shrank. Katherine lamented the state of the family fortune in 1865, noting resentfully that when brother William brought his wife and children to live in the house, the move was “a heavy weight on [Ann Johnson’s] income.”¹⁰⁴ William was committed to an insane asylum in 1866, and Richard moved out of the house at about the same time. Left to manage the house on their own, the Johnson women hired themselves as seamstresses, sold pies Under-the-Hill and found employment as teachers to make ends meet. Their efforts had little effect on their difficult situation, Katherine wrote sadly in 1873. “I believe that to all our other ills and troubles is to be added that of poverty, for every year we grow poorer and poorer, we can’t get our rents and . . . for two terms I have toiled in the Public School and received nothing but a

¹⁰¹Norman photo, Myrtle Bank Galleries. This fence remained through the 1920s. See Mary Louise Miller telephone interview 7 August 1992. While the presence of a fence in the 1900s does not prove that a similar structure preceded it, William Johnson often recorded in his 1840s diary entries erecting or mending fences on his lot.

¹⁰²Wade, 59.

¹⁰³Johnson Diary entry February 11, 1842; “Land Use History, William Johnson House,” TMs, Natchez National Historical Park, Natchez, Mississippi; Hogan and Davis (1951), 355.

¹⁰⁴Johnson Family Papers, LSU, Volume 31.

lot of worthless warrants for my pains.”¹⁰⁵ Tenants remained an element of the Johnson House through the turn of the century--as late as the 1940s or 1950s, Sally Johnston was renting out the dependency¹⁰⁶.

Pinpointing an exact construction date of the first-floor partitioning is difficult because receipts for construction materials dating to the 1870s and 1880s exist in the Johnson Family Papers, but they do not specify which of the several Johnson-owned properties received work. The Johnsons owned two brick buildings by 1860, and leased three plantations by 1870¹⁰⁷. In 1856, 207' of 2" plank, 25' of 1-1/2" plank, 25' of 1-1/2" scantling and 53" of "shoulders" were purchased from Thomas Rose, but their use was not specified¹⁰⁸. Anna requested a line of credit from the New Orleans firm of West V. Cusachs in 1885, but the request was denied¹⁰⁹. Nails, lath and scantling were purchased at various times, but do not appear in sufficient quantity to suggest a specific date for the first-floor subdivision. Possible dates might be on January 11, 1867, when Anna Johnson paid Robert Peterson \$55.00 "For repairing the house," or March 16, 1868, when Byron Johnson purchased sills, joists and planks from R. Ratchford. However, Byron had leased St. Genevieve Plantation in Louisiana two days earlier, and the materials were probably destined for construction there. In February 1873, Anna Johnson was presented with a \$36.90 bill from R. S. Dixon for several gallons of lead-based paint. While no building was specified, the expenditure may indicate maintenance of leased rooms¹¹⁰. On April 30, 1882, E. W. Wall of the Louisiana Steam, Sash, Blind and Door factory gave Roberts and Company a bill for \$48.75, presumably for work on a Johnson-owned building.

Tax assessments also suggest an 1870s alteration to the house. In 1866-67, the Johnson Estate was valued at \$14,200, although specific lots are not identified. In 1870, the State Street property was valued at \$4,800, but dropped to \$3,850 the following year. "State and County Railroad Taxes" in 1878 list the property at \$2,000, an amount at which it roughly remained through the 1900s. In 1880, the value had risen to \$2,500, but dropped back to \$2,000 by 1894. The building remained at the same taxable value until about

¹⁰⁵It may be that the Johnson women used the first floor in the 1860s and early 1870s for their sewing work. The 1991 and 1992 archaeology investigations found a high number of brass straight pins. "Population Schedules of the 9th Census of the United States (1870)," 1, Adams County, National Archives and Records Service, microfilm; Johnson Family Papers, Folders 1-6, Volume 31.

¹⁰⁶Mary Louise Miller telephone interview, 21 July 1992.

¹⁰⁷The Johnson family had hired James Hardie to build their new barbershop on Main Street in 1854, and Byron Johnson leased three plantations. See "Specifications of a House Proposed to be Built for William Johnson on Main Street," William Johnson Family Papers, LSU, Folder 19.

¹⁰⁸Ibid, Folder 20.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., Folder 4.

¹¹⁰Ibid., Folder 22. See also bills of June 1, 1857 (Folder 20); June 22, 1865 and June 23, 1866 (Folder 21); January 11, 1867, June 1867, and March 16, 1868 (Folder 22); April 30, 1882 and April-November 1892 (Folder 24); and sporadic entries in Daybooks and Ledgers: September 21 to October 30, 1866 (Volume 15); December 6 to May 24, 1867 (Volume 15); March 28, 1872 (Volume 48); April 16 to July 4, 1867 (Volume 45), Johnson Family Papers, LSU.

1913, when it again rose to \$2,500. By 1922, it dropped to \$2,200.¹¹¹

Because most of the Johnson family remained in the house for a long period of their adult lives, it can be assumed that the subdivision of the first floor into three rooms would have been necessary to accommodate the boarders. The Johnson family were the only inhabitants listed in the 1860 census manuscripts, but as early as 1867, a Mr. Carter and "Aunt Milly Johnson" were renting the dependency "kitchen room" from Anna Johnson for \$5.00 per month¹¹². A tantalizing scrap from an 1867 receipt for plaster repairs on a Johnson building--no address is given--once listed the occupant of the repaired room, but that portion has since been torn and lost¹¹³. In addition to the eight-member Johnson family residing at 210 State St. in 1870, barbers Juanito and Carlito Garrus, ages 28 and 25, lived at this address, as did tinner William York¹¹⁴.

In 1880, six people occupied the house, including school teachers Pauline Elliott (age 32) and John Chavers (age 25). No records exist for the 1890 census. By 1900, fourteen people were listed in the building. In addition to Johnson's four daughters, son Clarence and his wife, Catherine Lynch, were living there with their four children, Mabel G., William, Kenneth M. and John. The boarders at that time were Elliott, Evelyn Smith (age 19) a teacher, John [or James?] Lynch, a 19-year-old paymaster, and widower James Wheeler, a barber. By 1910, Alice Johnson had become head of the household, and rented out rooms to teachers Elliott and Rachel Ross, age 32. Clarence was also listed as head of the household that year, with his wife and three children. John Johnston had by that time moved out. Also at this time, Evelyn Smith was listed as Clarence's "adopted daughter." The division of household heads indicates that the building was considered two separate residences.¹¹⁵

It has been suggested that 210 State St. was used as a school at some point at about the turn of the century¹¹⁶. The Johnson children had received sufficient education to qualify them for teaching at a time when few southern children were encouraged to attend school

¹¹¹See Folders 23-26, Johnson Family Papers, LSU; "Adams County Assessment of Lands," Historic Natchez Foundation, Natchez, Mississippi.

¹¹²Anna Johnson's Daybook, Johnson Family Papers, LSU, Volume 45.

¹¹³Johnson Family Papers, LSU, Folder 22.

¹¹⁴Eugene is misidentified as a blacksmith. The Garruses had close connections with the Johnsons. Both were signatories in contracts with the Johnsons between the family and freedmen to work Carthage and Black Lake Plantations leased by Byron and Anna. Juanito Garrus would later marry Eugenia Johnson. See "Population Schedules of the 7th Census of the United States (1870)," 1, Adams County (Washington, D.C.: The National Archives and Records Service, 1965) microfilm; Elaine B. Smith, "William T. Johnson and Family Memorial Papers Inventory," TMs, January 1990, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

¹¹⁵Interestingly, Kenneth M. Johnston was also the census-taker for that area of town in 1910. See "Population Schedules of the 13th Census of the United States (1910)," Adams County, National Archives and Records Service, microfilm.

¹¹⁶This theory is based on the presence of several volumes of attendance records once stored in the Johnson House attic, and also upon the discovery of many pencils unearthed during the 1991 and 1992 excavations. See also Hawkes, 8.

regularly. Although Anna L., Katherine, Josephine and Alice were listed as teachers in the 1880 and 1900 census, and while Anna and Katherine earned first- and second-grade level teaching certificates in 1899,¹¹⁷ no documentary evidence exists to prove conclusively the building's use as a school. City directories from 1877 and 1892 list only the Institute Public and Natchez Union Schools, the latter at which Anna L. Johnson taught from at least 1871 through 1907 before she moved to Peachland Plantation in 1912. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps from 1886, 1892, 1897, 1901, 1904 and 1925 list the building and dependencies (both first and second kitchen structures) as dwellings. The house was occupied by adult boarders from the 1870s to the 1910s, presumably leaving little space for a school room. Furthermore, long-time boarder Pauline Elliott worked with Anna at the segregated "Union Colored School" from at least 1888 to at least 1914. Rachel Ross, another boarder, taught at Union from 1899 to 1907. Josephine Johnson was listed as a teacher in the Adams County school system in 1873, and Katherine was employed in the Vidalia public school in 1871, then at a country school in 1876 before teaching at Ravenswood Plantation in Louisiana's Tensas Parish from 1877-78. She later taught in Troyville, Louisiana, in 1888. Alice Johnson won a contract to teach in the Deer Park Public School for the 1898-99 school year. Alice and Josephine retired from teaching by 1910.¹¹⁸

D. Construction

William Johnson's diary, ledgers and daybooks for the years 1840 to 1842 provide extensive reference to the process of constructing the house at 210 State St. As general contractor, he kept scrupulous account of his expenditures, which amounted to at least \$45.00 in materials and more than \$3,300 in wages¹¹⁹. Johnson bargained with mill owner Andrew Brown for lumber, and with neighbor William Parker for additional lumber and bricks. The barber employed local white artisans for the carpentry, brick laying and plastering, and hired additional general labor as needed. He and his slaves performed some of the rough labor themselves.

The Johnson House was built in a surprisingly short period of time. The house was constructed within eight months, between initial surveying and final wallpapering. Johnson began construction after his previous frame building burned down on September 24, 1839. He had the lot surveyed on January 3, 1840, but did not begin intensive work until May. This delay fortuitously saved Johnson from the damage of a May 7, 1840, tornado that ripped through the city, causing the deaths of more than forty people and more than \$1 million in damages. John McCallum, Johnson's neighbor to the east,

¹¹⁷Johnson Family Papers, LSU, Folder 24.

¹¹⁸The 1873 Adams County school board minutes book, page 77, lists Josephine, along with future sister-in-law Catherine Lynch. Both received \$50.00 a year. From "Adams County School Board Minutes," microfilm 312, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi; "Teacher Pay Register and Teacher Pay Certificates, 1873-1915," Historic Natchez Foundation, Natchez, Mississippi; Anna Johnson's Attendance Records, Johnson Family Papers, LSU, Volume 52, Folder 4, 24; Katherine Johnson's "Attendance Records" of 1871, Melrose, Natchez National Historic Park, Natchez, Mississippi; Joe Louis Caldwell, "A Social, Economic and Political Study of Blacks in the Louisiana Delta, 1865-1880" (Ph.D. diss., Tulane University, 1989), 187; Manuscript Census.

¹¹⁹See expenditures in Johnson Diary and Johnson Family Papers, LSU, Folders 31 and 39. The expenditures for the artisans may have included materials.

suffered \$1,000 damage to his newly constructed building. Directly to the north, William Parker's landmark three-story brick "Southern Exchange" Hotel, partially burned in the 1839 fire, was destroyed at a loss of about \$70,000.¹²⁰

Johnson contracted carpenter George Weldon to build his residence. Irish-born Weldon was a highly successful builder in Mississippi, and with his brothers Thomas and William, were at one time the wealthiest and most extensive contractors in the state. The Weldons used more than 100 slaves in their work crew. Among their work are included the courthouses in Raymond and Vicksburg, Mississippi, and Memorial Hall in Natchez¹²¹. Weldon's associations with Johnson extended to the construction of the barber's Main Street brick building and accompanying kitchen, and a small frame building at Natchez Under-the-Hill. Johnson also lent Weldon money during and after construction on this building.

Although the Weldons had established a brickyard near High Street in 1838,¹²² Johnson obtained most of his bricks from William Parker. During the months of May and June 1840, Johnson hauled bricks from Parker's hotel ruins¹²³. In the months following the tornado, Johnson had competition for the materials. "Mr Parker is selling off[f] his Brick very fast - number of Carts are hauling from thare," he noted on May 21, 1840, so he brought four slaves along to aid in collection and loading. Johnson recorded paying a total of \$150 for the bricks. He continued to haul bricks from Parker's ruins through 1841, being careful to collect only those lying free on the ground. Johnson wrote that according to an agreement with Parker's attorney, F. L. Claiborne, the attorney informed him that "you can take them tho you must not pull dow the Houses that the people are living in I told him I would not and so the Bargain was confirmed."¹²⁴

The face brick of the front facade is of a finer quality than the remaining brick on the building. This material probably came from mason James C. Fox, who itemized a bill on October 17, 1840, for "1,700 bricks at \$10 per thousand."¹²⁵

Johnson's use of brick was undoubtedly influenced by a series of destructive fires in the 1830s¹²⁶. An 1840 ordinance went so far as to ban frame commercial structures in downtown Natchez. However, few other building codes restricted Johnson's

¹²⁰Mississippi Free Trader and Natchez Weekly Gazette, 11 and 14 May 1839.

¹²¹Mary W. Miller, interview by author, 30 July 1992; Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Mississippi, 1 (Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1891; repr. Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Company of Chicago, 1978), 328.

¹²²"Minutes of the Board of Aldermen," 26 December 1838, Historic Natchez Foundation, Natchez, Mississippi, microfilm.

¹²³Johnson Diary entries of May 21 and 22, June 1, 8, 12, 22, 23, 25, 1840.

¹²⁴Johnson Diary entries June 8, 1840; April 10, 12-16, 19, 1841.

¹²⁵Hawkes, 13.

¹²⁶Miller 1979, Sect. 7-4, based on petitions to selectmen by owners in 1840, from "Minutes of the Board of Aldermen," Historic Natchez Foundation.

construction--Natchez did not adopt a complete set of building codes until 1954,¹²⁷ and restrictions on the construction were limited to the creation of brick or stone chimneys¹²⁸.

Although Johnson purchased at least \$75.00 in lumber from Parker,¹²⁹ his primary timber source was Andrew Brown, from Brown's successful cypress steam lumbermill Under-the-Hill. Brown, one of the leading industrialists in the lower Mississippi Valley, was born in Scotland in 1873, and studied architecture before moving to the United States in the early 1820s. Brown purchased the mill of his employer, Peter Little, in 1828. In response to local demands during the 1830s boom period, he completely rebuilt his lumber plant in 1835. Brown's success was partially due to slave labor in the lumberyard and sawmill, and his near-monopoly as a lumber manufacturer in Natchez. He and silent partner Stephen Duncan provided most of the wood materials for the town during the 1830s and 1840s. By 1840 the sawmill produced more than 2 million board feet annually. Andrew Brown continued to prosper in the 1840s and 1850s, establishing a lumber market in New Orleans and a sash factory in 1852. By 1860, Brown controlled a commercial empire, with extensive timber lands in the Yazoo Valley¹³⁰.

Construction of the Johnson House progressed quickly; the shell of the house was erected within three months. Brown personally worked on the house, measuring off the ground on August 3 and 4, 1840. Nearly two weeks later, on August 17, Weldon (and presumably additional employees, including a "Mr. Tucker" to whom Johnson made frequent payments) began laying joists. By September 14, the second-floor joists had been partially constructed, and were finished the following day. "Sheeting" and the attic rafters were installed on October 8 and 9, and the shell of the building completed shortly thereafter. By October 20, Weldon had nearly finished the shingling.

Construction of the various building elements--framing, masonry and finishing--appear to have occurred simultaneously, with their progress dependent on Johnson's ability to procure materials. For example, on August 25, 1840, while initial framing was underway, two sash frame windows purchased by Johnson from a Mr. Elam were installed. On September 7, before the second floor was complete, Johnson reported that his "New Doors" had been hung. Presumably these doors were the three doors that Johnson had purchased from Parker on June 15, 1840¹³¹. The doors may have been the three double doors that survived on the house until remodeling in the 1920s. Those removed during remodeling had diagonal panels that angled from the sides to meet in the center¹³².

¹²⁷Natchez adopted the National Building Code of 1949 on July 1, 1954. From The Code of the City of Natchez, Mississippi, 1954 (Charlottesville, VA: Michie City Publications Co., 1954).

¹²⁸Natchez Amended General Ordinances, "Fires, Chimneys, Forges, Etc.," Section 1 (City of Natchez, 29 January 1877).

¹²⁹Johnson Diary entries June 19 and 22, 1841.

¹³⁰John Hebron Moore, Andrew Brown and Cypress Lumbering in the Old Southwest (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), viii-xi, 22-59, 102-104.

¹³¹Johnson Family Papers, LSU, File 31.

¹³²Mary Louise Miller, telephone interview, 7 August 1992.

Johnson bought a keg of nails for \$8.00 on October 15, 1840, enabling Weldon to fulfill their agreement for Weldon to shingle that day at "four dollars the square and I to find the nails."

Brickwork had begun as early as August 17, when Johnson paid Fox \$30 for his work, although Johnson also wrote one month later that "the Brick layers commenced to work on the Building."¹³³ Work on the chimneys had progressed by September. While the brick layers were at work that month, the carpenters set two additional windows and another door frame¹³⁴. At least two masons worked on the house, James Fox and a "Mr. Greaves." This may have been Charles Graves, who was listed in the 1840 census, although both "Graves and Johnson" and "Greaves and Johnson" purchased lumber from Andrew Brown in 1840¹³⁵. One of the masons suffered from inattention or clumsiness, as Johnson discovered on September 18, when he and slave Winston found a trowel while cleaning out a new chimney.

Design decisions also seem to have evolved while construction was underway. There are no plans or specifications in the Johnson Family Papers for this building, although Johnson had mentioned paying a contractor \$18 in 1836 for a draft of Harriet Battles' house, and later hired local carpenter James Hardie to design a new brick building on Main Street¹³⁶. It is possible that Johnson copied the earlier "5-room building" of Battles' frame structure for this building¹³⁷. In addition to the changes to the garret and attic height discussed in Part I. 6. "Alterations and Additions" below, Johnson appears to have belatedly decided to include dormers in his garret. He remarked that on October 9, 1840, he "partly made a bargain" with George Weldon to install dormer windows. The inclusion of dormers in the garret may have been influenced by the 1840 tornado, which destroyed numerous roofs in town. A subscriber to the Mississippi Free Trader encouraged the installation of dormer windows in a letter to the newspaper of May 28, 1840. He claimed that the cause was a result of the fall in external air pressure, and that roofs not equipped with openings to equalize the pressure were those that had been damaged.

Although the shell of the house was completed by November 1840, internal construction, the creation of a brick kitchen dependency and landscaping continued through the following year. The lot was fenced by November 16, and on December 18, Johnson hired bricklayers to begin the foundations of the kitchen. The kitchen chimney was begun on December 22. Brickwork on the kitchen continued through January, and was completed on January 28, 1841. The kitchen floor was laid on March 1, and the walls plastered from

¹³³Johnson Diary entry September 17, 1840. The earlier reference to the Fox bill might have been for work on Johnson's Main Street building, which was under construction in 1839.

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵Andrew Brown Daybooks, 1837-1840, Historic Natchez Foundation, photocopies.

¹³⁶The seven-page specifications indicate that the Main Street Store had six doors on the main facade, either in six openings, or -- as in the Johnson House -- hung in sets in three openings. The fireplace arrangement suggests that the first floor was divided into three rooms. Johnson Family Papers, LSU, Folder 19.

¹³⁷Hawkes, 5.

March 5 to 10. A privy was built in the yard between February 2 and 4.

Interior work on the house began in December 1840, with carpentry work and plastering generally progressing from the first floor to the garret. On the 8th, Johnson purchased 1,000' of 1" lumber. Two weeks later he bought an additional \$27.00 worth of lumber, probably to be used on the partitioning of rooms that had begun that day. In early January, Johnson spent \$52.50 on 15,000 laths from Brown's sawmill, and hired two plasterers, Barbee and Evans, at \$80.00 a month and \$3.00 a day, respectively.¹³⁸ Johnson himself made "mortar" for the plasterers and prepared the beds, using some of the \$37.50 worth of lime in 30 barrels he had purchased on January 11. In the nineteenth century, animal hair was commonly used as a binder in plaster, and the base coat of the Johnson House plaster has an unusually high percentage of hair. Johnson might have used hair clippings from his barbershop as the binding material¹³⁹. Four days later, on January 15, plastering had progressed to the second floor, "Left Hand Conner [sic] Room," probably a reference to the parlor.

An examination of the Johnson House plaster reveals that the base moldings were installed before the plaster was applied, and were used as the stock for the plaster float. Damp weather then delayed progress on plastering for a week, until January 22. In the meantime, carpenters were at work laying the gallery and dormer floors¹⁴⁰. Plastering rooms did not follow any specific order, and probably depended upon the drying time of the walls. On January 28, the third "whitening" plaster coat had been applied to unnamed portions of the interior. The garret received less work from the plasterers. One coat was applied on February 18, 1841, and six days later, Johnson and Winston were painting the walls. On the lower floors, plastering continued through March. Johnson wrote on February 19 that he had hired another plasterer, James Brown, who may have speeded up work. By the 25th, workers had "Finished of[f] the Large Front Room to day in the second story and Commenced on the other Back Room." Johnson aided in the work by removing lime deposits from the baseboards and doors. Progress was also delayed due to interruptions by the artisans. Johnson noted with some irritation on February 16 that only one plasterer had appeared at work, "the other on a Spree I think." A disagreement between plasterers as to the dryness of the plaster ensued on March 1, but Barbee prevailed, and proceeded to apply a final coat. Plasterer Evans left to work in nearby Washington two days later, and a Mr. Ruffner sent over two additional workmen, apparently in compensation.

The Johnson House was essentially completed by March, although additional work continued sporadically during the following months. Finishing the rooms included application of white lead paint and wallpaper. On March 11 and 12, a paper hanger

¹³⁸Johnson Diary entries January 6, 7, 11 and 15, 1841.

¹³⁹Johnson may have sold his shop clippings to other plasterers prior to this, as he did later. His 1841-43 Diary and Account Book lists the sale of a bushel of clippings to a "Plasterer" for \$1.50. Hawkes, 31, from William Johnson Papers, LSU.

¹⁴⁰Johnson Diary entry January 22, 1841.

arrived to hang wallpaper in “the front room,”¹⁴¹ and Johnson began moving furniture to his new dwelling. The family completed moving from their quarters in “Mrs. Neibut’s house” on March 15, 1841. Eleven days later, Johnson hired a man to dig a cellar under the house, work in which Johnson participated. Cellar excavation lasted until early April. Final structural work was completed in mid-March with the installation of a “bridging joist” and pillar located at the center of the first floor, for which Johnson paid \$5.50, and repair of the front doors by carpenter Tucker¹⁴². On April 1, Tucker replaced “the old [window]” with a new one, and on May 13, Johnson installed an awning on his building. It blew off less than a month later¹⁴³. On July 29, Johnson lathed the underside of the gallery “to make a Dining or Eating Room.” On October 26, a Mr. Brick installed two grates that he had purchased at auction. Four days later, Johnson joyfully reported that he had paid Weldon “the last Cent that I owe him in the World.” In preparation for their new tenant, Barbieri, Johnson and his slaves Charles and Ned painted the building on November 13, 1841, the same day that he purchased 30 yards of carpeting.

Johnson continued to improve his house in the following years. He bid \$2.87 and won two doors at an auction on April 22, 1842, for which he later had to pay “3 Bits more.” One week later, Johnson wrote that he “had a Door Cut in the Back of the Lower Room in the dwelling House in State Street,” at a cost of \$20.00. On July 13, 1843, blinds were installed on the front windows. On May 16, 1843, the barber had carpenters St. Clair and Shaw install a “cover” for his gallery at a cost of \$25.00, and in late November, had “Glass Frames” moved from his Main Street store to his residence on State Street¹⁴⁴. Work on the interior continued through May 8, 1845, when Johnson wrote that “the Boys Papering Some Little to day & Painting also.” Subsequent repair work on the house was recorded by the Johnson family in the form of receipts, and consisted primarily of whitening, painting, and rebuilding of fences.

During final construction of the house in 1841, Johnson was also at work finishing his yard. In March he hauled dirt from Parker’s ruins, probably to level the yard¹⁴⁵. In addition to the two-story kitchen, the barber had a cistern dug and plastered during the month of March¹⁴⁶. A second cistern was built by Johnson and his workmen and bricked in by a Mr. Oblemis in February 1842. Another was finished in August 1842¹⁴⁷. Johnson built a hen house on March 12, and even moved a cow to the State Street lot, building a pen for it on March 16. Landscaping the yard included the planting of “4 China trees”

¹⁴¹Johnson had previously purchased 346 “pieces” of wallpaper on December 16, 1840, some of which he later sold. From Hogan and Davis (1951), 31.

¹⁴²Johnson Diary entry March 24, 1841.

¹⁴³Johnson Diary entry June 9, 1841.

¹⁴⁴Johnson Diary entry November 28, 1844.

¹⁴⁵Johnson Diary entry March 26, 1841.

¹⁴⁶Diary entries March 6 to 16, 1841

¹⁴⁷Johnson Diary entries January 20; February 1, 5, 8, 11, 17, 18, 19; July 30, 1842. It is not clear from the entries if the later cistern was built at State Street or Main Street.

that Johnson had bought on February 20, 1841, and rose bushes purchased for \$2.25 at auction on March 5, 1842¹⁴⁸. William Johnson also paved the area between house and kitchen, once again using bricks hauled from the Parker ruins. This work was performed at various times by Johnson and his slaves, Steven, Phillip, John and Winston. In March and April 1841, the barber hired additional help as needed¹⁴⁹. Final work on the yard included paying \$3.50 on July 1 to hang a gate that had been given to Johnson by a Mr. Raly. Johnson erected a shed on July 29. One year later, Johnson continued to improve the yard. During the month of May, he installed a garden fence, and from July to August 1842, had the yard leveled, paved and fenced, and a latrine dug¹⁵⁰. The yard appears to have been used for livestock and vegetable gardens at least until Johnson purchased Hard Scrabble in 1845¹⁵¹. Johnson continued to improve the State Street lot through 1850, when he hired a carpenter named Waller to build "a little Frame house in the yard," using lumber from Brown's mill.¹⁵²

Johnson's papers are also noteworthy as a record of contemporary prices for materials and labor. In addition to his diary notes on daily expenditures, Johnson recorded three itemized bills given him by the artisans. Mason Fox's bill amounted to \$827.05 on October 17, 1840, and included work on the laying of 83,936 bricks, of which he provided 17,000. Fox also listed installing "two trimmer arches" at \$2.00 a piece, 56 feet of cornice totaling \$56.00, "three Double arches" at \$3.00 each, twelve single arches at \$1.50 each, and the setting of three window frames at \$.50 per frame.

Carpenters Weldon and Tucker presented Johnson with similar bills¹⁵³. On March 20, 1841, Johnson copied a bill that George Weldon had given him on March 11, listing \$506.90 worth of work on the house:

William Johnson D	
To G. Weldon for first floor and	
3 Door frames and 3 window frames as per contract	117.00
To framing second floor 12 sqr 4	48.00
To 1 door door frame & transom Light sash	20.00
To Setting 3 window frames	1.50
Framing Raising Floor 12 sqr.	48.00
framing 15 sqr of Rafters	60.00
7 sqr Collar Beams	28.00
To 15 sqr Sheeting and Shingling	90.00
100 ft. reveal Board	5.00
2 Dormer windows	75.00

¹⁴⁸Johnson Family Papers, LSU, File 31.

¹⁴⁹Johnson Diary entries March 26; April 10, 12-16, 19, 1841.

¹⁵⁰Johnson Diary entries, May 13; July 7, 12, 15, 18, 21, 22, 25, 30; August 16, 18, 21, 1842.

¹⁵¹Hawkes, 7.

¹⁵²Johnson Diary entries, March 28 to April 5, 1850.

¹⁵³Xeroxes of original included below.

JOHNSON & McCALLUM HOUSES, WILLIAM JOHNSON HOUSE
HABS No. MS-270-A
(Page 35)

12 po nails	1.50
150 feet 2 inch pine bed per	7.50
60 feet wall strip for second floor	1.80
60 feet raising floor do	1.80
60 ft. Raising plate	<u>1.80</u>
	\$506.90

Tucker presented Johnson with a similar bill on March 24, 1841, which the barber noted that he had paid in full the same day:

To repairing Front Doors	3.00
do window sashes	2.50
To Timber Pine Lumber	4.00
Caseing 3 windows at 4\$ per	12.00
Making 4 window frames a 4\$	16.00
do 2 Door Frames	10.00
Caseing 2 Doors under stairway	9.00
Bridging Joist & puting up Pillar	5.50
2 pine Doors at \$7 per	14.00
Puting up furrowing to Lattion [?]	3.00
Geting out & puting Down Base in Closeprefs under Stairway	2.00
Making 18 Lights of Sash 25th	4.50
Puting up studing & Finishing around Dormer windows	8.00
Puting in framing timbers in 2 wind ows & Making 2 window Frames	8.00
Strateages & Darbys/or Plasterers	1.50
Framing Roof & Kitchen	8.00
do Joists for 2 floors	10.00

Johnson's accounts of expenditures between 1840 and 1841 indicate that he paid masons Fox \$907.05, Reynolds \$247.50, and Greaves \$9.40 for their work. Finishing carpenter Tucker was paid \$486, and Weldon \$943.90. During the months of January to March 1841, plasterers Evans, Barbee and Brown were paid \$620, \$136.66 1/2, and \$750, respectively¹⁵⁴. In paying wages, Johnson did not discriminate between day laborers, who received between \$.61-1/2 and \$1.12-1/2 per day, and his slaves, who received \$1.00 to \$1.50 per day. Phillip and Steven, who did a majority of the rough labor with Johnson during the first five months of construction, were given \$1.00 and \$1.50 respectively for mixing mortar and hauling materials. Steven received a reduction in pay to \$1.12-1/2 in August, perhaps due to his tendency to slip away and drink, while Phillip's wages increased to \$1.50¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵⁴Johnson Family Papers, LSU, File 39; Johnson Diary entries August 17; October 17; November 26; December 12, 19, 26, 1840; January 11, 16, 25, 27; July 3; December 30, 1841.

¹⁵⁵From Johnson's daybook listing expenditures from January 8, 1841 to May 25, 1841. Johnson Family Papers, LSU, File 36.

Today, the salvaged brick materials, a poor mortar mix and lack of maintenance have left the Johnson house in disrepair. The quality of construction has long contributed to this problem, something Johnson himself noted shortly after work on his home was completed in 1841, when he reported a leaking roof during a heavy rain storm. The roof was cemented in 1857.¹⁵⁶

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The William Johnson House is a three-bay, two-and-a-half-story Greek Revival-style structure. The brick building's form is representative of the type popular for business and residence construction during the early and mid decades of the nineteenth century. The Johnson House has had two major internal first-floor subdivisions, and several lesser alterations.
2. Condition of fabric: The current condition of the building is fair. The Johnson house has been uninhabited for seventeen years, and has not been properly maintained. Recent construction activity in the 1970s and 1980s included removal of ca. 1910 exterior cement stucco, removal of a frame porch on the northeast wall, and replacement of northeast fenestration and openings. The northeast facade brick is highly chipped as a result of the stucco removal, encouraging dissolution. There has also been extensive repointing, and rebuilding of the southwest frame gallery. However, necessary measures to control settling, wicking and efflorescence in first-floor walls have not occurred. A 3" to 4" gap exists between the upper portions of the northeast and southwest walls and the common wall, and the building has pulled away from the rebuilt southwest gallery by about 1". Substantial brick deterioration is also found on the northwest wall and chimneys. Deteriorated floor boards and joists occur on the second floor.

The first-floor interior has been gutted, with removal of ca. 1910 partition walls and the floor. General disrepair includes missing sections of plaster, plaster cracking, and peeled wallpaper.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: This is a two-and-a-half-story building, measuring 27'-9 1/2" (three-bay front) x 42'-7" (two bays deep). It has a 27'-9 1/2" x 9'-2" gallery on the southwest wall.
2. Foundations: The building sits on brick foundations. The materials for the northeast, northwest and southwest walls are of broken brick. The southeast wall bricks are whole¹⁵⁷. On northeast, northwest and southwest walls the foundation has twenty-three courses below the joist pockets and a brick footing. At its

¹⁵⁶Johnson Diary entry October 31, 1841; Johnson Family Papers, LSU, Folder 20.

¹⁵⁷Atkinson (1991).

juncture with the first-floor wall, the foundation is 18" wide. A wood ledger for the floor sill is found next to the northwest joist pockets, and is set 12" below grade. Four smaller pockets are south of the first-floor chimney. One basement entrance is let into the foundation at the north corner of the northwest wall, a second is found at the west corner of the southwest wall. They have wood lintels. A large crack is found in the northwest elevation. A central bearing masonry wall is set 9" below grade, and has no footing. It is also twenty-one courses tall. The northeast wall foundation has no footing.

3. Walls: The 14"-thick walls are of common brick laid in a common bond (5:1). Interior and exterior brick is salvaged, resulting in irregular joint patterns and contributing to a lack of bonding between units. The northwest wall has a 1/2" layer of cement stucco. This same stucco previously covered all exterior walls, with front and rear facades scored to imitate ashlar. Cracks appear around window and door openings, and at corners, complicated by the use of low-strength mortar. The modern mortar is lighter in color than the original, and contains a coarser aggregate. The northeast wall was repointed about 1983. The upper northeast and southwest walls originally abutted the adjacent house--they share a common wall--but are now pulling away at roof level by 2" to 3".
4. Structural system, framing: The walls are load-bearing brick, 14" thick, and the internal framing is cypress¹⁵⁸. Roof rafters meet without a ridgeboard. Connections are made with cut nails. Ca. 1900 first-floor flooring--damaged from termites and end rotting, removed in 1982--had 2 1/2" x 15" floor joists¹⁵⁹. The second and gallery floors have 3" x 12", ±18" o.c., full-width span, vertical-sawn floor joists, with vertical-sawn board bridging. The second-floor joists span northwest-southeast. On the second floor, header boards are used to reinforce second-floor chimneys and the gallery staircase landing.
5. Porches, stoops: A two-story frame gallery, rebuilt in 1979, is located on the southwest. It has solid posts on the first floor, boxed posts on the second. Posts have molded capitals. The first-floor gallery ceiling is finished in board-and-batten. Jigsaw balusters in an urn shape are on the second floor, the design appearing to date to the turn of the century. There is an open, three-run staircase at the southeast end of the gallery.

The original gallery was enclosed with a board-and-batten wall about 1920, and equipped with a modern bathroom. The reconstruction is based on a 1979 structural analysis, which discovered remnants of the original design: five square wood posts rested on raised brick piers. Wall pockets held three large beams, with the header supported primarily by the posts. Thinner joists were let into the beams. The column pockets held profiles of upper and lower rails, the upper rail bed molding matching the first-floor northwest-side windows. The porch columns

¹⁵⁸Richard Ohmstede, "Structural Inspection Report Lancashire Building and William Johnson House, Natchez National Historical Park, Natchez, Mississippi," TMs (National Park Service Report, Eastern Team, Denver Service Center, October, 1991), Natchez National Historical Park, Natchez, Mississippi.

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

have been shifted at least once: based on use of masonite siding and fixtures, about 1950, joists supporting the bathroom addition at the west corner were replaced, and columns in the west corner shifted. A bridge to the kitchen was installed, and the original stairway replaced with a second, which began at the south edge of the gallery, rose to the southwest to a landing on the bridge, then rose to the northeast to the second floor.¹⁶⁰

A ca. 1910 frame porch with half-hipped roof, metal first-floor posts (replacing original wood turned posts) and turned second-floor posts was removed about 1976.

6. Chimneys: There are two internal chimneys on the northwest elevation. One fireplace with a Greek Revival-style mantel is on the first floor. Two second-floor fireplaces with similar iron grates to the first floor have simpler Colonial Revival mantels. Stovepipe openings for freestanding cast-iron stoves are present on the second and third floors: one rough opening is let into the garret-level northern chimney on the northwest wall, the other is fitted with an iron ring and let into the common-wall, second-floor chimney.

The southernmost chimney at gallery level appears to have been widened, using higher-quality brick. This chimney is badly deteriorated, with water infiltration at the juncture of attic and chimney dissolving the binding materials in the brick. A large gap exists between flue and exterior wall.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The house has seven exterior entrances. The entrances have wood lintels/nailers, with brick flat arches. Three paneled, double doors are found equally spaced and recessed into the northeast wall, first floor. They are 1982 replicas of double-door entries to the building, and replaced a ca. 1910 remodeling which infilled the flanking doors with brick and six-over-six windows, and installed a central door with narrow sidelights and transom. Two six-panel doors are in the center of the southwest wall, first and second floors. The first-floor door has no molding, and a four-light transom. The second-floor door also has no molding, and a three-light transom.

Two batten doors lead to the basement, one at the north corner of the northwest elevation and one at the south corner of the southwest elevation, set within the porch floor.

- b. Windows and shutters: The typical original windows are six-over-six-light double-hung sash in beaded-edge wood frames. Original windows and frames exist on the northeast wall, second floor (except the center, 1982 replica window), the second and third floors of the northwest wall, and the southwest wall. They measure 3'-9 3/4" x 7'-0 1/2". First-floor window frames on the southwest wall lack a beaded edge, and are smaller

¹⁶⁰Hawkes, 18.

than the originals, measuring 3'-4" x 5'-11".

The gabled dormers on the northeast elevation also have six-over-six-light, double-hung sash windows, and are flanked by pilaster cornerboards. The pilasters have molded plinths and capitals with cavetto and ogee profiles. The northwest pilaster capital is a 1982 replacement, as are all the cavetto moldings. The dormers are clad in beveled siding.

Following a 1979 paint analysis, recent repainting of cream sashes, frames and green louvered shutters recreate the original paint scheme.¹⁶¹

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The building has a shallow gable roof covered initially with wood shingles, at present with raised-seam metal painted red. The 6 1/2 over 12 pitch changes on the south side at knee wall level to 4 over 12, then to 5 over 12.
- b. Cornice, eaves: A decorative sawtooth brick cornice detailing on the northeast and southwest walls is created from three corbelled brick courses, the center course bricks being offset 45 degrees. There is little eave overhang. Remnants of the original half-circle gutters and down spouts are found on the northeast wall and brick dependency.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: There is a full basement with dirt floor on the northwest half of the building. The walls are unfinished, bare brick. The east half of the building was not excavated, and consists of a dirt crawl space.

There are also two ca. 1930 poured concrete foundations for a central arched support. They are encased in remnant tongue-in-groove boards connected with wire nails. Remnants of the wood floor exist between the columns and the concrete foundations, and rest on wood blocks set into the concrete.

A December 2-17, 1991, archaeological excavation by a National Park Service team revealed evidence of between two and four previous buildings on the site. Two brick floors date to ca. 1795, and are separated by a layer of silty clay containing animal bones and artifacts. The floors are in the south corner, and laid in two patterns: the lower level is of broken bricks laid parallel, the upper is in a basketweave pattern. The floors may have originally been larger than their present size, but were partially destroyed by the construction of the present foundations. The northwest edges of both floors terminate about 1'-8" from the center

¹⁶¹Hawkes, 12, 19.

dividing foundation.

A subsequent building was built on this floor. It had two wythe-wide brick piers, with L-shaped corner piers placed within the east and south corners of the present building. The south pier was mortared onto the earlier brick floor, and was disassembled for excavation. Three brick piers on a northeast-southwest axis between them described a 32' long wall. The upper four courses are scorched. While the eastern corner pier was built with a trench--probably a result of the 1836 rebuilding for Harriet Battles' new frame house--the center piers were laid directly on the ground. The piers are now 1'-8" below ground level. All piers have sunk somewhat into the ground, and the southernmost pier had depressed the brick floor about 3". The ground was uneven when the piers were built, evidenced in the variation of brick courses--between seven to eleven. An unknown number of upper courses is missing, as indicated by mortar on the present upper courses.

- b. First floor: The first-floor flooring and joists have been removed to allow for subsurface excavation. The original plan appears to have been open, but was subdivided twice. The first division, done between ca. 1870 and 1920, divided the floor into one large rear room and two smaller front rooms. In about 1930, the first floor was remodelled, creating six rooms; behind the extant two front rooms, four rooms were symmetrically arranged about a central, rear hallway. They were used as a living room, dining room, kitchen, bathroom, and two bedrooms. Remnants of this subdivision are a frame arch with radial sawn columns supporting the central, fourteenth double joist. There is one fireplace at the west corner of the northwest wall.
 - c. Second floor: The second floor is divided into residential space. Access is from the exterior southwest gallery. Four rooms open off of a central rear hallway. Two smaller rooms are to the south and west, and two larger rooms are to the north and east. Two fireplaces (one per room) are on the northwest wall. Between the east and south rooms is a staircase providing access to the garret.
 - d. Garret: The open, finished garret is illuminated by the dormer windows on the northeast wall. Around the staircase landing is a wooden railing with turned balusters. Chimney flues are on the northwest wall. A opening to the attic is located in the center of the ceiling.
2. Stairways: There is one enclosed winder staircase on the east side of the second floor. It rises ten steps and turns 90 degrees up three winder steps to the garret landing. An open, three-run staircase with square balusters rises to the southeast three steps to a landing, turns 90 degrees up two steps to a second landing, turns 90 degrees and rises twelve steps to the second-floor gallery landing.
 3. Flooring: The original 5-1/4" to 6-3/4" flooring on second and garret stories are of wood planks, laid northeast-southwest on the second floor and northwest-southeast at the garret level. The second-floor hallway was refloored with

narrower 3-1/4" wood strips. The first floor has been removed, and the basement is dirt.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls are plaster applied to brick exterior walls, or lath and plaster partition walls. The original 1/2"-thick plaster was keyed into irregular sawn lath, applied directly to the brick, or attached with cut nails to 2" x 4" studs. The first plaster coat is brown, and contains a high concentration of animal or human hair.

The second, ca. 1930 first-floor partition walls were covered with plaster board or hard white gypsum plaster, keyed into regular cut sawn lath, which was attached with wire nails to 2" x 4" studs¹⁶². The front room partition featured Craftsman-style battered columns placed east of the central door, with leaded glass bookcases. Scars from partition walls are on interior. Much of the plaster has been removed from the first-floor walls and ceilings.

The second-floor rooms have been papered several times. Wallpaper was applied over plaster and whitewash. The hallway and enclosed staircase paper contained images of buildings and tropical foliage in olive, gold and red, with swags of olive and purple--a late nineteenth-century color palette¹⁶³. This was covered with a cream wallpaper and Art Deco style border. The west-room wallpaper had abstract foliage and fleur-de-lis pattern in colors of dark green, gray green, silver, maroon and white. Over that is an ivy pattern. The north room had four layers of wallpaper; the first two patterns are undecipherable, although a small scrap directly applied to the plaster has a blue and white pattern. The fourth, currently exposed layer has a large floral print of red and orange flowers on branches, with leaves of tan, brown, green, gray, red and orange. Outlines of the same Art Deco border are found near ceiling level. The east-room original wallpaper cannot be discerned. The first visible layer has a yellow, gold and green floral pattern. The present paper has flower blossoms on a vine, in colors of olive, peach, gray and tan. A silver and white variegated pattern paper is used as a border, and on the ceiling. The papers are divided by a smaller border of pink and yellow flowers on green and brown vines.

5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: On the second floor there are seven interior doors, painted gray and cream. Three molded panel doors open onto the north room, and are oak grained on both sides. The remaining doors have four unmolded panels. Doorway surrounds have the same 4 3/4" trim with cyma reversa moldings as the windows. First-floor doors were ca. 1910s horizontal panel doors. A central arch on the first floor, built about 1900, was once covered in plasterboard. Above the arch is a piece of beveled lap wood, painted yellow, which may mark the location of an earlier

¹⁶²Hawkes, 31.

¹⁶³Hawkes, 67.

support.¹⁶⁴

- b. Windows: Moldings around original windows are shallow, 4-3/4" boards with 1-1/2" cyma reversa molding. Windows inserted about 1844 on the northwest wall, first floor, have 6"-wide surrounds, with a 1-3/4" deeper cyma reversa molding. The backband on these later windows is slightly wider and flatter, and the windows were installed over the plaster coat. The window surrounds were painted cream with medium gray on the backband¹⁶⁵. The north-room windows are equipped with wooden curtain-rod holders.
6. Decorative features: First- and second-floor decorative features consist of simple cyma reversa picture moldings. Cyma reversa picture moldings encircled the first floor, interrupted where internal wall dividers once existed. The west room's picture molding is embellished with plaster work in a floral pattern, painted gold. Baseboards on the second floor are 9 3/4" board with cyma recta molding. They were originally painted light orange brown. The northeast wall baseboard extends past the central dividing wall, and is cut where a central door once existed. Garret baseboards are plain milled 7" boards.
7. Architectural furniture: There is a clothespress below the second floor/garret staircase.
8. Hardware: Hinges are simple, unadorned iron. There are a variety of doors and locks. Two spring latches are installed on the doors to the clothespress. Most door handles are missing. The surviving door handles on the second floor are one brown ceramic handle on the north room, and white ceramic handles on the gallery door. Plate latch locks with bolts exist on the east room, and portions remain on the south room. Other locks appear to have been a variety of cast-iron box locks.¹⁶⁶
9. Mechanical systems:
 - a. Heating: The building was equipped with three fireplaces and two cast-iron stoves. Evidence of stove use is found in the circular stove holes on the northwest chimney, garret, and second-floor south room. There are no hearths in front of these chimneys, indicating that they were added later. These elements were designed for heating, since cooking was done in the kitchen dependency to the south.

The first-floor Greek Revival mantelpiece at the south corner of the northwest wall has fluted Doric colonettes and a frieze detailed with raised picture moldings, projecting end blocks, metopes, and a spandrel finished

¹⁶⁴Johnson Diary entry March 24, 1841.

¹⁶⁵Hawkes, 33, 40.

¹⁶⁶Hawkes, 79.

with a projecting central panel. It has a semi-circular arched iron coal grate, trimmed with cable moldings and garlanded wreaths at the corners. It is surrounded with yellow tile. The vertical sawn plinths were nailed to the floor with cut nails. This mantel replaced the original mantel, which is now stored in the dependency. Two Colonial Revival mantels with similar coal grates are found on the second floor, northwest wall, one per room.

- b. Plumbing: The building was plumbed for running water in the 1950s. A first-floor bathroom existed on the northwest side of the building, center, and a second was installed on the second-floor gallery.
- c. Electricity: Lighting was added to the house about 1910-1920. Wiring was cut through the second floor for ceiling fixtures, and the floor boards replaced with wire nails. The first floor has a chandelier fixture with four clear glass globes. A second-floor chandelier fixture in the north room has four sockets with opaque glass globes.

D. Site:

- 1. Historic landscape design: The William Johnson House is set on Lot 3, Block 5, in the city of Natchez, Mississippi. The block is part of a Cartesian grid system that parallels the Mississippi and is set 45 degrees off a north-south orientation. The house fronts directly onto the sidewalk, with a small grass area between sidewalk and street. An open lot is to the northwest, screened from the street by a modern vertical board fence. The building shares a common wall with the brick building to the southeast, documented as HABS No. MS-270-C. Southwest of the building is a brick, two-story dependency, and a gabled root cellar. A brick wall/retaining wall separates the southeast, rear portion of the Johnson House from the adjacent lot.

Vegetation consists of a small deciduous tree northeast of the building, and fig tree at the west corner of the Johnson house.

- 2. Outbuildings: There is one two-story brick dependency/kitchen with a frame gallery southwest of the Johnson House. It has recently been reroofed, and a new frame gallery and open stairs built on the northwest elevation. It is documented as HABS No. MS-270-B.

A gabled, frame storage building partially set into the ground is southwest of the residence and kitchen. It is roofed in metal, and the gable runs northwest-southeast. The entrance is on the northwest side.

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was sponsored by the Southeast Regional Office of the National Park Service. The documentation was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Robert J. Kapsch, Chief, under the direction of Paul D. Dolinsky, Chief of HABS, with assistance of HABS architect and project leader Joseph D. Balachowski, HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland, and Sarah J. Boykin, Southeast Regional Office project architect. The project was completed during summer 1992 at the HABS field office at Melrose, Natchez National Historical Park, Natchez, Mississippi, by project supervisor John P. White, architect, with architectural technicians Roderick Fluker (Tuskegee University), John L. Alberstadt (Louisiana State University), Junne Kikata (Tokyo University of Fine Arts, Japan, through US-ICOMOS), Rachel L. King (University of Virginia), Dennis E. McCarthy (The Catholic University of America), Kristin A. Peterson (University of Texas, Austin), and Lawrence A. Weintraub (Tulane University). The project historian was Dena L. Sanford (University of Oregon, HABS-Sally Kress Tompkins Fellow). Sanford conducted all of the research associated with the project and wrote the historical information sections (Part I), including the in-depth historical context and the architectural information. Discussions with local architectural historian Mary W. Miller provided insight into the stylistic development of Natchez architecture. The photography was produced by Jack E. Boucher, HABS photographer.

**ADDENDUM TO:
JOHNSON & MCCALLUM HOUSES, WILLIAM JOHNSON
HOUSE
Natchez National Historical Park
210 State Street
Natchez
Adams County
Mississippi**

**HABS MS-270-A
MISS, 1-NATCH, 32A-**

**HABS
MISS
1-NATCH,
32A-**

PHOTOGRAPHS

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
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