

Allenberg Cotton Company
104-06 S. Front Street
Memphis
Shelby County
Tennessee

HABS No. TN-188

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C.

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ALLENBERG COTTON COMPANY

HABS No. TN-188

Location: 104-06 South Front Street, Memphis, Shelby County,
Tennessee.
Latitude: 35° 08' 34"
Longitude: 90° 03' 17"

Present Owner: Allenberg Cotton Company

Present Occupants: Allenberg Cotton Company
(104 South Front Street)

Southern Cotton Sales
(106 South Front Street)

Present Use: Cotton brokerage house

Significance: A typical example of the brokerage houses of Memphis' Cotton Row during the cotton heyday, this building still functions as an exchange building.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: About 1871. It appears that the present building did not exist in 1870; a boundary dispute was settled in that year by exchanging two deeds of one front foot each. The deed to Meacham, cited in the chain of title below, contains this explanation: "Confusions have arisen about the boundaries of said respective lots [because] the south wall of the buildings on lots 14 and 15 projects and covers one foot of lot No. 16."
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: This building is on part of a larger tract which initially had been developed by the Memphis Hospital Company. By an act of the Tennessee General Assembly (December 22, 1835) the President and Trustees of the company were authorized to sell their house and lot. It was advertised and sold to Haralson, the highest bidder, some time in 1836. The Justices of the Peace for Shelby County were later required to appoint Directors for the Hospital, who then elected a President; Haralson received no deed until this had been accomplished almost two years after he paid for the property.

Haralson's estate was settled through litigation (William Speckernagle and wife, petitioners, versus Silas Buck et al, defendants), the record and date of which was not found. The original Hospital Company block has since been known as the "Haralson Subdivision."

The following is the chain of title for this building. The information is from the records in the Register of Deeds and the Probate Court of Shelby County.

- 1838 Deed May 15, 1838, recorded June 15, 1839 in
Book H page 163 (Lot 490 and house thereon, \$4225.00)
Memphis Hospital Company
to
Thomas B. Haralson
- 18__ Decree mentioned in subsequent deed
Circuit Court
to
Isabella W. Houston (widow of Thomas B. Haralson)
- 1870 Deed April 13, 1870, recorded May 13, 1870 in
Book 74 page 495 (Lots 16 and 17, Block 21 of Lot 490)
Thomas H. Cocke and Isabella W. Houston
to
Major L. Meacham
- 1870 Deed December 30, 1870, recorded January 9, 1871 in
Book 77 page 417 (One foot of Lot 18 exchanged for one
foot of Lot 16)
Thomas H. Cocke
to
Major L. Meacham
- 1884 Will June 20, 1873, recorded December 26, 1884 in
Will Book 9 page 154
Major L. Meacham
to
Ida Stewart (Meacham's daughter; wife of William Stewart)
- 1952 Lease November 28, 1952, recorded November 28, 1952 in
Lease Book 33 page 409
Martha Stewart, Ida M. Stewart, W.M. Stewart and
Kenneth A. Stewart (children of William and Ida Stewart)
to
Allenberg Cotton Company, Incorporated
- 1952 Deed December 1, 1952, recorded December 1, 1952 in
Book 3030 page 268
Martha Stewart et al
to
One Hundred Four South Front Street Corporation

- 1952 Trust Deed December 1, 1952, recorded December 4, 1952 in Book 3039 page 487
One Hundred Four South Front Street Corporation
to
Union Planters National Bank of Memphis
- 1961 Release Deed November 21, 1961, recorded December 4, 1961 in Book 4625 page 194
Union Planters National Bank of Memphis
to
One Hundred Four South Front Street Corporation

- B. Historical Context: Major L. Meacham was a large property owner who was interested in the rental market. The present building was one of his properties built for use as a rental property.

The Allenberg Cotton Company (which controls the 104 South Front Street Corporation) is the building's longest occupant. This firm has rented the building since 1922, and has owned it since 1952. Another long-time occupant was the Wilkinson and Carroll Cotton Company, which began in 1889 as Dockery, Wilkinson and Company.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This commercially designed building has a simple rectangular plan, wide front doorways and numerous windows, which were common architectural features of 19th century commercial buildings in the nation.
2. Condition of fabric: Generally good. It has undergone changes to accommodate increased office space, notably the insertion of a mezzanine level.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The building measures approximately 45' north to south and 140' from west front to east rear. It is two stories high at the rear and three stories at the west. It is five bays wide and is a simple rectangle in plan.
2. Foundations: Brick.
3. Wall construction, structural system: The building has brick bearing walls. The front facade has pilasters which mark the bays. There are two lines of structure about 12' in from the side walls (creating center and side aisles of about 20" each). Brick

piers in the basement support tapered cast iron columns on the first floor and square wood columns on the second. The columns support beams which in turn carry the 2" x 14" joists. Tie rods pass through the building from north to south.

4. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The west entry front has five bays which originally contained large double doors each measuring 4'-2" x 14'-4". Each had three large glass lights over a solid panel. The northernmost bay has been altered with a modern door and aluminum siding. The center bay has new doors not in violation with the original ones remaining in the other bays.

The rear central door is set in a segmental arch opening and has a transom. It measures 3'-6" x 10'-1" x 2 3/4" with a large panel over a small one. It is accessible by a wooden platform.

- b. Windows: Front second floor contains a double-hung window in each bay. They have segmental arch openings with brick heads and keystones with a molded design. Each window has 4/4 sash.

Third floor windows are similar with 2/2 double-hung sash. They also have brick heads and keystones with a molded design. They measure 4'-6" x 8'-5".

On the east rear the first floor has two segmental arch double-hung 2/2 sash windows on either side of the central doorway. The second floor windows are the same as those on the first floor, and they measure 4'-0" x 10'-5".

5. Roof: The roof slopes gently from the west front to the rear. It is covered with tar and gravel and has a brick parapet at the front and sides. There is a gutter at the edge at the rear. The roof skylights have been covered over.

6. Other information: A fire escape is on the rear east wall.

B. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: The basement is one single space with two lines of structure (brick piers) creating center and side aisles.
- b. First floor: This floor has been divided into several spaces, but contains a large carding room to the rear, a smaller carding room at the southwest, an office and storage space to the north.

- c. Mezzanine: A mezzanine has been inserted in the northwest corner to provide additional office space.
 - d. Second floor: The majority of the second floor is for the carding room, a single space. The front has been framed in to create offices spaces.
 - e. Third floor: The third floor extends only across the west front of the building and corresponds to the lower second floor ceiling height. It contains a single office space.
2. Stairways: The stairway is situated in the northwest corner of the building. Between the first and second floors the stairs are 5'-6" wide with 5-1/2" risers and 12-1/2" treads. There are thirteen risers to the mezzanine and additional eighteen risers to the second floor. A smaller stairway (3'0" wide x 11 3/4" tread; 7-1/2" riser) is found between the second floor and landing; there are seven risers. Another twenty three risers of 6-1/2" (12-1/2" x 40" treads) connect the landing to the third floor.
3. Flooring: Basement: concrete.
First floor: 5-1/2" boards and plywood panels.
Mezzanine: asphalt tile.
Second floor: 5" boards in the carding room and asphalt tile in the offices.
Third floor: asphalt tile.
4. Wall and ceiling finish:
- a. Walls:
Basement: brick exposed. Ceiling height: 8'-7" to the bottom of the joists.
First floor: brick exposed and painted; frame partitions built in. Rear ceiling height: 14'-10". Front ceiling height: 7'-2".
Mezzanine: frame partitions built in with plywood paneling as surface. Ceiling height: 7'-1".
Second floor: brick walls exposed and painted in carding room; plaster wall surfaces in offices. Front ceiling height: 7'-11". Carding room ceiling height: 15'-0".
Third floor: frame partitions with plywood paneling. Ceiling height: 10'-2".

b. Ceilings:

Basement: under flooring.
First floor: under flooring.
Mezzanine: acoustical tile.
Second floor: acoustical tile in offices; celotex in carding room.
Third floor: dropped ceiling of acoustical tile.

5. Decorative features and trim: The colors used in the carding room is interesting. Grey and black are used with controlled lighting to aid in the judging of cotton quality.

6. Hardware: Standard hardware is used.

7. Mechanical equipment:

a. Elevator: An elevator is in the southeast corner of the building.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building is situated on the east side of South Front Street about a half block south of Union Avenue, and north of Barboro Alley. It is oriented toward the west. A parking lot is to the north of the building. There is an alley to the east. The general surroundings are urban in character with numerous tall buildings adjacent. The structure occupies the entire lot.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Property records. Register of Deeds and the Probate Court of Shelby County. (Address not indicated).

Prepared by: Robert C. Giebner
HABS Project Supervisor
West Tennessee Project
August, 1972

Richard H. Hulan
HABS Project Historian
West Tennessee Project
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Edited by: Susan McCown
HABS Historian
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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This 1972 project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the Tennessee Historical Commission and the West Tennessee Historical Society. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed by Robert C. Giebner (University of Arizona), project supervisor, and Richard H. Hulan, project historian (Nashville).

Jack E. Boucher, HABS staff photographer, took the photographs of the building in March 1974.

The written data was edited in the Spring of 1985 by Susan McCown, HABS staff historian in the Washington, D.C. office, for transmittal to the Library of Congress.