

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Henderson-Britton House

AND/OR COMMON

Magnolia Hall

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

215 South Pearl Street

-- NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Natchez

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Fourth

STATE

Mississippi

VICINITY OF

CODE

28

COUNTY

Adams

CODE

001

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

 DISTRICT BUILDING(S) STRUCTURE SITE OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

 PUBLIC PRIVATE BOTH PUBLIC ACQUISITION IN PROCESS BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

 OCCUPIED UNOCCUPIED WORK IN PROGRESS ACCESSIBLE YES: RESTRICTED YES: UNRESTRICTED NO

## PRESENT USE

 AGRICULTURE COMMERCIAL EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL MILITARY MUSEUM PARK PRIVATE RESIDENCE RELIGIOUS SCIENTIFIC TRANSPORTATION OTHERFuture  
Museum**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Preservation Society of Ellicott Hill

STREET &amp; NUMBER

P. O. Box 537

CITY, TOWN

Natchez

VICINITY OF

STATE

Mississippi 39120

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETCOffice of the Chancery Clerk  
Adams County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Courthouse Square

CITY, TOWN

Natchez

STATE

Mississippi 39120

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Adams County Landmarks Inventory

DATE

1974

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Natchez Metropolitan Planning Commission

CITY, TOWN

Natchez

STATE

Mississippi 39120

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Henderson-Britton House, located on the northeast corner of South Pearl and Washington streets in downtown Natchez, Mississippi, is a monumental, rectangular building with an L-shaped service wing. Plastered and scored to resemble stone, it is constructed of brick which was once painted a dark reddish brown. Sheltering the three center bays of the five-bay facade is a pedimented portico with giant-order fluted Ionic columns that rise from heavy square bases and support the second-floor balcony. A giant-order Ionic colonnade extends across the full width of the rear of the house under the hipped roof. Interestingly, the two outer bays of the colonnade are wide, in contrast to the narrower central bay. As on the portico, a second-story gallery is suspended between the columns. Both portico and colonnade have simple cast-iron balustrades upstairs and downstairs. The massive frontispiece is designed with rusticated engaged square columns that support an entablature with a modillioned cornice on paired brackets. The similar but less elaborate doorway opening onto the second-floor front gallery has single brackets supporting its smaller cornice, and no transom. First- and second-floor doorways opening onto the rear galleries are also similar to, but simpler in detail than, the primary facade entrance. Quarter-corner paneled pilasters define each bay of the facade and divide the side elevations into sections, with two full-length, nine-over-nine windows downstairs in each and two shorter, six-over-six windows above, all having louvered blinds. The cornice extending around the four sides is supported by plain modillions.

The original interior plan consisted of a central hall arrangement with three rooms on either side, each room having a fireplace on the inner wall. To adapt the building to its recent use as a day school, the original partitions on the northeast side of the central hall were removed, and a new one was built to form two large rooms. The three mantels on this side, as well as the one in the front room on the southwest side, were removed. On the southwest side of the central hall, the front room has been divided in half, and the wall between the center and rear rooms has been replaced with a folding partition. The second room retains its original arched white, gray-veined marble mantel with cartouche-shaped keystone. A similar mantel remains in the rear southwest room. The original plaster cornices remain in place in each first-floor room above suspended acoustical ceilings which have been installed throughout. Fragments of a ceiling centerpiece composed of stylized magnolia leaves and blossoms remain in the middle room on the southwest side.

Rising in a straight run from approximately the midpoint of the northeast side of the broad central hall is a stairway with console-shaped newel. Its heavy hand-rail and turned balusters are of mahogany. The second-floor plan of the house is similar to that of the first floor. Doors and windows have broad, eared trim with paneled jambs, with those of the windows being splayed. The window sills are about eight inches above the floor; the upper and lower sash of the windows are equal in size. Doors have two vertical panels.

Like the main block of the house, the L-shaped service wing is plastered brick and is covered by a hipped roof. Its second-floor level is lower than that of the main house. A two-story gallery on the rear has square wooden columns above and below. Each arm of the ell has two nearly square rooms, and an open stairway marks the juncture.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In a town noted for its wealth of Greek Revival architecture, the Henderson-Britton House is an unusually large and well-designed example of the style. Whereas most of the monumental antebellum homes in Natchez are located on suburban estates, this residence is one of the three major Greek Revival mansions,<sup>1</sup> and one of only four antebellum mansions,<sup>2</sup> located in the center of town. The completion of the house on the eve of the Civil War marked the end of the vigorous growth that characterized Natchez during the period 1830-1861. The structure is also significant as the home of Thomas Henderson, a locally important cotton commission merchant, and later of the Brittons, a prominent banking family of nineteenth-century Natchez.

In 1858, Thomas Henderson purchased for \$10,000 the property on the corner of Pearl and Washington streets<sup>3</sup> which had been owned by members of his family since 1815.<sup>4</sup> It is assumed that construction of his house began shortly thereafter, thus making it probably the last great mansion house completed in the Natchez area before the onset of the Civil War precluded construction of all grand residences. The house was sold in 1866 for the sum of \$33,750. At that time the lots were described as those "on which is the new brick dwelling house and out buildings erected by the said Thomas Henderson, deceased, and in which he resided at the time of his death."<sup>5</sup>

The high purchase price in 1858 of the lot alone is explained by the local tradition that a house now known as Pleasant Hill was there when Henderson purchased the property. Henderson reputedly had the house moved to the northwest corner of Pearl and Orleans street, where it is situated today. The similarity in the floor plans of Pleasant Hill and the Henderson-Britton House suggests that Henderson was influenced by the former house in the construction of his new residence. Common to both is the placement of the fireplaces on hall walls. In addition to this unusual feature, the Thomas Henderson house differs from most of the Greek Revival and Federal mansion houses in the Natchez area in the positioning of a straight-run main staircase in the central hall. Only two other Greek Revival mansions, Belmont and Melmont, are known to have similar staircases.

In an 1858 business directory of the city of Natchez, Thomas Henderson is listed as a commission merchant with a business located on the corner of Main and Broadway,<sup>6</sup> where the commercial structure, considerably remodeled, still stands. Family tradition maintains that Henderson was also a planter of substantial prosperity. He was an active member of the First Presbyterian Church, located in the next block from his residence, and he held several positions of importance in that church body.

In 1870, the Henderson house property was conveyed to Eliza M. Britton,<sup>7</sup> the wife of A. C. Britton, a president and one of the founders of Britton &

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

A. Mygatt & Co's New Orleans Business Directory with a Map. [1858]. Compiled and arranged by W. H. Rainey. "Natchez Directory," pp. 258-69. N.p.: A. Mygatt & Co., 1857.

Adams County, Mississippi. Chancery Clerk. Deed Books H, LL, OO, QQ, 4E, 4T, 9S, 12U, 13N.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

QUADRANGLE NAME Natchez Quadrangle

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,5 6,5,14,6,0 3,4,9,2,3,9,0

B        
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

A lot approximately 163' x 183' on the northeast corner of Washington and South Pearl streets.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Mary McCahon Shoemaker, Architectural Historian;  
Samuel Wilson, Jr., F.A.I.A.; and Mary W. Miller, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

February 21, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

P. O. Box 571

(601) 354-6218

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Jackson

Mississippi 39205

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Elmer B. Hilliard*

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

February 22, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 6 & 8 PAGE 1

6 - REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

Statewide Survey of Historic Sites  
1977   x   state  
Mississippi Department of Archives and History  
Jackson Mississippi 39205

8 - SIGNIFICANCE

Koontz Bank, chartered in 1867. The bank had evolved from W. A. Britton and Company, which served as the town's chief financial institution for the two final antebellum decades. Britton & Koontz is today the oldest bank continuously operated in Natchez. In an 1888 promotional publication about the city of Natchez, the Henderson-Britton House is pictured and listed as the residence of "A. C. Britton, Banker, Natchez."<sup>8</sup>

In the twentieth century, the house has been owned by the Learned and Armstrong families,<sup>9</sup> as well as by Trinity Episcopal Church, which used it as a nursery and elementary school from 1963 to 1974.<sup>10</sup> In 1976, the house was deeded by Mrs. George Armstrong to the Preservation Society of Ellicott Hill,<sup>11</sup> an organization affiliated with the Natchez Garden Club. The goal of the garden club is to complete the restoration of the downtown mansion. The alterations made to the Henderson-Britton House to adapt it to school use, although considerable, are such that the building can easily be restored to its original form and character.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The other two Greek Revival mansions are Choctaw, constructed prior to 1836, and Stanton Hall, completed in 1857.

<sup>2</sup>Rosalie, constructed ca. 1822, is the fourth remaining mansion in the downtown area.

<sup>3</sup>Deed Book, Adams County, II:603.

<sup>4</sup>Deed Book, Adams County, II:313.

<sup>5</sup>Deed Book, Adams County, 00:368.

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<sup>6</sup> A. Mygatt & Co's Business Directory, 1858, "Natchez Directory," p. 293.

<sup>7</sup> Deed Book, Adams County, QQ:267.

<sup>8</sup> Natchez, Mississippi, on Top, not "Under the Hill," Adams County and the Neighboring Territory, n.p.

<sup>9</sup> Deed Books, Adams County, 4E:416; 4T:437.

<sup>10</sup> Deed Books, Adams County, 9S:480; 12U:472.

<sup>11</sup> Deed Book, Adams County, 13N:447.

9 - MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Chisholm, J. Julian. History of the Presbyterian Church of Natchez, Mississippi.  
Natchez: McDonald Printing Co., 1972.

Murray, Elizabeth Dunbar. My Mother Used to Say; a Natchez Belle of the 1860's.  
Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1959.

Natchez, Mississippi, on Top, not "Under the Hill," Adams County and the Neighboring Territory. Natchez: Daily Democrat Steam Print, [1888].



PHOTO NO. 1 - HENDERSON-BRITTON HOUSE

Natchez, Adams County, Mississippi

Danny Richardson

November, 1977

Mississippi Department of Archives  
and History

Northwest elevation (facade), from the  
northwest.



PHOTO NO. 2 - HENDERSON-BRITTON HOUSE  
Natchez, Adams County, Mississippi  
Danny Richardson  
November, 1977  
Mississippi Department of Archives  
and History  
Southwest (side) and southeast (rear)  
elevations, from the south.



PHOTO NO. 3 - HENDERSON-BRITTON HOUSE

Natchez, Adams County, Mississippi

Danny Richardson

November, 1977

Mississippi Department of Archives  
and History

Southeast (rear) and northeast (ell)  
elevations, from the east.