

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Mississippi	
COUNTY: Copiah	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Wesson Hotel

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Richardson House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Railroad Avenue and Spring Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Wesson

STATE Mississippi	CODE 39191	COUNTY: Copiah	CODE 29
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure 	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Mrs. Kelly B. Braswell

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Wesson Hotel, Railroad Avenue and Spring Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Wesson

STATE: Mississippi	CODE 39181	CODE 28
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Office of the Chancery Clerk, Copiah County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Courthouse Square

CITY OR TOWN:  
Hazlehurst

STATE Mississippi	CODE 39083	CODE 28
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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:  
 Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: 	STATE: 	CODE: 
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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Wesson Hotel is situated on a large oak-shaded lot at the intersection of Railroad Avenue and Spring Street, two blocks from Wesson's Main Street. A building which contained the original kitchen and quarters for the staff was located approximately fifty feet southeast of the main structure but is no longer standing. Beyond the northeast corner of the lot is a white frame cottage which was once hotel property and which was rented as the Presbyterian manse in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

The hotel itself, a wooden structure on brick piers, consists of twenty-eight rooms and two hallways on two residential floors, an attic of four rooms, and a cellar beneath the dining room. The squared u-shape of the plan (main block with two wings extending rearward) is symmetrical except for the one-story kitchen on the axis of the southeast wing. The gabled roof is covered with shingle-patterned green asbestos sheeting and the eight chimneys have been removed (two astride the ridge-pole of the main block, two on the southeast wing, and four on the northeast wing). Galleries across both floors of the facade and of the three inward-facing rear elevations are enclosed by balustrades of cutout, vase-shaped splats and feature box columns with flaring, molded capitals supporting plank friezes. Large single brackets interspersed at regular intervals with smaller paired brackets run beneath the front cornice and the westernmost cornice returns of the side elevations. A prominent transverse gable on the facade roof repeats in its angles the frieze and bracketed cornice below, and features as well a window with pointed arch heading and pilastered casing. At the corresponding position in the roof of the central rear elevation is a pedimented dormer lighted by a double window. There are two additional windows, 6 over 9, in each gable end of the attic, and the numerous windows of the two residential floors below are 9 over 9. Previously shuttered, they all have utilitarian casings unenriched except for slightly hooded moldings over the lintels.

The chief adornment of the building, aside from the trim of the galleries, is the framing of the four principal doorways centered on the first and second floors, front and rear, of the main block. All are identical: double-leaf doors flanked by narrow side lights set between pairs of pilasters and topped by five-paned transoms. The frontispiece effect of the composition is increased by extending a plain broad frieze and bold cornice the full height of the gallery ceiling and setting the whole against a fabric of matched boarding. Other decorative treatment of the exterior is minimal: plank friezes beneath projecting cornices and clapboards with beveled edges. On the weathered side expanses, the result is a rustic severity which

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7.  
contrasts with the softened impact of the galleried facade and courtyard elevations. Originally the latter faced a charming gazebo-like wellhouse, its white trellised walls pierced by ogee-arch entrances, but the roof of the structure burned and the remainder was demolished. The well which was the original water supply for the hotel is also gone, having been filled in, and the site is marked by a mound of brush-covered earth. From the courtyard, access to the galleries is provided by five flights of steps: short ones to the first floor of each elevation and runs of 30 steps, guarded by handrails and supported by scaffolding, to the second floor of each side elevation.

The floor plan of the hotel is basically as built. Minor changes have included installation of several bathrooms (there were none at first) and the partitioning of one end of the long dining room into a bedroom. Wood construction and trim is employed throughout to the almost total exclusion of other materials, producing an interior which appears today somewhat unfinished but which was doubtlessly appropriate to the original function of the building. Walls and ceilings are of matched boarding painted a yellowed ivory, with cornices and baseboards simulated by wide stripes of brown. The stairway consists of straight runs to the second floor and the attic, both flights having a typically ponderous newel, broad handrail, molded stringer, and turned balusters set two to a tread. In each of the rooms the uniformly prosaic mantelpieces feature plank-like pilasters, friezes, and shelves, and over a number of doors are transoms of obscure glass molded in a fleur-de-lis pattern. Most of the rooms are now empty of furniture as well as occupants, though a few vestiges of earlier days remain: the registry desk, equipped with ink wells and revolving pad; the last of a number of dining room tables, its length three times its width to better accommodate guests; faded, hand-painted wooden signs over doors leading from the first-floor hall, designating "Parlor" and "Office." Mounted over the front steps is a similar but much larger sign, once reading "Richardson House" but no longer legible.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |  |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) ca. 1877

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry    | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                   | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture                 | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian       | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                   | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce     | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Wesson Hotel, originally known as the Richardson House, was built ca. 1877 after a fire destroyed on the same site an earlier hotel which reportedly dated from 1864, the year Wesson was incorporated. The history of the present hotel is inextricably blended with that of the town, which came into being during the Civil War after Union troops destroyed textile and flour mills in Choctaw County owned by Colonel James Madison Wesson (1815-1899). Moving to the locale which thereafter bore his name, Colonel Wesson formed a corporation, the Mississippi Manufacturing Company, in 1866 and with his associates erected a cotton mill and 76 operatives' houses. Four years later he sold his interests to Captain William Oliver (1829-1891) and John T. Hardy, both of New Orleans. After the original mill structure burned in 1873, Colonel Edmund Richardson (1818-1891), a cotton broker and planter in partnership with General Nathan Bedford Forrest in Tennessee and General Wade Hampton in the Mississippi Delta, joined the corporation. As president, Colonel Richardson reorganized the Mississippi Manufacturing Company on a more ambitious scale with a new name: Mississippi Mills. Mill No. 1 (50' x 350') was erected on the site of the first plant, to be followed in 1885 by Mill No. 2 (50' x 212'). By 1887, when Mill No. 3 (501 x 240') was completed, several thousand people were employed by Mississippi Mills, cited locally as the largest manufacturing institution south of the Ohio River and the South's best single example of postwar economic recovery. Success was shortlived, however, for by 1906 a number of factors, including absentee management, labor disputes, and use of outdated machinery, forced the company into receivership. In 1920 the three brick multi-storied, towered plants, outstanding survivors of nineteenth industrial architecture, were demolished.

In the town that the mills built, one of two company-associated structures remaining (excluding houses now privately owned) is a two-story brick warehouse (built 1882) at Main and Spring Streets, now a furniture store. The other is the Richardson House, the builder of which, John P. Richardson (b. 1854), was for a time assistant superintendent of Mississippi Mills. Richardson was the son of Colonel Edmund Richardson

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8.  
and was married to Mary Ella Oliver, daughter of Captain William Oliver. At the time the Richardson House was constructed, title to the property was held by Mississippi Mills, as it had been since the founding of the town. An insurance register entry for a policy written January 6, 1882, to cover the possessions of one R. J. Hughston, a resident guest at the Richardson House, confirms the ownership, as well as giving a description of what must have been a typically furnished room:

Copy of Policy.

Upon his Bedroom set consisting of bedstead.  
Dresser Washstand Table Towel Rack. 2 Rockers  
BedSprings & mattress chamber & Toilet sets 2  
lamps and 2 Trunks in the Wesson Hotel known  
as the Richardson House J. N. Cooke present  
Propretor (Building owned by Miss Mills) in  
Wesson Copiah County Miss.  
(J. S. Rea Insurance Register, p. 3.)

The entry also includes a diagram showing the first floor of the hotel (with various rooms labeled) and outbuildings: kitchen/quarters, wellhouse, and Presbyterian manse.

In the heyday of railroad travel, the Richardson House was ideally located to serve passengers who arrived and departed at the Illinois Central Railroad station (built 1884) which still stands less than a hundred yards away, across Railroad Avenue. Widely known for its excellent meals and comfortably furnished rooms, the hotel is said to have been headquarters for political rallies generated by the arrival of campaigning candidates at the railroad station. It also derived much of its patronage from the "drummers" or traveling salesmen who came to Wesson to supply the mill commissary and later the merchants whose establishments succeeded the company-owned store. The drummers unpacked the trunks which traveled with them and displayed their wares in the first-floor southwest corner room still known as the sample room. Up in the attic, business of a different sort took place in the "gambling casino" which flourished beneath the central gable.

In November, 1906, Mississippi Mills offered the Richardson House for sale at public auction. The successful bidder, at \$4,000.00, was James G. Lyell, who immediately sold to the Bank of Wesson for the same price. In 1918 the bank gave title to a parcel of land adjoining the hotel property to Laura D. Moody for the sum of \$300.00. Mrs. Moody subsequently became or was already the owner of the main hotel lot as well, and in 1920, for \$1,750.00, she and S. Moody conveyed to Mrs. Leonora M. Loving "the Richardson

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8.  
Hotel property, including all the furniture and furnishings...."  
M. E. Manning, father of the present owner, Mrs. Kelly B. Braswell, purchased the Richardson House in 1929 for \$3,000.00 and operated it as the Wesson Hotel until his death in 1932. For nearly a quarter of a century afterward, the building was maintained chiefly as an apartment house, but with some rooms reserved for transients, and since 1956 it has been occupied by Mrs. Braswell and two tenants. In 1964, during the celebration of Wesson's one-hundredth anniversary, the hotel was the setting for the Centennial Museum.

There exists a degree of local though unorganized sentiment for preserving the Wesson Hotel because of its veritably unchanged nineteenth-century architecture and its associations with the origin and early history of the town. However, conversion of the building into one of several proposed uses, including a museum, apartment house, retirement home, restaurant, or some other undetermined use (or a combination of these) would seem to require (1) a realistic appraisal of the local economy and a hitherto undeveloped tourist trade and (2) financial backing. At the present time, neither is available, and the survival of the hotel as a link with a brief but brilliant chapter in Mississippi's economic history is in doubt.

9.  
Mrs. Lucille Graham, Rea Insurance Agency, Wesson, Mississippi, February 21, 1972.

Mr. Robert G. Walker, Wesson, Mississippi, June 30, 1971.

Personal inspection by Dawn Maddox, June 30, 1971, and February 21, 1972.

Rea, J. S. Insurance register of Rea Insurance Agency, Wesson, Mississippi, 1882. Now in possession of Bank of Wesson.

Telephone Interviews:

Miss Decima Rea (daughter of J. S. Rea and grandniece of Captain William Oliver), Wesson, Mississippi, February 21, 1972.

Miss Ella Rea (granddaughter of Captain William Oliver), Wesson, Mississippi, February 21, 1972.

The Wesson Enterprise, Wesson, Mississippi. Centennial editions, 1964: May 15, May 22, June 5, June 19, June 26.

Works Progress Administration. History of Copiah County:  
"Industry" (typescript). Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Mississippi. Chicago; The Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1891. Vol. II: "Mississippi Mills," pp. 674-678; "William Oliver," pp. 532-534, 646-647; "Edmund Richardson," pp. 665-669; "John P. Richardson," pp. 672-674.

Interviews:

Mrs. Kelly B. Braswell, Wesson, Mississippi, June 30, 1971, and February 21, 1972.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		31° 36' 40"	90° 22' 45"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1 1/2 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
Dawn Maddox, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION: Mississippi Department of Archives and History

DATE: March 14, 1972

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Post Office Box 571

CITY OR TOWN: Jackson

STATE: Mississippi 39205

CODE: 28

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name R. A. McLemore  
R. A. McLemore

Title Director, Miss. Department of Archives and History

Date March 14, 1972

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

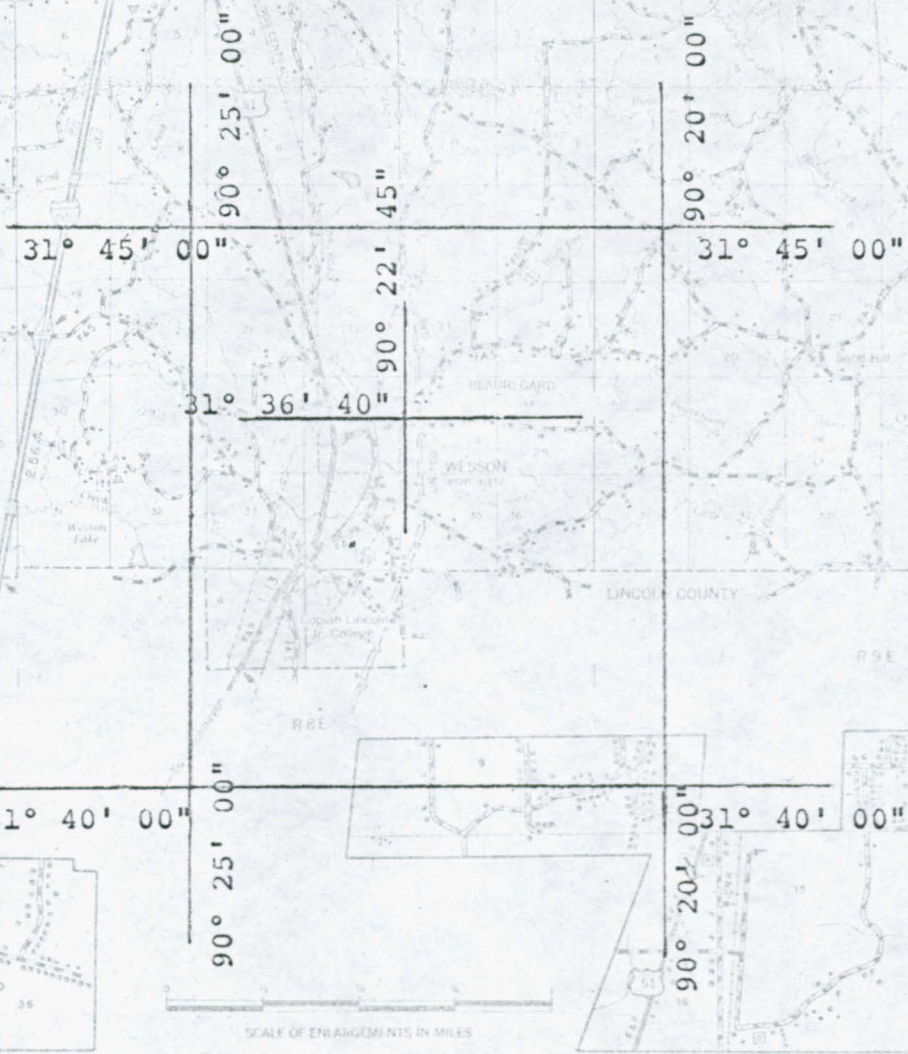
Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

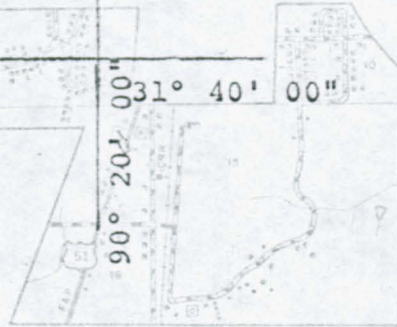
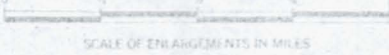




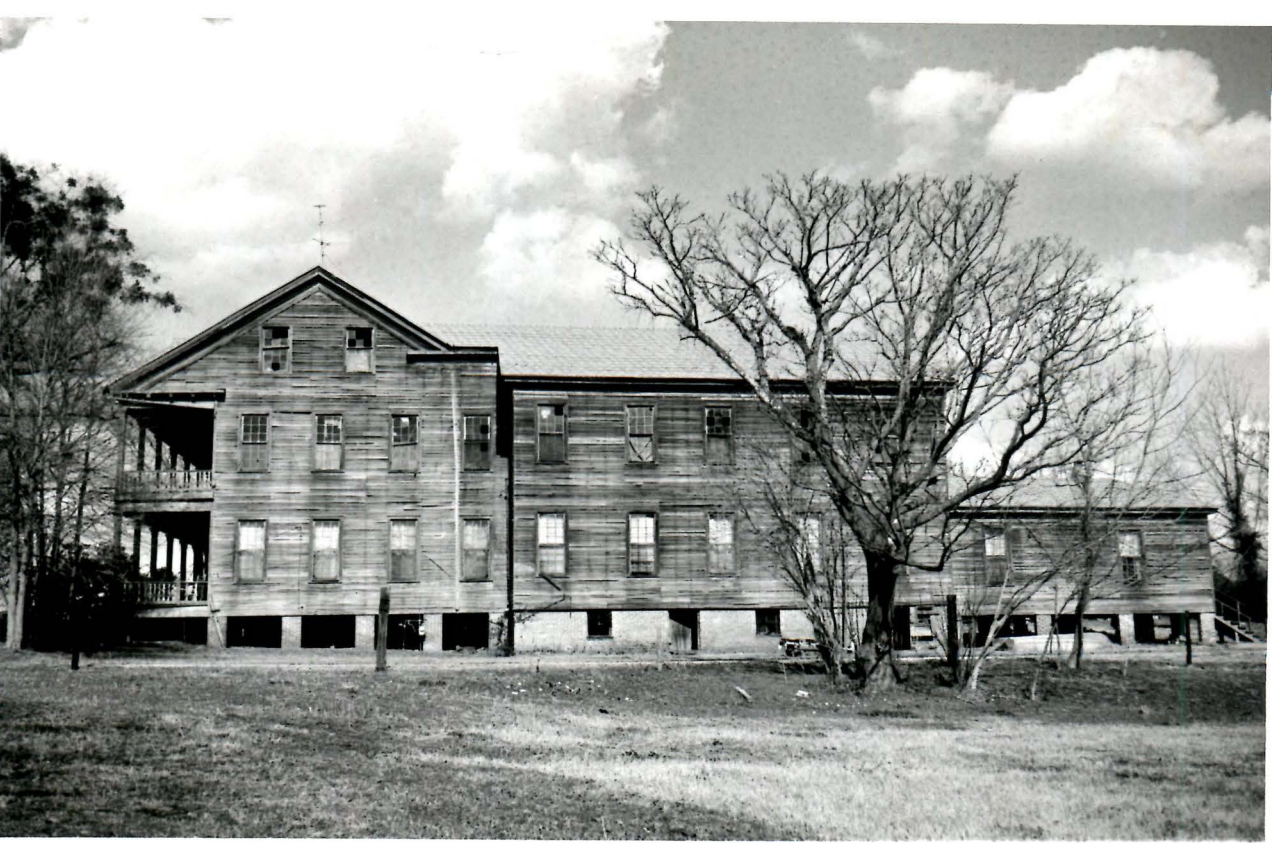
Mississippi State Highway Department  
 Scale: 1/2 inch: 1 mile  
 Date: 1967



2



Crystal Springs  
 500 30  
 475 000  
 500 000  
 525 000



Name: Wesson Hotel

Location: Railroad Ave. and Spring St., Wesson, Miss.

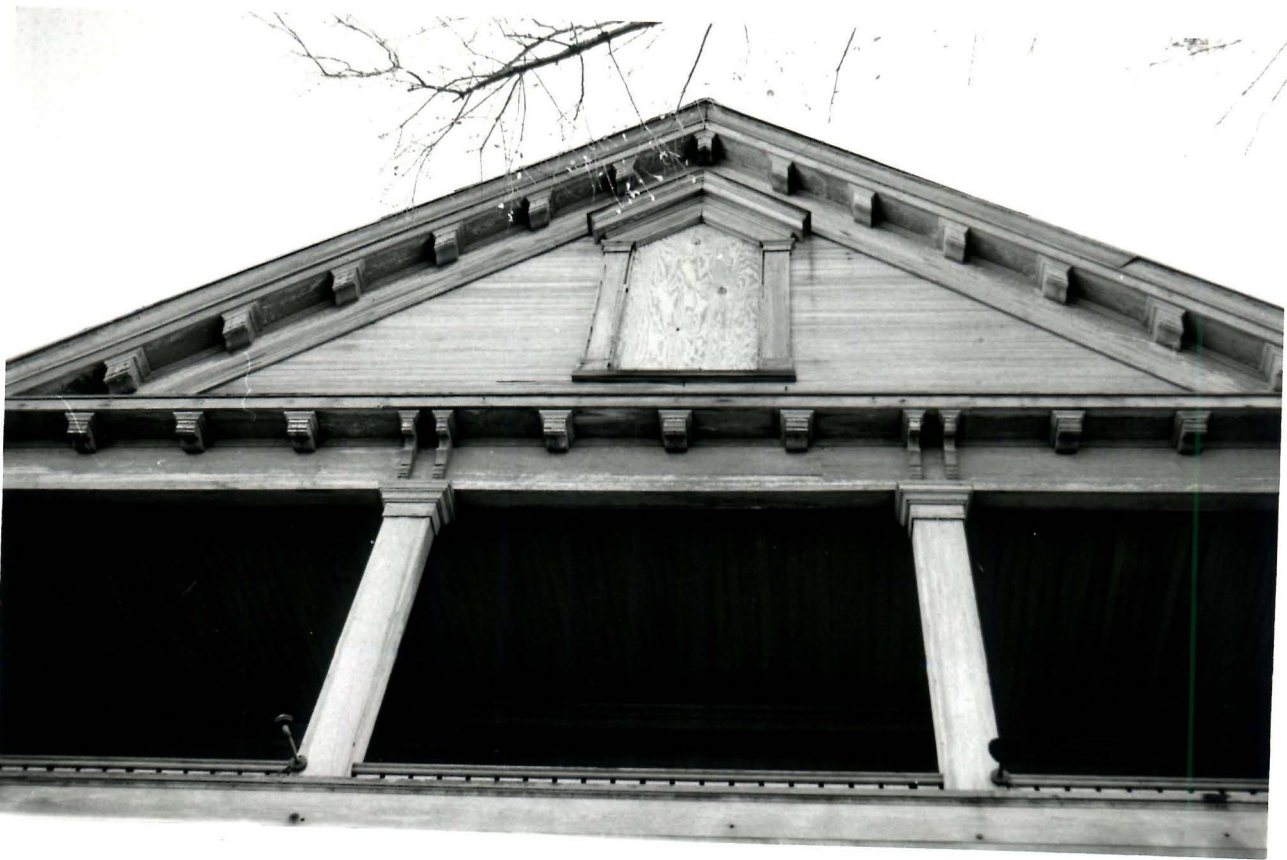
Photo Credit: Miss. Dept. of Archives and History

Date of Photo: February 21, 1972

Description of View: Southwest elevation,  
looking northeast

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Name: Wesson Hotel

Location: Railroad Ave. and Spring St., Wesson, Miss.

Photo Credit: Miss. Dept. of Archives and History

Date of Photo: February 21, 1972

Description of View: Detail of northwest (facade)  
elevation: second floor gallery and gable pediment.

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Name: Wesson Hotel

Location: Railroad Ave. and Spring St., Wesson, Miss.

Photo Credit: Miss. Dept. of Archives and History

Date of Photo: February 21, 1972

Description of View: Rear elevations, looking  
northwest.

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Name: Wesson Hotel

Miss.

Location: Railroad Avenue and Spring Street, Wesson,

Photo Credit: Mississippi Dept. of Archives and Hist.

Date of Photo: February 21, 1972

Description of View: Stairway in first floor  
central hallway of main block.

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Name: Wesson Hotel  
Location: Railroad Ave. and Spring St., Wesson, Miss.  
Photo Credit: Miss. Dept. of Archives and History  
Date of Photo: February 21, 1972  
Description of View: Exterior doorway on second  
floor rear elevation of main block.

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RICHARDSON HOUSE

Name: Wesson Hotel  
Location: Railroad Ave. and Spring St., Wesson, Miss.  
Photo Credit: W. C. Hardy  
Date of Photo: ca. 1900  
Description of View: Northwest (facade) and  
southwest elevations, looking east. Tracks  
of Illinois Central Railroad in foreground.

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