

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Westbrook Cotton Gin

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Location

street & number 395 Gillsburg Road☐ not for publicationcity or town Liberty☐ vicinitystate Mississippi code MS county Amite code \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_\_ national statewide X local

Signature of certifying official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

\_\_\_\_ entered in the National Register

\_\_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_\_ removed from the National Register

\_\_\_\_ other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action



Westbrook Cotton Gin  
Name of Property

Amite, Mississippi  
County and State

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	buildings
	district
	site
	structure
	object
1	<b>Total</b>

### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

n/a

### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/processing

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/Restaurant

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

No style

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: concrete

walls: metal

roof: metal

other:

## Narrative Description



(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

### Summary Paragraph

The Westbrook Cotton Gin is a two-story metal building that was constructed c. 1909 to house a cotton gin. It is located at 395 Gillsburg Road, facing west, in downtown Liberty, Mississippi. The building occupies a lot on the corner of Gillsburg and Liberty roads, an area that is both commercial and residential.

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### Narrative Description

The Westbrook Cotton Gin is a rectangular building clad in corrugated metal. The building has a large two-story gable-roof pavilion on a north-south axis flanked by a one-story shed roof wing to the west and a large one-story flat roof addition to the east. The primary façade is north. The two-story gable end has two six-light metal-frame fixed windows in the second floor. A large opening with sliding door is offset to the west on the ground floor. A single metal wood door enters the one-story shed wing. There is a metal frame nine-light louvered window to the west. A pent metal awning supported by steel poles covers the door and extends around the corner of the building and along the west elevation. To the east of the garage door a raised walkway is protected by a metal awning extends partially along the north elevation. A one-story frame addition extends to the north. To the east of the addition, the wall of the one-story addition has a second sliding door and one door with an overhead garage door.

On the east elevation the two-story pavilion has four metal frame six-light fixed windows on the second floor. The roof of the one-story addition slopes gradually to the east. A loading dock with a sliding door is offset to the north. Additional garage door openings and fixed windows are distributed along the elevation, but are obscured by board and batten siding applied in the late 1990s or early 2000s.

The west elevation is close to the street. Four metal-frame six-light windows are spread across the wall of the second floor. An intersecting gable pavilion, offset to the south, extends from the wall of the second floor. Two two-light fixed windows are in the west face. There is a fifth six-light fixed window in the west wall of the two-story pavilion to the south of the projecting wing. There are no openings in the first floor wall.

The pent awning extends partially across the south elevation, from the southwest corner to the east wall of the two-story pavilion. Two metal frame windows are placed in the second floor gable end. A single leaf door provides access. The one-story addition extends to the east. Any exterior openings in the wall are covered by board and batten siding but at least one nine-light metal frame window can be seen from inside.

The interior is mostly a large open space. The steel I-beams and trusses supporting the two-story gable roof are open to view. The floor is concrete and the metal frame from the scales can still be seen. The one-story wing to the east is a large open space with I-beams and metal posts supporting the roof. A corrugated metal and frame two-story office is set in the southwest corner. Offices, a locker room and storage rooms are placed along the south wall.

The Westbrook Cotton Gin remains as the only cotton gin building in Amite County. Most of the alterations to the building, including the large addition to the east were completed after ginning operations ceased, probably in the 1960s. The building was used for small

Westbrook Cotton Gin  
Name of Property

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manufacturing and storage. The most significant loss is the south door where farmers would exit the gin after unloading cotton. The board and batten exterior cladding is cosmetic and has been removed on the most visible west elevation. Although the building has some alterations it remains the most intact resource illustrating the ginning aspect of the cotton industry in Amite County.



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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☒ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Industry

Ethnic History/Black

Social History

### Period of Significance

c. 1909-1960; 1961

### Significant Dates

### Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

### Cultural Affiliation

### Architect/Builder

Not known

### Period of Significance (justification)

The Period of Significance begins in 1909, the date of the construction of the cotton gin and extends through 1960, which includes the time the gin was in operation, up to fifty years ago. The year 1961 is significant for the slaying of Herbert Lee, a local farmer and voting rights advocate.

### Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

The slaying of Herbert Lee on September 25, 1961, by a politically connected white man was an important event in the local history of the Mississippi Civil Rights movement and is considered exceptionally significant.



**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The Westbrook Cotton Gin is significant as the only remaining gin in Amite County, Mississippi in an area historically dependent on the cotton industry, which has now all but disappeared. Existing cotton gins are historically significant because they represent one of the state's most important industries. Although the Westbrook Cotton Gin has undergone a few alterations over the years- mainly being the rear addition- it retains sufficient integrity to be individually eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Industry, as a rare surviving example of a cotton gin from this period. It is also significant in the area of Ethnic Heritage/Black and Social History as the site of the murder of a black man by a white man during the Civil Rights era.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance)

Industry

The Westbrook Cotton Gin is locally significant, in part, as the last remaining cotton gin building in Amite County, Mississippi. Cotton production in Mississippi exploded from nothing in 1800 to 535.1 million pounds in 1859. On the eve of the Civil War, cotton provided the economic underpinnings of the southern economy. Cotton gave the south power and dictated its huge role in a global economy. This power, however, was built on the backs of slave labor. Following the Civil War, cotton plantation owners had to rebuild cotton operations with their fields in disrepair and without their slave labor. Systems of tenancy, including sharecropping, were developed and cotton again became Mississippi's most important cash crop. By 1870, sharecroppers, small farmers, and plantation owners had produced more cotton than they had in 1860, and by 1880, they exported more cotton than they had in 1860. Cotton took a hit again in 1915 with the introduction of the boll weevil that devastated cotton farms. However, by 1929, cotton was the principal crop on 62% of farms in the South. Production fell off somewhat prior to 1940, but consumption increased during World War II, only to fall off at a dramatic rate afterward with the introduction of synthetic fibers, hitting bottom in 1971. Cotton acres also declined as farmers compared the profitability of the crop with others which did not require as expensive pest control, weed control, or fertilizer.

The Westbrook Gin was built c. 1909 by a corporation of farmers who operated it for about three years before selling it to E. H. Westbrook. Westbrook operated the gin with four men employed during the three months of the harvest season.<sup>1</sup> Trucks hauling cotton were weighed on scales outside of the gin, and then the truck was driven into the building from the north end. The cotton was removed from the truck which was then driven out the other end of the gin and was weighed again to determine the weight of the cotton.<sup>2</sup>

There were six other gins in operation in Amite County at the same time that the Westbrook Gin was in use, however, none of these is extant. The Causey Cotton Gin was constructed in 1926 on the Hemp-Lea Road near Liberty. The McElveen Gin was built on State Highway 24 between Liberty and McComb and was considered "modern" in 1939 according to a statement in the WPA Historical Research Project.<sup>3</sup> The Taylor Gin was located on the Liberty-Gillsburg Road about six miles north of Gillsburg. The Fortenberry Gin was located at Gillsburg. The Bates Gin was operated with a saw mill and was located in Amite County on Peoria Road. There was also a gin in Gloster, the Gloster Ginning Company.<sup>4</sup> All of these gins were about the same design as the Westbrook Gin in that

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<sup>1</sup> WPA State-wide Historical Research Project, *Amite County, Vol III, Part 2* (WPA, 1939), 304.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Hughes, Interview in Liberty, Mississippi, March 21, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> WPA, 304.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 305.



they were two stories in height to accommodate the ginning equipment and were constructed of metal, according to Liberty resident Henry Hughes, who drove trucks laden with cotton to each of these gins. He noted that the Westbrook Gin was the largest of the Amite County gins.

### Civil Rights

The Westbrook Gin is also significant in the area of Ethnic History/Black and Social History. The Civil Rights movement in Mississippi is well chronicled. The Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee was very active in during the 1960s in southern Mississippi. The town of Liberty was not left out of these efforts. On August 15, 1961, Robert Moses came to Liberty to register blacks to vote. E. W. Steptoe and Herbert Lee were among the members of the local NAACP chapter who worked with Moses. According to some accounts, Moses invited John Doar, a representative of the United States Justice Department to meet with blacks in Liberty. Doar asked Steptoe if there were particular white men who provoked fear among the black community and Steptoe indicated E.H. Hurst, a white neighbor and a member of the Mississippi legislature. Steptoe indicated Hurst had threatened him and Herbert Lee.<sup>5</sup>

The next day, September 25, Herbert Lee, was shot and killed at the Westbrook Gin by Hurst. Newspaper accounts reported that Amite County Sheriff E. L. Caston said that Hurst shot the black farmer to death as the man advanced on him with a tire tool. Witnesses told the sheriff that Lee drove onto the grounds of the Westbrook Gin with a truckload of cotton, with Hurst following him in his truck bearing cotton. They reported that Hurst left his truck, walked to Lee's truck and began talking. The witnesses were quoted as hearing Hurst tell Lee to "put down that tire iron, I don't want to have to hurt you." Lee stepped from his truck with an 18-inch long strap in his hand, the witnesses were quoted as saying, and Hurst struck him on the head while holding a .38 caliber revolver. The sheriff said witnesses told him that the revolver fired and Lee fell dead.<sup>6</sup> Hurst surrendered to officers but was not jailed pending an investigation by the coroner. The coroner's jury was convened a few hours after the killing. After testimony by three black and two white witnesses, who all described the shooting as self defense, Hurst was held blameless in the killing.<sup>7</sup> Hurst was never charged or tried.

According to Charles Payne in his book, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, "black witnesses had been pressured by the sheriff and others to testify that Lee tried to hit Hurst with a tire tool. They testified as ordered."<sup>8</sup> One of the black witnesses, Louis Allen, made the mistake of contradicting the jury's conclusion in confidential testimony to local FBI officials. He said that Hurst murdered Lee because of his participation in the voter registration campaign. Lee was a charter member of the Amite County NAACP branch and had volunteered to drive Moses around the county to contact potential voters.<sup>9</sup> After a series of harassments, arrests on trumped-up charges, beatings and surveillance, the misery ended for Louis Allen. On January 31, 1964, Allen was found dead with half of his face gone.<sup>10</sup>

The killing of Herbert Lee put registration of black voters on hold in Amite County, but only for a short while. According to John Dittmer in *Local People. The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, the tragic killing of Herbert Lee was preserved by the movement in a song written by Bertha Gober. "We'll Never Turn Back" is "the haunting anthem of the Mississippi movement, written in memory of the martyred Herbert Lee."<sup>11</sup> The Westbrook Cotton Gin serves as a visible link to this important part of Mississippi's history.

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### **Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)**

Amite County was created on February 24, 1809 by the Territorial Legislature, which also created the town of Liberty on the same day as the county seat. Liberty was chartered in 1828.

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<sup>5</sup> Susan Klopfer, Fred Klopfer and Barry Klopfer, *Murders Around Mississippi: Murders of Herbert Lee and Lewis Allen* (<http://neshobanews.blogspot.com/2005/06/murders-of-herbert-lee-and-lewis-allen>. Retrieved February 5, 2009), 2.

<sup>6</sup> "E. H. Hurst- State Solon Slays Negro at Liberty," *Vicksburg Evening Post* (September 25, 1961): 1.

<sup>7</sup> "State Solon Held Blameless in Negro's Death," *Vicksburg Evening Post* (September 26, 1961): 5.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>9</sup> John Dittmer, *Local People. The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 109.

<sup>10</sup> Len Holt, *The Summer That Didn't End: The Story of the Civil Rights Project of 1964 and Its Challenge to America* (London: Hernemann, 1966), 35.

<sup>11</sup> Dittmer, 132.



## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

- Amite County Sesqui-Centennial Committee. *Liberty and Amite County Sesqui-Centennial 1809-1959*. Gloster, Mississippi: Wilk-Amite Record, 1959.
- Cohn, David L. *The Life and Times of King Cotton*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1956.
- Dittmer, John. *Local People. The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994.
- "E. H. Hurst- State Solon Slays Negro at Liberty." *Vicksburg Evening Post*, September 25, 1961, page 1.
- Holt, Len. *The Summer That Didn't End: The Story of the Civil Rights Project of 1964 and Its Challenge to America*. London: Hernemann, 1966.
- Holtzclaw, Robert Fulton. *Black Magnolias: A Brief History of the Afro-Americans 1865-1980*. Shaker Heights: Keeble Press, 1984.
- Hughes, Henry. Interview in Liberty, Mississippi, March 21, 2010.
- Klopfer, Susan, Fred Klopfer and Barry Klopfer. "Murders Around Mississippi: Murders of Herbert Lee and Lewis Allen." <http://neshobanews.blogspot.com/2005/06/murders-of-herbert-lee-and-lewis-allen>. Retrieved February 5, 2009.
- Newfield, Jack. *A Prophetic Minority*. New York: Signet Publishing Company, 1966.
- Payne, Charles. *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1995.
- "State Solon Held Blameless in Negro's Death." *Vicksburg Evening Post*, September 26, 1961, page 5.
- WPA State-wide Historical Research Project. *Amite County, Vol III, Part 2*, 1939.

#### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been Requested)
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

#### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 05-LIB-0077

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** about one acre  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1    15        709030        3448756  
      Zone    Easting        Northing

2                                     
      Zone    Easting        Northing

3                                     
      Zone    Easting        Northing

4                                     
      Zone    Easting        Northing

### Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

Beginning at the southwest corner of Gillsburg Road and Liberty Road and run north along the Gillsburg Road 310' then run due east for 212', then the boundary runs south at an angle to intersect with Liberty Road at a point that is 130' east from the beginning point.



Westbrook Cotton Gin

Name of Property

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4. rear (east) elevation
5. southwest corner- interior
6. west wall- interior
7. southwest corner- interior
8. north end- interior
9. east side- addition- interior
10. south end- interior

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



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**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundary runs with the cotton gin building and does not include the parking lot or property to the north of the gin building which has the same parcel number.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Nancy H. Bell, Executive Director

organization Vicksburg Foundation for Historic Preservation

date 12/1/2009

street & number 1107 Washington Street

telephone 601.636.5010

city or town Vicksburg

state MS

zip code 39183

e-mail vburgfoundation@aol.com

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property:** Westbrook Cotton Gin

**City or Vicinity:** Liberty

**County:** Amite

**State:** MS

sdfsdf

**Photographer:** Nancy Bell

**Date Photographed:** July 2009

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**

- 1 of 10. façade (west) elevation
2. south elevation
3. north elevation



173' 6"

14' \* 23' 6" \* 17' \*

①

③

④

addition

103'

1-story

2-story

2-story

addition

⑧

⑩

⑥

⑨

⑦

⑤

②

Westbrook Cotton Gin  
395 Gillsburg Road  
Liberty, Amite County, MS



Photo # and direction









Westbrook Cotton Gin  
Liberty, Amite County, MS  
Photo 1 of 10







Westbrook Cotton Gin  
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Westbrook Cotton Gin  
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Westbrook Cotton Gin  
Liberty, Annette County, MS  
Photo 6 of 10



Westbrook Cotton Gin  
Liberty, Amite County, MS  
Photo 7 of 10



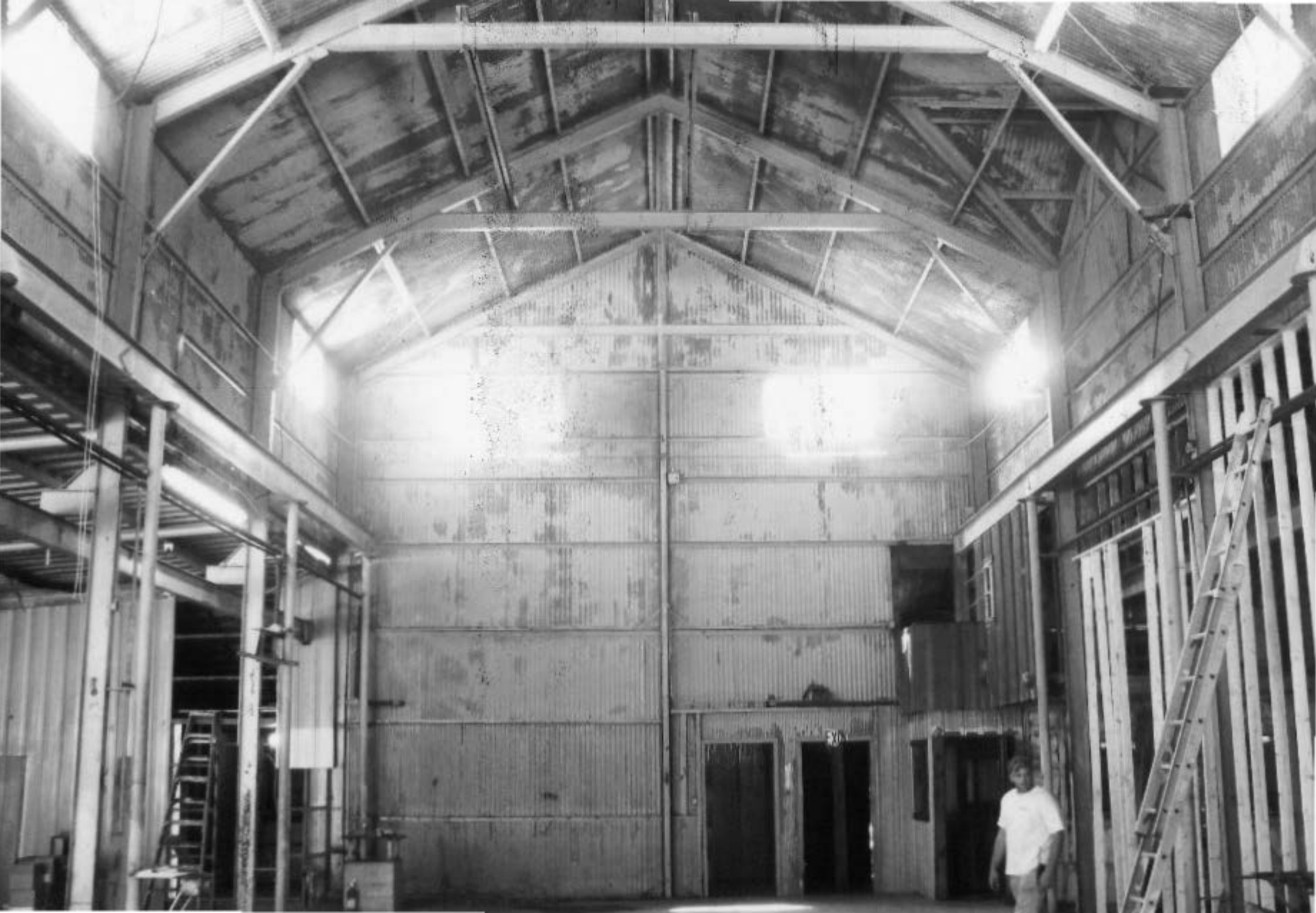


Wegthbrook Cotton Gin  
Liberty, Amite County, MS  
Photo 8 of 10





Westbrook Cotton Gin,  
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Westbrook Cotton Gin  
Liberty, Anne County, MS

Photo 10 z 10