

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only

received **SEP 30 1985**

date entered

001 3

1. Name

historic Old Fort House

and or common Themerlaine

2. Location

street & number 510 7th Street North

N/A not for publication

city, town Columbus

N/A vicinity of

state Mississippi

code 28

county Lowndes

code 87

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
☐ district	☒ public	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture
☒ building(s)	☐ private	☐ unoccupied	☐ commercial
☐ structure	☐ both	☒ work in progress	☐ educational
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment
☐ object	☐ in process	☐ yes: restricted	☐ government
	N/A being considered	☐ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial
		☒ no	☐ military
			☐ museum
			☐ park
			☒ private residence
			☐ religious
			☐ scientific
			☐ transportation
			☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. & Mrs. Michael J. Pizzitola

street & number 510 7th Street North

city, town Columbus

N/A vicinity of

state Mississippi

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Lowndes County Courthouse, Chancery Clerk's Office

street & number 2nd Avenue North

city, town Columbus

state Mississippi

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Statewide Survey of Historic Sites has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1974 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Mississippi Department of Archives and History

city, town Jackson

state Mississippi

7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent

☒ ~~mod~~

☐ fair

☐ deteriorated

☐ ruins

☐ unexposed

Check one

☒ unaltered

☐ altered

Check one

☒ original site

☐ moved

date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Old Fort House built c.1844, exemplifies Greek Revival proportions with the unique blend of Gothic Revival and Italianate elements. It presents a picturesque image situated near the street on a large, elevated, corner lot in a mixture of residential and commercial property. This elegant residence, surrounded by an informal garden, dominates the area in scale, beauty and by its commanding view. Although in sound condition, it is now undergoing a complete restoration by its present owners.

The Old Fort Home is a two story white clapboard structure, facing west, over a raised brick basement. Under the entire form of the main block, the rez-de-chaussee, or ground story, was the service area containing the kitchen and the domestic servant's quarters. Today, this area, the handmade brick flooring preserved, contains four full size rooms used as a family recreation area.

The classical symmetry and impression is achieved with the five bay facade; paneled pilasters between each bay and at the corners of the west and south facades; an entrance doorway framed with large, continuous transom and side lights flanked by smaller paneled pilasters carrying an entablature which is embellished with dentil molding. All is crowned by a full entablature with denticulated cornice, low hip roof and four interior end chimneys, stacks paneled and caps corbeled.

Then a move away from the bold simplicity of Greek Revival begins with the four giant fluted octagonal Gothic columns that are connected by Tudor arches resting on octagonal impost blocks and sawn wood in an intricate design above each arch. This Romantic motif supports the three bay centered portico while more of the delicate scroll work is used as a balustrade to enclose the portico and the second floor balcony over the entrance. All fenestration, although of trabeated construction with 6/6 double-hung sashes, has a cornice that features a dropped, pointed, wooden molding. Then again, one is reminded of the owners knowledge of the current taste in architecture by the single-leaf entrance door being of the Italianate style exhibiting arched panels and repeated on the interior doors of the reception rooms. To add even more grandeur and distinction, an identical porticoed facade is located on the south elevation. This was the coach entrance where a handmade brick driveway is still visible.

The exquisite detail of the main entrance (west and south) is introduced by a centered high flight of masonry steps and upon entering, the classical balance returns. The formal arrangement of a wide central hall accompanied to either side by symmetrical parlors that may be closed-off by concealed sliding doors. This portion is beautifully articulated by plasterwork in the acanthus leaf design, impressive brass chandeliers and identical white marble mantles of the same round arched design. Paneled jib windows open onto the porticos from each room.

It is believed the section just described was an addition (c.1844), reflecting increased wealth, to an existing structure. The earlier compo-

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
☐ prehistoric	☐ archeology-prehistoric	☐ community planning	☐ landscape architecture	☐ religion
☐ 1400–1499	☐ archeology-historic	☐ conservation	☐ law	☐ science
☐ 1500–1599	☐ agriculture	☐ economics	☐ literature	☐ sculpture
☐ 1600–1699	☒ architecture	☐ education	☐ military	☐ social/
☐ 1700–1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian
☒ 1800–1899	☐ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☐ 1900–	☐ communications	☐ industry	☐ politics/government	☐ transportation
		☐ invention		☐ other (specify)

Specific dates c.1844, 1850s **Builder/Architect** Martha W. Fort, Owner

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Old Fort House built c.1844 (1844 O.T. Keeler Map, Columbus Library, Columbus, Ms.) is one of the earliest and most architecturally significant structures in the Columbus, Ms. area due to the fact that it represents a unique architectural style and a way of life that was prevalent in numerous southern towns during this antebellum period. Instead of isolated plantation dwellings, wealthy planters, such as the Forts, often built elegant town houses for their families, reflecting the economy, plus the social and cultural activities during the era of "the golden fifties". This superior example in workmanship and beauty has endured several transfers of ownership with no major alterations and no additions which blemish the original fabric.

The history of this branch of the Fort family is elusive, vague and confusing but obviously, they were prosperous planters. Elias Fort and his wife, Martha Williams Battle, came out of Nash County, N.C. shortly after they sold property there between 1816 and 1820. (Deed Book 13, Pg.73. Nash Co.N.C.) Then later, in 1824, they were located in Pickens County, Ala., adjacent to Lowndes County, Ms., where Elias was listed as a commissioner. (History of Pickens Co.,Ala. from its first settlement in 1817-1856, Nelson F. Smith. "Pickens Republican" Office 1856. The Reprint Co. Publishers, Spartanburg, S.C. 1980). A colorful biography (A Belle Of The Fifties, Ada Sterling, Doubleday 1904) about Virginia Tunstall, Martha's niece, verifies that Elias and Martha brought her from N.C. to Alabama between 1830 and 1833. An estate settlement dated March 3, 1834 (Estate file #61. Chancery Clerk's Office, Lowndes Co., Columbus, Ms.) stated Elias Fort was deceased, leaving Martha with four children. Perpetuating the distinguished Fort name by reason of her visible success, Martha resided in this house until her death in 1876. Micellaneous evidence points to Martha as being solely responsible for the present style and appearance of the Fort home.

Columbus, in Lowndes County, Ms., is located on the east bank of the Tombigbee River and as early as 1817, a "military road" from New Orleans to Nashville contributed to a ready means of access to the region. (History of Mississippi, The Heart of the South, Dunbar Rowland, LL.D. Vol.2,P.778-82. Chicago-Jackson, The S.J. Clarke Publ.Co.1925). A post-road was established by the state from Jackson to Columbus (A History of Columbus, Ms. During the Nineteenth Century, Dr. W.L. Lipscomb. Press of Dispatch Printing Co., Birmingham, Ala. 1909) creating excellent shipping and travel connections aiding the growth of the town which was incorporated in 1821. It grew in size in the 1830's after the Americans suc-

9. Major Bibliographical References

Lipscomb, Dr. W.L. A History of Columbus, Mississippi During the Nineteenth Century. Press of Dispatch Printing Company, Birmingham, Alabama. 1909.

(see continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approx. 3 acres

Quadrangle name Columbus, Miss.-Ala.

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

A

1	6	3	6	7	5	2	5	3	7	0	7	4	5	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

see item 10 continuation sheet page 2

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	NA	code	county	code
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state	NA	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title E. Pauline Morgan, consultant

organization NA

date April 1, 1985

street & number 326 East Jefferson Street

telephone 601-289-4464

city or town Kosciusko

state Mississippi, 39090

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

Kenneth H. P. Pool

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

date September 27, 1985

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 10-31-85

for Sheloree Byer
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Old Fort House, Lowndes County,

Mississippi

Continuation sheet

Item number 7,8

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7. DESCRIPTION

ment was joined to the new by a transverse stairhall, terminated with doorways (north and south) identical to the main entrance (west), intersecting the central hall through an elliptical paneled arch enriched by a pineapple design pendant in the center. Therefore a T floor plan was created and the earlier rooms used as bedroom and formal dining room, decorated in the same manner as the parlors.

Throughout the house, attention to detail is evident by the 6 1/4"-7" wide pine floorboards; 12" heavily molded baseboards downstairs—a 10" version upstairs; the shouldered architrave trim around doors and windows and the single flight stairway displaying a masterfully turned newel post. The second story echoes the floor plan of the first, allowing for four spacious bedrooms.

Except for the addition of modern conveniences and a wing across the rear elevation to accommodate a kitchen, bath and stairway to the ground floor, this proud symbol has maintained its integrity.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

ceeded in making treaties with the Choctaws and Chickasaws and these natives ceded their land to the U.S. Government (Art of the Old South, Jessie Poesch. Alfred A. Knopf, N.Y. 1983. P.252). A land office in Columbus was added in 1833 and it was the busiest land office in the country in 1834-35. (A History of Miss., edited by Richard Aubrey McLemore. Hattiesburg Univ. & College Press of Ms. 1973, Vol.1, P.289). The fertile farm lands of the Black Prairie extension of the Alabama Black Belt, accounted for much of this rush for these lands adjacent to a major waterway flowing to Mobile, Alabama.

Within ten years, during the pioneer period, it is believed the first stage of the Old Fort House was built. Later, probably in the early 1850's, since a sizable increase in the value of property is conspicuous in comparing 1850 and 1860 U.S. Census Records, a second and final stage was begun, creating a magnificent, impressive symbol of wealth and avant garde architecture. Appearing to be from the same hand, yet unknown architect-builders in Columbus created five similar mansions (the Fort home being one of three remaining along with Errolton which was placed on the National Register in 1978) in which basic plans for a columnar house were combined imaginatively with Gothic columns and tracery in wood: a combination only to be found in the nineteenth century in the Deep South (Art of the Old South, Jessie Poesch. Alfred A. Knopf. N.Y. 1983, P.214). This uncommon blend of Revival motifs denotes liberal attitudes and a willingness to deviate from the customary pure Greek Revival which abounds in the region. The Fort House originally occupied the entire Square #27 North of Main Street, in-

(see continuation sheet)

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Old Fort House, Lowndes County,

Continuation sheet Mississippi

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8. SIGNIFICANCE

incorporating several dependencies such as a smokehouse, carriage and stable units, servant quarters and a wellhouse, which still exists. Through the years, lots have been sold, leaving the Old Fort House on a large corner lot.

9. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL

McLemore, Richard Aubrey. A History of Mississippi. Hattiesburg University & College Press of Mississippi. 1973.

Poesch, Jessie. Art of the Old South. Alfred A. Knopf, N.y. 1983.

Rowland, Dunbar, LL.D. History of Mississippi, The Heart of the South. Chicago-Jackson, The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company. 1925.

Keeler, O.T. 1844 Map. Columbus Library. Columbus, Mississippi.

Smith, Nelson E.. History of Pickens County, Alabama from its first settlement in 1817-1856. "Pickens Republican" Office 1856. The Reprint Co. Publishers, Spartanburg, S.C. 1980.

Sterling, Ada. A Belle of the Fifties. Doubleday. 1904.

10. VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the northwest corner of Square 27, North of Main Street, in the City of Columbus, Lowndes County, Mississippi; thence south 09 degrees 30 minutes east along the west side of said square 109.8 feet to the point of beginning; thence continue south 09 degrees 30 minutes east along said west side 212.2 feet to the north right-of-way of Fifth Avenue North as-built; thence north 81 degrees 00 minutes east along said north right-of-way 135 feet to a point that is south 81 degrees 00 minutes west and 197 feet from the back of the curb on the west side of Eighth Street North; thence north 09 degrees 30 minutes west 100 feet; thence north 81 degrees 00 minutes east 70 feet; thence north 09 degrees 30 minutes west along a block wall 110 feet; thence south 81 degrees 00 minutes west along a block wall 41 feet; thence north 09 degrees 30 minutes west 120 feet, more or less, to the north side of said Square 27; thence south 81 degrees 00 minutes west along said north side 10 feet; thence south 09 degrees 30 minutes east 100 feet thence south 78 degrees 45 minutes west along a block wall 55 feet; thence south 09 degrees 30 minutes east 9.8 feet; thence south 79 degrees 00 minutes west 100 feet to the point of beginning.

The above described property is leasehold property from the Mayor and City Council of the City of Columbus, Ms., as successors in office to the Trustees of Franklin Academy, for a term of 99 years from August 1, 1920, renewable forever.



EXTERIOR ELEVATION:

Old Fort Home

510 7th Street North

Front elevation, view to east

Columbus, Lowndes Co. Ms.

Mississippi Department of Archives & History

Letus Still

April 1, 1985

Photo 1 of 6



EXTERIOR ELEVATION:

Old Fort Home

510 7th Street North

South elevation, view to north

Columbus, Lowndes Co. Ms.

Mississippi Department of Archives & History

Letus Still

April 1, 1985

Photo 2 of 6



INTERIOR FEATURE:

Old Fort Home

510 7th Street North

Front entrance, view to east

Columbus, Lowndes Co. Ms.

Mississippi Department of Archives & History

Letus Still

April 1, 1985

Photo 3 of 6



INTERIOR FEATURE:

Old Fort Home

510 7th Street North

Marble mantle, view to north

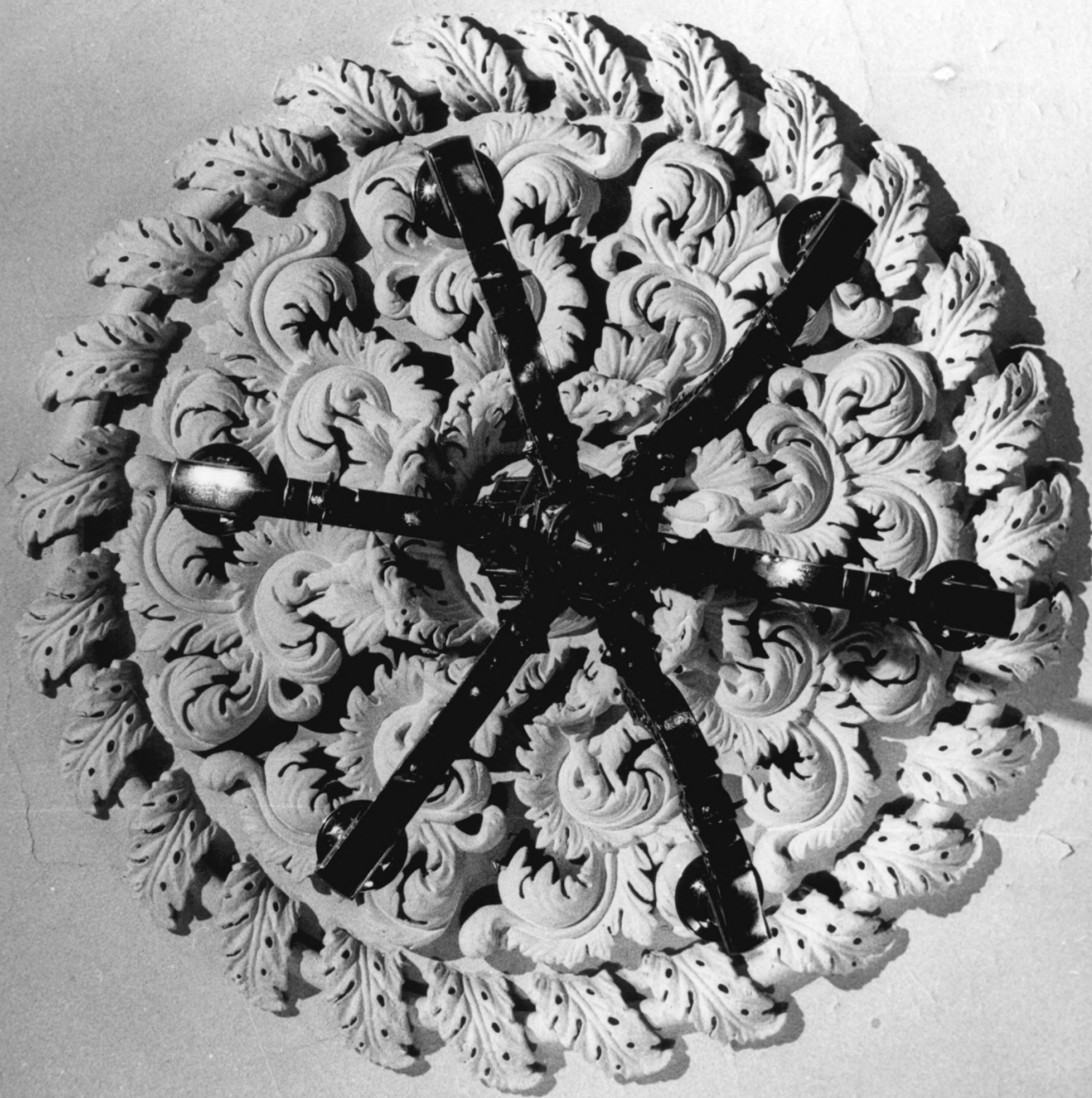
Columbus, Lowndes Co. Ms.

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Letus Still

April 1, 1985

Photo 4 of 6



INTERIOR FEATURE:

Old Fort Home

510 7th Street North

Detail of plasterwork, patera with
chandelier

Columbus, Lowndes Co. Ms.

Mississippi Department of Archives & History

Letus Still

April 1, 1985

Photo 5 of 6



INTERIOR FEATURE:

Old Fort Home

510 7th Street North

Stair hall, view to south

Columbus, Lowndes Co. Ms.

Mississippi Department of Archives & History

Letus Still

April 1, 1985

Photo 6 of 6