

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections**1. Name**historic N/AHistoric Resources of Magnolia (Partial Inventory: Historic  
and/or common and Architectural Properties)**2. Location**street & number See individual nominations N/A not for publicationcity, town Magnolia N/A vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~state Mississippi code 28 county Pike code 113**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> multiple resource	<u>N/A</u> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**name Multiple Ownership

street &amp; number

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Location of Legal Description**courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Chancery Clerk  
Pike County Courthousestreet & number Bay Streetcity, town Magnolia state Mississippi**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**title Statewide Survey of Historic Sites has this property been determined eligible?  yes  nodate November, 1981  federal  state  county  localdepository for survey records Mississippi Department of Archives and Historycity, town Jackson state Mississippi

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 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

Magnolia, developed by landowner Ansel Prewitt in 1856, was built amid the natural landscape of the piney woods and was named for the proliferation of magnolia trees within the area. Located halfway between Jackson and New Orleans, and eight miles south of McComb, Magnolia rests in the gently-sloping wooded hills typical of southwest Mississippi. The city is transected by both Highway 48 and Highway 51. Although it seeks to attract industrial and commercial development, Magnolia is still rural in character and dependent upon the larger city of McComb for many of its consumer goods and cultural resources.

Natural features of the area played an immediate role in determining city boundaries: the Tangipahoa River became the eastern boundary; the Minnehaha Creek became the southern boundary. A third determinant in city planning was the all-important placement of the Jackson, New Orleans and Great Northern railroad tracks, which were laid parallel to and less than half a mile west of the banks of the Tangipahoa River. The strip of land containing the tracks eventually became a railroad-maintained park, and following the length of Main Street, remains today as a historic green space. This green island separates East and West Railroad Avenue (Main Street), and the original commercial area developed on both sides of the island. The bulwark of Magnolia's recreational buildings, the non-extant Central House Hotel, was built on East Railroad Avenue, just bordering on the Tangipahoa. Later hotels were constructed on the cross street, Magnolia. General stores were built along West Railroad and southern East Railroad. Commercial development later spread and still exists along Bay Street (Highway 48), Clark Avenue (Highway 51) and Magnolia Street. Present-day industrial development is centered to the north of the city.

One geographic feature which played an integral part in turn-of-the-century Magnolia was "The Island," located on the Tangipahoa behind the Central House. The Island served as the city's traditional outdoor celebratory space. Due to a change in the river and changing lifestyles, today The Island is abandoned and unapproachable.

Other than the railroad green, the small but shaded courthouse green and the expansive wooded residential lots in Southtown, the city's only other traditional green space is at the city cemetery, located on South Prewitt Street, just to the west of the Southtown Historic District.

Settlement in the oldest residential area north of Bay Street and west of Railroad Avenue is dense. This area was settled first by Magnolia's pre-Civil War citizens and later by the less-affluent working class. As throughout Magnolia, this area enjoys a great mixture of trees, shrubs and flowers. With the prominent exception of three major Queen Anne residences and two Greek Revival cottages, the historic resources of this area consist of Queen Anne-inspired middle-class dwellings and workmen's cottages.

Southtown, first settled in the 1870s with construction of the Pike County Courthouse, had residential settlement within the decade. Southtown immediately became the affluent, exclusive area of town, as evinced by the spacious lots, larger houses and the absence of commercial development. The neighborhood continued primarily residential until the 1930s when the city constructed several public buildings. The district has retained its turn-of-the-century ambiance and today is the setting for three of the most significant Queen Anne residences

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) recreation
<input type="checkbox"/> invention				
<b>Specific dates</b>	N/A	<b>Builder/Architect</b>	N/A	

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The historic resources of Magnolia (population 2,450) are significant for their contribution to the broad patterns of Mississippi transportation and recreation history (criteria A) and for their splendid collection of significant examples of architecture dating from the period 1850 to 1930 (criteria C). Magnolia has retained a significant microcosm of turn-of-the-century transportation, commercial and residential buildings illustrating the influence and impact of Mississippi's railroad days. Located midway between Jackson and New Orleans, Magnolia became a popular post Civil War vacation and health resort, hosting wealthy New Orleanians, many of whom were forced to flee frequent yellow fever summers. A prosperous commercial center emerged within the town, and members of the successful merchant class exhibited their prosperity by building splendid Queen Anne residences, while other citizens built more modest Queen Anne-inspired dwellings.

The area around present-day Magnolia was settled as early as 1810, but it was Ansel Prewitt, a wealthy Pike County landowner and master of Prewitt Plantation, who founded the town of Magnolia on his lands in 1856. Prewitt assured the existence, if not the success, of his town when he deeded a right-of-way to the New Orleans, Jackson and Great Northern Railroad. A railroad line was built through Magnolia soon after and the town laid out accordingly. Residential settlement began in the northwest quadrant, while commercial settlement paralleled the railroad tracks. One of Magnolia's first residences was built by John Frederick Lieb, a Magnolia grocer. The modest Greek Revival cottage, noted for its raised basement and doric frontispiece, was built in the commercial area east of the tracks, near the banks of the Tangipahoa River. The Lieb House is preserved today amid a new industrial environment. Other buildings were constructed during the brief settlement period prior to the Civil War. The town's resort popularity began in its earliest days, which prompted the construction of several buildings which no longer exist: ". . . from its very conception, Magnolia became a resort for the sick and enfeebled . . . here in the wilds in the piney woods a hotel and sanitorium was erected in 1859" (Magnolia Gazette, June 11, 1892, p. 1).

Although Magnolia was unscathed by the Civil War, it was not until the 1870s that it began a slow climb towards prosperity. As an 1892 news article described it: "About the year 1876, she [Magnolia] commenced to boom" (Magnolia Gazette, June 11, 1892, p. 1). The first impetus to Magnolia's prosperity came in 1872 when Col. H. S. McComb, president of the New Orleans, Jackson and Great Northern Railroad transferred his railroad shops from New Orleans to the newly-created city of McComb, eight miles north of Magnolia. Although the potential

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Magnolia (Miss.) Gazette, 1892, 1915.

Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Works Progress Administration. Pike County. Historic Homes Folder.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property See individual nominations

Quadrangle name McComb South, Miss.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 

1	5	7	4	2	9	2	0	3	4	4	8	0	9	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

1	5	7	4	2	6	8	0	3	4	4	8	7	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

1	5	7	4	2	5	9	0	3	4	4	7	3	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

1	5	7	4	1	8	4	0	3	4	4	7	6	5	0
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 individual nominations

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

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code
N/A			

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title P. Ana Gordon, Historian

organization Mississippi Department of Archives and History

date May 12, 1983

street & number P. O. Box 571

telephone (601) 354-7326

city or town Jackson

state 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

Kenneth H. P'Pool

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

date Aug. 23, 1984

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
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Historic Resources of Magnolia

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7 - DESCRIPTION

in the state. Besides these mansions, Southtown has a collection of smaller-scale, but equally ambitious, Queen Anne residences and a group of substantial, but unembellished, late-nineteenth-century residences. Two twentieth-century residences, the Cutrer House (designed by Mississippi architect C. H. Lindsey), and the Watkins House (designed by Charles Armstrong) complete Southtown's historic residential resources.

In general, the historic architectural resources of Magnolia are high-style, large, two-and-a-half-story, Queen Anne mansions; less flamboyant, but equally substantial, one- and two-and-a-half-story Queen Anne residences; a group of one-story, large, highly-decorated Queen Anne residences; and a variety of smaller, one-story ornamented cottages. The Greek Revival style is represented by one-story, five-bay cottages. Turn-of-the-century commercial buildings are one and two story and present a cohesive, unbroken mainstreet landscape. Magnolia's governmental structures are one-story, red brick buildings. The Pike County Courthouse is a two-story, nine-bay building.

The survey and inventory of Magnolia's historic resources was conducted by P. Ana Gordon, historian, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, with the assistance of Malcolm Allen, a Magnolia resident. Of the 170 resources identified, 55 were selected to be nominated to the National Register in the following categories: 35 within the Southtown Historic District; 6 within the Myrtle Street Historic District; and 14 as individual entries.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

economic side effects of McComb upon Magnolia were yet unforeseen, initially, Magnolia was quick to cultivate the new businesses and residential needs of the railroad workers.

Also in 1873, Magnolia was named the Pike County seat, and with construction of the new courthouse on Bay Street in 1876, the city began to expand into its southern streets. The courthouse was destroyed by fire in 1881 but reconstructed in 1883. It was significantly remodeled in 1917.

Finally, in 1878 Magnolia became a haven for the multitude of New Orleanians who fled their city during one of the worse yellow fever epidemics of the century. Because of Magnolia's propinquity to New Orleans and because of its curative sulphur and mineral springs, New Orleanians had retreated to Magnolia as early as 1867 in their efforts to escape the fever. Although the neighboring cities of McComb and Osyka were visited by the fever in 1878, Magnolia remained untainted by the saffron scourage. In later years, Magnolia became a popular summer health resort for many wealthy New Orleanians (Magnolia Gazette, June 11, 1892).

Magnolia was eminently capable to host visitors during both epidemic summer and winter vacations. The town soon boasted three hotels, including the Central

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## 8 - SIGNIFICANCE

House and the Excelsior Hotel. The Grand Central Hotel, known as the Central House (named for its location at the center of the New Orleans-Canton line), was a three-story, 144 room building and the city's most illustrious hotel. The Central House became the cornerstone of the city's tourist trade and residential social life. One of the Central House's greatest attributes was "The Island," a strip of land located behind the hotel on the Tangipahoa River. The Island became the traditional site for festivities and parties. The Excelsior Hotel, a two-and-a-half-story building with a two-tiered verandah, also catered to "railroad trade." Located next to it was a two-story, gabled-fronted building known as "The Annex," and designated as the showplace where traveling salesmen could exhibit their wares. The Annex, a singular building within the city, shows the definite influence of New Orleans architecture. Although both hotels are gone, The Annex remains today as a private residence.

By 1892, Magnolia announced that it had "nearly two score business houses," and proudly boasted that although "the early town of Magnolia was built of logs, the present town is one of neat frame cottages and handsome brick houses" (Magnolia Gazette, June 11, 1892). One of the handsome houses was a two-and-a-half-story Queen Anne residence built by William Atkinson in 1885 and located in the neighborhood known as "Southtown." The house, designed by a skilled architect and executed by trained workers from New Orleans, was highlighted by "tiny fragments of varicolored glass, broken into bits, inlaid in the front gable in intricate design" (Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Works Progress Administration, Pike County, Historic Homes Folder). The interior was notable for its cherubic centerpieces and for the Venetian blinds built into the wall and completely concealed when not in use. The house faced the railroad tracks but was concealed from view by eight large magnolia trees. All of the building's original architectural features survived and are well preserved.

In 1893, a major fire swept along Main Street and claimed the Central House, the railroad station, numerous businesses and several residences. Most of the businesses quickly rebuilt along Main Street, and the decade saw fine residential and commercial buildings being constructed. One of the new commercial buildings was the Norwood Building, constructed in the heart of the business district along Main Street in 1897 by Joseph E. Norwood, publisher of the Magnolia Gazette. The two-story, four-bay storefront was one of the larger commercial buildings constructed after the fire. Another example of this later building phase, which carried into the next century, was Belle Maison, located on Myrtle Street. The two-and-a-half-story Queen Anne house was built by Judge Edgar Simmons in 1902 on the site of his recently razed residence. Belle Maison is typical of the more modest Queen Anne styled and decorated residences characteristic of the north side of town. It is restored today and one of the first Magnolia residences to exhibit a healthy Victorian color and trim.

Magnolia's prominence as a health resort waned after the beginning of the twentieth century. No one reason is known, although it may be in part due to

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the eradication of yellow fever after New Orleans' last epidemic of 1905.

In 1915, Magnolia received lasting local fame when it was recognized as the "Cleanest City in Mississippi." The Mississippi Federation of Women's Clubs sponsored the "cleanest city" contest, which was judged by the Mississippi Board of Health. Magnolia's award, given for a city with a population above 1,000 and below 2,500, recognized the city's sanitary environment and wholesome appearance. In response to the award, the Illinois Central Railroad devoted most of their July, 1915, magazine to a written and pictorial tribute to Magnolia.

With the advent of the automobile age in the 1920s, Magnolia lost its prominence as a railroad station. Today Magnolia, located between an interstate highway and the freight railroad, is known primarily as the Pike County seat and for its architecture, most notably its large Queen Anne residences.

Magnolia's citizens are aware of their architectural legacy, and many homeowners have initiated preservation efforts. Preservation in Magnolia has been assisted partially by the continuity of family ownership, which resulted in few alterations. One example is Magnolia Hall, which was built by A. L. Lazar in 1879, and remained in the family until 1968. The survey and inventory of Magnolia's historic buildings has heightened local interest in historic preservation and promoted an appreciation for sensitive restoration. Community interest and local enthusiasm for the survey contributed to the formation of the Pike County Historical Society and to the consideration of a local preservation ordinance.

The natural grouping of major residences and the existence of architectural gems among new unsympathetic construction led to the selection of thirteen individual buildings and two districts.

The Southtown Historic District contains residential and governmental buildings representing Magnolia's turn-of-the-century period of significance. Included within the district are the Pike County Courthouse, three of the best Queen Anne residences in the state, and a variety of turn-of-the-century dwellings. The boundaries were drawn to include all buildings retaining historical reference to development in Southtown and to exclude areas of new and unsympathetic construction.

The Myrtle Street Historic District resulted from the attractive visual grouping of five substantial turn-of-the-century residences and one church, all of which represented a cohesive and unaltered residential block from Magnolia's primary period of significance.

The individual buildings included within the nomination are each notable for their style, individuality or similarity within the city's architectural context, and architectural excellence within the framework of known non-extant and extant buildings. Each structure represents a building type which was important to the historic and architectural development of the city.

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## 9 - MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Smith, Lourette. Magnolia Through the Years. Magnolia, Miss.: Traditional Printing, 1977.