

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Cliffs is a one-and-a-half story, square, frame, Greek Revival plantation residence set upon a brick basement that is fully raised at the rear. The gabled roof is pierced by two, inside-end brick chimneys on the front slope, one at each side, and by two, interior brick chimneys on the rear slope. The house is fronted by an undercut gallery that is supported by wooden box columns with molded capitals that are linked by rectangular-sectioned balusters with molded handrail. The five-bay northeasterly facade is plastered and finished with a molded base having two fasciae. The windows contain six-over-six, double-hung sash and are closed by many of the original shutter blinds. A plain peaked surround defines the central entrance which consists of a single-leaf door, sidelights set over molded panels, and a transom.

The interior features a double-pile floor plan with central hallway and "cabinet" rooms located at each end of the recessed rear gallery, now enclosed by glass. The rooms are identically trimmed with doors that are four-paneled and molded, architrave door and window surrounds, molded bases with two fasciae, and pilastered wooden mantel pieces. The double parlors on the northerly side are separated by sliding doors. Evidence of the original interior decorative scheme of the principal floor still survives. The mantel pieces and baseboards were painted black, the doors were grained in imitation of oak, and the walls were left bare plaster or white washed. The rear chimneys of the house service the "cabinet" rooms and the larger rear rooms of the main floor, and this fireplace configuration is unusual for houses with this characteristic Mississippi floor plan. Most commonly, the "cabinet" rooms were unheated. Remnants of a plaster cornice survive in the front parlor.

Originally, the stairway to the upstairs was entered in the recessed rear gallery, made a quarter turn with winders, and continued in a straight flight along the southerly wall to terminate in the unfinished second story. Although the stairway is still in the same location, only the upper portion is original with the winders having been replaced by a landing. A stairway leads to the basement area beneath the stairway to the upstairs. The basement floor of The Cliffs is divided into four large rooms with central passage. The basement rooms have been totally renovated to accommodate modern bedrooms, bathrooms, and a kitchen, and almost no original millwork has survived. The rear gallery on the basement level has been enclosed with glass to serve as a modern den.

To the rear of the main house is a large barn with a broken slope, gabled roof that is possibly original to the main house. No other outbuildings are included within the nominated property boundaries, and no outbuildings on the surrounding acreage, once a part of The Cliffs Plantation, appear to be contemporary with the main dwelling house.

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	X agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600-1699	X architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/
___ 1700-1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ humanitarian
X 1800-1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater
___ 1900-	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation
		___ invention		___ other (specify)

Specific dates 1850's **Builder/Architect**

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Cliffs is an excellent example of a Greek Revival, Mississippi plantation dwelling of one-and-a-half stories with undercut gallery. The house was probably constructed in the 1850's as the plantation residence of John W. Henderson, one of the most prominent citizens of nineteenth-century Natchez. Evidence of the original interior decorative scheme still survives, as the first renovation did not occur until approximately 1970. The doors were grained in imitation of oak, one oak-grained door still surviving; the baseboards and mantel pieces were painted black; and the plaster walls were left bare or white washed.

John W. Henderson was the grandson of Scotchman John Henderson I, who immigrated to Natchez in 1787. A prominent merchant, Henderson wrote the first book published in the territory, was one of the founders of the First Presbyterian Church, and was the person for whom the two National Register houses The Elms (ca. 1805) and Pleasant Hill (ca. 1835) were constructed (Mary Warren Miller, Pleasant Hill, Adams Co., National Register File, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson). One of John Henderson I's sons was Thomas Henderson, a wealthy planter and cotton broker, for whom the ca. 1858 Henderson-Britton House was constructed (Mary Warren Miller, Henderson-Britton House, Adams Co., National Register File, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson). The Henderson-Britton House is currently being restored by the Natchez Garden Club under a Federal grant program.

In 1828, Thomas Henderson and his brother Alexander purchased part of Mount Hope Plantation (Adams Co. Deed Book Q:135), expanded this purchase into what would eventually become an antebellum plantation of 1,446 acres, and named it The Cliffs (Will Book 3:251 and Deed Book PP:91). In his will dated 1857, Thomas Henderson refers to having already given "to my son John W. the Cliff [sic] Plantation with the slaves, stock & farming utensils thereon and money . . . (Will Book 3:251)." No mention is made of having given John a pre-existing dwelling. The circular saw marks on the structural timber of the house definitely point to a post-1848 date of construction, as Andrew Brown's saw mill in Natchez did not own such a saw until 1848. Circular saws are not considered to have been widely used until the late 1840's and 50's (John Hebron Moore, Andrew Brown and Cypress Lumbering in the Old Southwest [Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967], pp. 54-56). In addition, the track for the sliding doors separating the double parlors is located above, and the earliest documented overhead door track is found at Stanton Hall, ca. 1857.

The house was probably begun about 1856, the year of John W. Henderson's marriage to Ellen Newman (The Natchez Democrat, Aug. 19, 1916, p. 2), and completed about 1857 or 58. In an 1868 deed of sale, the property is described as being "the same plantation of land upon which the said John Henderson has resided and cultivated for more than ten years past (Deed Book PP:91)." John Henderson's obituary states that he graduated from Oakland College (now Alcorn University) in 1853 and subsequently received a master of arts degree and from that time until the Civil War was engaged in the planting business (The Natchez Democrat, Aug. 19, 1916, p. 2).

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John W. Henderson was born in Natchez in 1832 and died in 1916. During his long life, he was a planter, a Civil War hero, a merchant, county school superintendent, and an ordained Presbyterian minister. He attained the rank of First Lieutenant in the Confederate Army and returned to Natchez after the war to abandon his planting career in favor of assuming the management of his late father's brokerage and mercantile firm. He later became manager of the Natchez mercantile firm of Stockman and Newman. After the S. B. Newman & Company of New Orleans failed and forced the closing of the Natchez branch in 1880, Henderson became county superintendent of education, a position he held for thirty-four years. An ordained minister, he never assumed the pastorate of a church but was content to assist the local congregations (The Natchez Democrat, Aug. 19, 1916, p. 2).

In 1868, John W. Henderson, having entered the mercantile world of downtown Natchez, sold The Cliffs Plantation to John Coulson (Deed Book PP:91). From Coulson, Henderson purchased Belvidere, a ca. 1840 residence located on Homochitto Street (Deed Book PP:94), that is today owned by the great-granddaughter of Henderson. For several years after John Henderson sold The Cliffs, it was owned by mercantile firms who sold the crops and leased the house to men who managed the plantation. Eventually the house became the long time residence of the Brown family, descendants of Thomas Mason of the firm Pollock and Mason. The Brown family obtained the property after lengthy litigation involving the heirs of Thomas Pollock.

In 1979, The Cliffs was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Meade Hufford who are renovating the house to serve as their permanent family residence.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Adams Co., Miss. Chancery Clerk. Deed Books Q, PP.

Adams Co., Miss. Chancery Clerk. Will Book 3.

Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson. National Register File.
Adams Co. Pleasant Hill (Mary W. Miller).

Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson. National Register File.
Adams Co. Henderson-Britton House (Mary W. Miller).

Moore, John Hebron. Andrew Brown and Cypress Lumbering in the Old Southwest.
Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967.

The Natchez Democrat, Aug. 19, 1916.

(RED GUM)

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GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

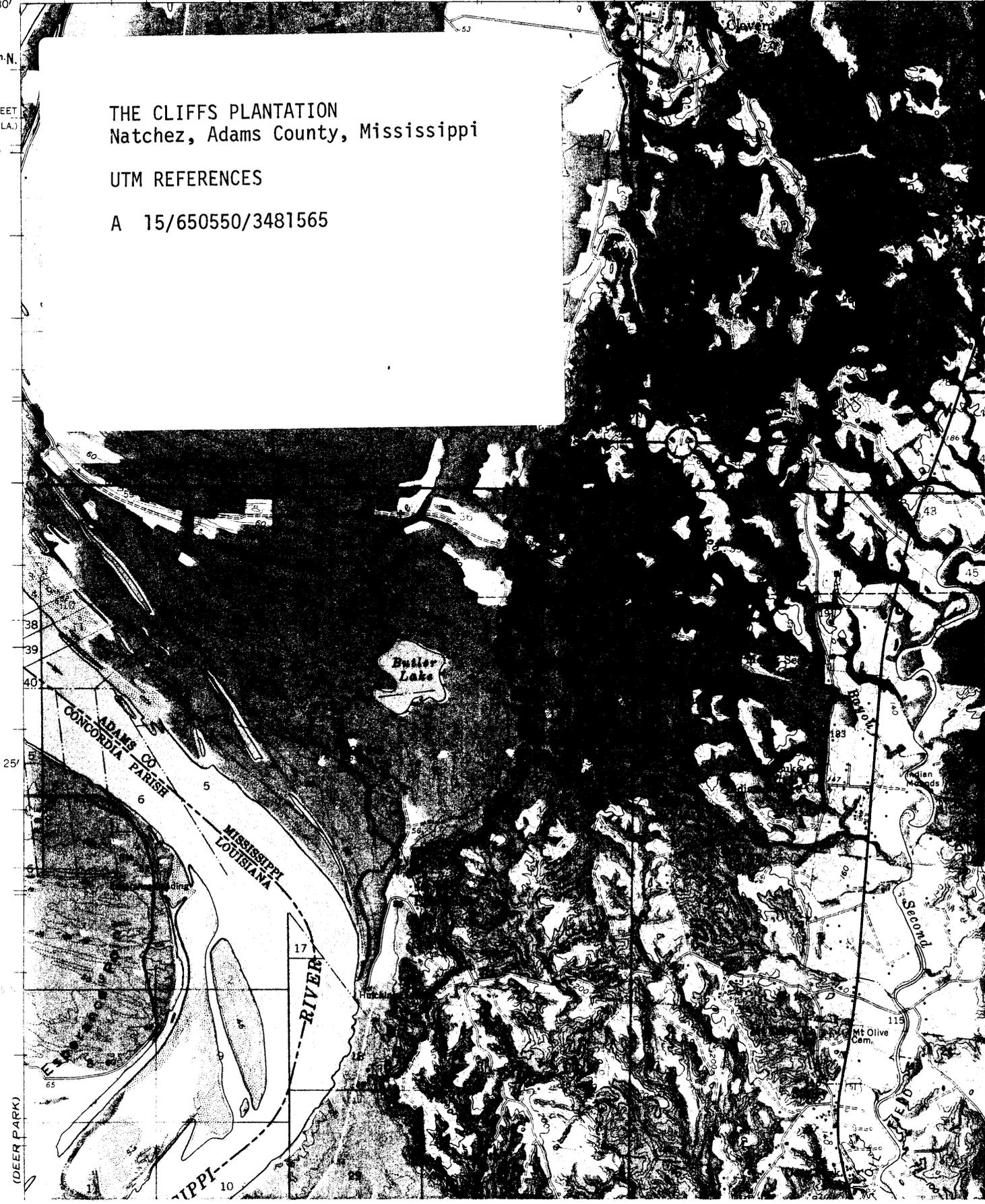
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3485000m.N.
300 000 FEET
(LA.)

THE CLIFFS PLANTATION
Natchez, Adams County, Mississippi

UTM REFERENCES

A 15/650550/3481565



(DEER PARK)