

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation 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 NCRS use only

received MAR 13 1980

date entered

9

1. Name

historic Van Court Town House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 510 Washington Street

___ not for publication

city, town Natchez

___ vicinity of

congressional district Fourth

state Mississippi

code 28

county Adams

code 1

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Dr. and Mrs. Hall Ratcliffe

street & number 510 Washington Street

city, town Natchez

___ vicinity of

state Mississippi 39120

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Adams County Courthouse--Chancery Clerk

street & number Courthouse Square

city, town Natchez

state Mississippi

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic American Buildings has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes ___ no

date 1930's

federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records The Library of Congress

city, town Washington

state D. C.

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

Situated on the southwest corner of the intersection of South Union and Washington Streets in downtown Natchez, the Van Court Town House is a two-and-a-half story brick residence that was stuccoed and scored in the twentieth century. The gabled roof is pierced by three inside-end chimneys, two of which are located on both the front and rear slopes of the roof, and the front dormers are more elaborately trimmed with modillioned cornices. Attached to the eastern elevation is a one-story stuccoed addition with modillioned cornice.

The northerly three-bay facade is crowned by a full entablature with molded cornice and modillions. The windows, which are filled with twelve-over-twelve, twelve-over-eight, and six-over-six, double-hung sash, are closed by original shutter blinds. The entrance is located in the westernmost bay and is fronted by a one-story cast-iron porch of mid-19th century design. The influence of the Federal period survives in the elliptical fanlight of the doorway, which also consists of an eight-paneled door and pilasters enframing sidelights set over molded panels. The pilasters are adorned with an incised Greek design.

The floor plan of the interior is a side hall plan, two rooms deep. The dining room and parlor were originally separated by hinged doors, now missing, framed by pilasters with Ionic capitals on the parlor side supporting a full entablature. The windows, having flared jambs with molded panels, are set above molded panels; the doors, having jambs with molded panels, have eight, fielded and molded panels; and the bases have two fasciae and are molded. The door and window surrounds are symmetrically molded with corner blocks and are further decorated by a tablet with fielded panel in the center of the lintel. Black marble, pilastered mantel pieces are located in both downstairs rooms, which also feature plaster centerpieces of foliate and floral design. The hallway centerpiece is composed of concentric circles surrounding radiating acanthus leaves.

One of the most outstanding architectural features of the house is the wide staircase which is continuous to the third floor level. The balusters, a cluster of which form the newel, are plainly turned. The upstairs rooms are more simply trimmed with architrave surrounds and beaded bases. Metal mantel pieces of later 19th-century design have replaced the original mantels. The rear gallery has been sympathetically enclosed on both levels to accommodate modern kitchen, breakfast room, and bath facilities.

To the rear of the main house, located at the southwest corner of the lot, is a two-story brick outbuilding with gabled roof. This outbuilding may have existed prior to the construction of the main house and could possibly have constituted an early Natchez dwelling.

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 type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1834-38

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Van Court Town House is one of the most architecturally significant of the downtown residences of Natchez. This significance derives from its high degree of finish and the transitional nature of its design, which features elements of both the Federal and Greek Revival styles.

The Van Court Town House was constructed by James Ferguson probably shortly after he purchased the property for 3,000 dollars in 1834 (Adams Co. Deed Book V:193). The corner lot was originally part of the estate of his father-in-law, Spaniard Joseph Quegles, a prominent early Natchez merchant and planter (Probate Box 57). The high selling price of the lot supports the theory that the two-story brick outbuilding existed prior to the construction of the main house. After the deaths of his wife and three children between January 1836 and May 1837, James Ferguson sold his property in 1838 for 12,000 dollars to Dr. Andrew Macrery (Deed Book Z:421). A newspaper advertisement for the sale of Macrery's property in 1849 refers to the house and lot "purchased by said decedent from James Ferguson (Mississippi Free Trader, Nov. 7, 1849, p. 2)." The stylistic evidence, the 9,000 dollar price increase, and the 1849 newspaper advertisement prove conclusively that the Van Court Town House was constructed by James Ferguson between 1834 and 1838. The Federal fanlight, the twelve-over-twelve window sash, and the staircase indicate that the house was built closer to 1834 at the beginning of the Greek Revival period in Natchez.

Dr. Andrew Macrery, who purchased the property in 1838, was a prominent Natchez physician who also owned Roseland Plantation on Liberty Road (Probate Box 115). The Macrery family owned the property until 1870, when Macrery's daughter Eliza and her husband Audley C. Britton sold the house to Adeline H. Baker (Deed Book QQ:268). The Brittons purchased Mrs. Baker's mansion, listed on the National Register as the Henderson-Britton House (Deed Book QQ:267). In 1882, Dr. Elias J. Van Court inherited the house from his half-sister, Adeline Baker (Will Book 4:220). Dr. Van Court also owned Courtland Plantation (Catherine Van Court, The Old House (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1950), p. VII), and, during his ownership, the house acquired its historic name, the Van Court Town House. Dr. Van Court was the son of a Presbyterian minister, Rev. J. H. Van Court, who came to Natchez from New Jersey in 1823 and married into the pioneer Swayzie family of the Kingston community, or Jersey Settlement (Historical and Biographical Memoirs of Mississippi (Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1891), Vol. II, 942).

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached sheet.

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle name Natchez

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	5	6	5	1	1	3	4	3	4	9	2	2	5	7
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 attached xerox of city tax map with nominated property outlined in red. Nominated property is located on map 59, block 3, parcel 1.

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

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

name/title Mary Warren Miller/Research Consultant

organization self-employed date August 23, 1979

street & number 506 High Street telephone (601) 442-9786

city or town Natchez state Mississippi 39120

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title _____ date _____

For HCRS use only

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

date _____

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date _____

Chief of Registration

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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9

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 1

The Van Courts lost the house by mortgage default in 1899, and the house was sold to the Reale family (Deed Book 3Q:639) who owned the property until 1963 (Will Book 21:65). In 1967, the house was purchased by Dr. and Mrs. Hall Ratcliffe who restored the house and are its present owners.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 1

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- Adams County, Mississippi. Chancery Clerk. Deed Books V, Z, QQ, 3Q.
- Adams County, Mississippi. Chancery Clerk. Probate Boxes 57, 115.
- Adams County, Mississippi. Chancery Clerk. Will Books 4, 21.
- Historical and Biographical Memoirs of Mississippi. Chicago: The
Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1891.
- Mississippi Free Trader, Nov. 7, 1849.
- Van Court, Catherine. The Old House. Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1950.