

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

FEB 16 1989

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Selma Plantation House  
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 467 Selma Road N/A not for publication  
city, town Natchez X vicinity  
state Mississippi code MS county Adams code 1 zip code 39120

3. Classification

Ownership of Property		Category of Property		Number of Resources within Property	
				Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> buildings		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district		<u>      </u> sites		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site		<u>      </u> structures		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure		<u>      </u> objects		
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> Total		

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Kenneth H. P. Pool Feb. 13, 1989  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer - Mississippi  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Patrick Andrews 6/15/89  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Federal

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brickwalls Weatherboard

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roof Other: simulated slateother 

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

The Selma plantation house is a well preserved example of a form of Creole vernacular architecture that was adopted by Anglo-American settlers in the Natchez District during the late-18th and early-19th centuries. It stands on a high knoll overlooking the valley of Muddy Fork Creek, near the center of what was formerly Selma plantation. It retains enough acreage to convey visually its plantation house origin.

The house was built ca. 1811 by Gerard Brandon (b. 1750), who came to America from Ireland shortly before the outbreak of the American Revolution and initially resided in South Carolina. After the war he settled in the Natchez District which was then part of Spanish West Florida and in 1786 purchased a parcel of land consisting of 600 French arpents (ca. 510 acres), which became his Selma plantation. It is essentially identical to Section 24, Township 7 North, Range 2 West. During the late-18th century and before cotton had become popular in the Natchez District, Brandon raised indigo at Selma. Indigo vats were located along Muddy Fork Creek. He also acquired other plantation lands in present-day Adams and Wilkinson counties (Brandon 1932:23-24; 1939:1-2; Selma--Chain of Title n.d.).

Gerard Brandon initially resided in a house that was located within about 100 yards of the Natchez Trace, which passed through Selma plantation. A son, Gerard Chittoque, who was born here in 1788, later became a governor of Mississippi. The house burned "about the year 1811," and Brandon then constructed the present-day Selma plantation house about a half mile to the south-southwest of the original house site. The second house was probably constructed soon after the burning of the older house, because it was recalled that the former was constructed "a number of years" before the 1823 death of Gerard Brandon (Brandon 1932:21, 24; 1939:1).

Following Brandon's death on July 27, 1823, he was buried beside his wife in the family cemetery located on the ridge to the east of the original housesite. Selma plantation was inherited by his oldest daughter Sarah, who apparently resided in the house until her death in 1831. The plantation remained in the possession of descendants of Gerard Brandon until 1875. Since then the property has passed through the ownership of a number of families. Although Selma plantation remained essentially intact well into this century, it has within recent years been subdivided (Brandon 1932:20-21; 1939:1-2; Selma--Chain of Title n.d.). In November 1976, Mr. and Mrs. John Williams, the current

FEB 16 1989

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Selma Plantation House, Natchez vicinity, Adams County, Mississippi

Section number 7 Page 1

owners, purchased the house and a 55-acre parcel that was taken out of the remainder of the Selma plantation parcel (Nancy Williams, personal communication 1988).

The Selma plantation house is one and a half stories high and stands about three feet off the ground on brick piers that were later infilled with brick. The main body of the house is beam framed with a clapboarded exterior. Its form indicates the influence of the French or Creole vernacular architectural tradition. The roof of the original structure is gabled with no breaks in pitch. The gallery is under-cut and full-frontal. The original floorplan is of a common Creole type that Edwards (1988:23-24) terms M2k; that is, it is three rooms wide with a large central salle, or living room, flanked on either side by chambres. Behind each chambre is a cabinet, and between the two cabinets was a loggia, now enclosed.

The upstairs is essentially a repetition of the chambre/salle/chambre pattern that underlies it. Two gabled dormers are on the north (front) of the salle and two are exactly opposite them on the south side of the room. The roof is covered with simulated slate shingles.

Between the salle and the western chambre, there is an internal chimney with fireplaces on either side and on both floors. At the eastern end there are two external Tidewater chimneys. The northern one is under the center of the gable and has fireplaces on both of the main floors. The southern chimney has fireplaces on the first floor in the cabinet and below in the basement. There was formerly a chimney on the exterior of the western cabinet, but it was removed probably during the 1930s.

Although there is a central front door, the pattern of fenestrations on the facade is somewhat asymmetrical with the doors and windows arranged as follows from east to west: w-d-w-d-w-w-d. The front gallery is accessed by a single flight of centered wooden steps and is supported by chamfered posts linked by a rectangular-sectioned balustrade with molded handrail (the original handrail would have been round). An unusual feature of the front gallery is the intermediate chamfered post between the front wall and corner post at each gallery end. The facade of the house is finished in wide, tongue-and-groove, horizontal beaded boards with a molded base, and all window and doorway openings have molded surrounds. All windows of the principal story are filled with nine-over-six, double-hung sash and are closed by shutter blinds. The front doors, like all original doors of the principal story, are six-panel doors with molded and fielded panels.

All interior walls and ceilings were originally finished in tongue-and-groove beaded boards with molded baseboards. Due to a ca. 1960 fire, some walls and ceilings on the second-story have been newly sheathed. On the first story, window and doorway openings all have

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Selma Plantation House, Natchez vicinity, Adams County, Mississippi

Section number 7 Page 2

molded backbands, doors have six molded and fielded panels, and a molded chair-rail is a feature of all rooms. All original mantel pieces survive, except where the chimney was removed from the western cabinet. The mantel pieces are vernacular expressions of the popular Federal style with ornament limited to simple moldings and reeded decoration. Access to the upper half story is provided by two, nearly matching staircases located within the enclosed loggia where they occupy the end bays of the sheltered portion of the original rear elevation. Both staircases are detailed with square newels and balusters and make a couple of quarter turns with winders before breaking through the rear wall of the house to terminate in diminutive hallways, each providing access between the salle and a chambre. An unusual feature of the upper half story are the small, finished eave rooms, which are lighted with small gable-end windows. The upper story is more plainly trimmed than the first story with batten, rather than paneled, doors and unmolded door and window surrounds.

Modifications to the house have been minor and do not obscure its original form. During the 1930s, an addition of approximately eight feet was constructed entirely across the rear (John Williams, personal communication 1988). In doing this the loggia was consequently enclosed. Because there is a dramatic break in the slope of the rear roof where the addition joins the original house, the addition is readily indentifiable and is not confused with the original structure. A screened-in porch was recently constructed on the rear. Because all of the additions are entirely in the rear, they are fairly inconspicuous and do not detract from the appearance of the original portion.

Minor alterations include the addition of a fanlight and sidelights to the central front door, probably during the 1930s, and the moving of the door that pierces the wall between the western chambre and the cabinet behind it. The latter alteration was made during the past decade (John Williams, personal communications 1988).

Although this building springs from a vernacular architectural tradition, this should not imply that it is small as are many vernacular houses. Before the addition to the rear of the house, there were approximately 1,650 square feet to the first floor and 1,280 square feet to the second (excluding the numerous closets, dormers, and eave rooms), making an approximate total of 2,940 square feet of enclosed space. With the addition to the rear and the enclosing of the loggia, the area of the first floor rose to 2,560 square feet, giving a total of approximately 3,840 square feet.

No associated historic outbuildings have survived, although the property does contain one nonhistoric outbuilding, a sympathetically-designed garage built behind the house in the late 1970s. The presence of this building does not detract from the visual integrity of the house and its setting.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)  
Architecture

Period of Significance  
ca. 1811

Significant Dates  
ca. 1811

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation  
N/A

Significant Person  
N/A

Architect/Builder  
N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Selma Plantation house is significant in that it is a representative example of a planter's cottage that was heavily influenced by the Creole architectural tradition as was common in the largely Anglo- and Afro-American population of the Natchez District during the late-18th and early-19th centuries. The house's significance is under National Register Criterion C, in that it embodies "the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction."

The Natchez District today corresponds approximately to the five Mississippi counties of Adams, Claiborne, Jefferson, Warren, and Wilkinson. The first permanent European settlements in the District were begun by the French during the second decade of the 18th century at Natchez and on the lower Yazoo River near Vicksburg. These settlements were wiped out during Indian uprisings in 1729. For the next few decades the only permanent European presence in the District was a small French garrison at Fort Rosalie at Natchez (James 1968:5-11).

Following the 1763 Treaty of Paris, the Natchez District came into the possession of England. Shortly afterward, the area began to be resettled by settlers of British origin who had moved into the area primarily from the colonies on the Atlantic seaboard of North America (letter, McIntire to Chester, deposition of Daniel Huay, and narrative by Edward Mease, in Rowland 1925:25-27, 77-78; Drake 1953:275; James 1968:15-18). The population continued to grow following the Spanish acquisition of the District in 1779; the census of 1784 indicated a population of 1,619, while the 1794 census listed a population of 4,446. A few years after the District was acquired by the United States in 1798, the population was numbered at 7,600 (Holmes 1965:115-117; James 1968:41-42). The main town of the District was Natchez, which had emerged as a small commercial center by 1776, initially located on the edge of the Mississippi River, below the high bluffs (Butler 1834:176, as quoted in Phelps 1966). In 1791, the Spanish had a town plat surveyed on top of the bluffs from which the modern town of Natchez has developed (Gayoso 1792).

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

MAY 08 1989

Baily, Francis  
1969 Journal of a tour in unsettled parts of North America in 1796 and 1797.  
Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois.

NATIONAL REGISTER

Bedford, John  
1919 A tour in 1807 down the Cumberland. Tennessee Historical Magazine  
5:107-128.

Brandon, Gerard  
1932 Untitled manuscript on the history of the Brandon family in Mississippi.  
Original in the possession of Mrs. Sarah Brandon Rickey of Dallas, Texas.  
Copy in Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi.

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository:

Historic Preservation Division, Mississippi  
Department of Archives and History

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 55.3 acres

UTM References

A 15 663820 3497100  
Zone Easting Northing

B 15 663915 3497460  
Zone Easting Northing

C 15 664215 3497525

D 15 664460 3497320

E 15 664180 3496950

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

A portion of Selma Plantation situated in Section 24, Township 7 North, Range 2 West, Adams County, Mississippi, particularly described as follows: Starting at No. 9 R.O.W. pin of Natchez Trace Parkway, as shown on plat of Natchez Trace Parkway Project No. 3-X, recorded on page 3 of 17, of said project in Adams County Courthouse records; thence go N 1° 11' W for 595.4 feet to the point of beginning for the tract

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property consists of a 55.3-acre tract which constitutes the historic setting of the house. This area of woodland and meadow is an important component of the rural setting of the house, and is part of the original acreage of Selma Plantation.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Jack D. Elliott, Jr./Historical Archaeologist  
organization Mississippi Department of Archives and History date January 5, 1989  
street & number P. O. Box 571 telephone (601) 354-7326  
city or town Jackson state Mississippi zip code 39205

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

FEB 10 1991

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Selma Plantation House, Natchez vicinity, Adams County, Mississippi

Section number 8 Page 1

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The ethnic composition of the Natchez District was clearly dominated by Anglo-Americans and their African slaves with there being only a minority of Latins, people of French and Spanish origins. In 1785, Francisco Boulogny, the commandant of the Natchez fort, wrote to the Spanish governor in New Orleans that

the greater part of the inhabitants of this town [he is actually referring to the district in general] are natives of North America, others are English royalists, a few are French, and very rarely there is a Spaniard (Kinnaird 1946:136).

In 1797, Francis Baily (1969:150) reported that

This district has been settled principally by English and Americans: and though the country was given up to the Spaniards in 1783, the proportion of Spanish inhabitants is very small.

Despite the largely Anglo- and Afro-American population, traveler accounts suggest that the early vernacular architecture tradition was more influenced by the Creole culture of the Lower Mississippi than it was by the settlers' own traditions. A Dr. John Bedford (1919:119) visited Natchez in 1807 and noted that

most of the houses are of wood and in the French style--elevated 7 or 8 feet from the ground--above which is one story only--and piazzas or galleries all round.

Fortesque Cuming (1904:320), who visited the town in the same year as Bedford, observed

I was much struck with the similarity of Natchez to many of the smaller West India towns, particularly St. Johns Antigua, though not near so large as it. The houses all with balconies and piazzas. . .

Although these writers used different names and comparisons in describing the early Natchez architecture, it is clear that they were talking about the same phenomenon--the Creole or French vernacular architecture that evolved in the Lower Mississippi Valley during the 18th and 19th centuries (Edwards 1988). The architectural tradition was the product of the process of syncretism, by which elements of

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Selma Plantation House, Natchez vicinity, Adams County, Mississippi

Section number 8 Page 2

several traditions were merged to form a new tradition. Creole architecture has antecedents in French, West African, and Caribbean architecture (Edwards 1976-1980; for the concept of syncretism see Jordan 1985:6, 154-155). Caribbean vernacular architecture had similar antecedents and attributes to the Creole architecture of the Lower Mississippi Valley, hence Cuming's comparison of Natchez architecture to that of West Indian (Caribbean) towns (Edwards 1980).

Although the Creole architecture was later overshadowed by the large mansions of Federal, Greek Revival, and other styles, dating to 1812-1861, several examples of this early substrate of vernacular architecture survive both inside Natchez and in its rural hinterland. These include: Airlie, the House on Ellicott's Hill, Hope Farm, The Gardens, the Griffith-McComas House, Mount Locust, Saragossa, Williamsburg and the middle portion of Richmond. Many of these exemplify the process of syncretism at work in the Natchez District in that some of them incorporate Anglo-American academic and vernacular traits such as the fanlight in the House on Ellicott's Hill and an external, gable-end chimney on Mount Locust (Crocker 1973; Gleason et al. 1986).

We have thus documented a situation in which a largely Anglo- and Afro-American population adopted a vernacular architectural tradition that was alien to their cultural heritage. The adoption of this architectural tradition can perhaps be attributed in part to exposure of these settlers to the French and Spaniard minority who resided in the Natchez District and who were probably familiar with Creole architecture. It can also be attributed to exposure of the non-Latin population to Creole architecture during visits to New Orleans and its environs.

The Selma Plantation house is clearly an example of the Creole architectural tradition that was adopted by Anglo-American settlers in the Natchez District. It is a Class III Creole house, according to Edwards' terminology, in which classes are based primarily on roof form. The roof of the Class III building is "a single-pitched 'umbrella' roof that spanned not only the main rooms of the house, but the front gallery and rear cabinet-loggia spaces as well" (Edwards 1988:17). According to Edwards this house form became popular "before the beginning of Spanish sovereignty" over Louisiana, which is to say, prior to 1763.

The floorplan of the Selma Plantation house is of Edwards' M2k type which appeared in the Creole core area as early as 1750 and soon became "the most popular" plan (Edwards 1988:23-24). Mount Locust has an identical plan, except on a smaller scale. The asymmetrical pattern of fenestrations on the facade shows a Creole or Caribbean influence (Edwards 1980:310 depicts a variety of Caribbean house types, some

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Selma Plantation House, Natchez vicinity, Adams County, Mississippi

Section number 8 Page 3

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having asymmetrical arrangements while others have symmetrical arrangements). Other Natchez area houses with asymmetrical patterns are Airlie, The Gardens, Hope Farm, and the upper (original) floor of the Griffith-McComas house (Crocker 1973; Gleason et al. 1986; Miller and Miller 1985:47).

Although the central chimney located between the salle and the western chambre is typical of Creole architecture, the two external Tidewater chimneys on the eastern end of the house are more typical of Southern Anglo-American architecture (Glassie 1968:343; Jordan 1978:95; Riedl et al. 1976:33). Federal-style mantelpieces and other decorative features are also indicative of non-Creole influences. The features serve as evidence of the process of syncretism involved in the merging of the Creole architectural tradition into an Anglo-American culture.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

FEB 16 1992

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Selma Plantation House, Natchez vicinity, Adams County, Mississippi

Section number 9 Page 1

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Brandon, Gerard

1939 Family record compiled by Gerard Brandon for his dear granddaughter Mary Jane Smith. Typescript in possession of Mrs. Margaret Smith Wesley, Natchez, Mississippi. Copy in Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi.

Butler, Mann

1834 A historical sketch of Natchez. Family Magazine 6:176.

Crocker, Mary Wallace

1973 Historic architecture of Mississippi. University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, Mississippi.

Cuming, Fortesque

1904 Sketches of a tour to the western country. Early Western Travels 1748-1846, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites, vol. 4. Arthur H. Clark Co., Cleveland, Ohio.

Drake, W. M.

1953 A note on the Jersey settlers of Adams county. Journal of Mississippi History 15:274-275.

Edwards, Jay D.

1976-1980 Cultural syncretism in the Louisiana Creole cottage. Louisiana Folklore Miscellany 4:9-40.

1980 The evolution of vernacular architecture in the Western Caribbean. In Cultural Traditions and Caribbean Identity: the Question of Patrimony, edited by S. Jeffrey K. Wilkerson, pp. 291-339. Center for Latin American Studies, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

1988 Louisiana's remarkable French vernacular architecture: 1700-1900. Department of Geography and Anthropology, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Ford, Alice

1969 Audubon, by himself. Natural History Press, Garden City, New York.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

FEB 15 1993

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Selma Plantation House, Natchez vicinity, Adams County, Mississippi

Section number 9 Page 2

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Gayoso, de Lemos, Manuel

1792 Letter to Baron de Carondelet, dated January 6, 1792.  
English translation on file in the Natchez Trace Parkway  
library, Tupelo, Mississippi.

Glassie, Henry

1968 The types of the Southern mountain cabin. Appendix C in  
The Study of American Folklore: an Introduction, by Jan  
Harold Brunvand, pp. 338-370. W. W. Norton, New York.

Gleason, David King, Mary Warren Miller and Ronald W. Miller

1986 The great houses of Natchez. University Press of  
Mississippi, Jackson, Mississippi.

Holmes, Jack D. L.

1965 Gayoso: the life of a Spanish governor in the Mississippi  
valley, 1789-1799. Louisiana State University Press, Baton  
Rouge, Louisiana.

Ingraham, Joseph Holt

1835 The Southwest by a yankee. Harper and Brothers, New York.

James, D. Clayton

1968 Antebellum Natchez. Louisiana State University Press, Baton  
Rouge, Louisiana.

Jordan, Terry G.

1978 Texas log buildings: a folk architecture. University of  
Texas Press, Austin, Texas.

1985 American log buildings: an Old World heritage. University  
of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Kinnaird, Lawrence (editor)

1946 Annual report of the American Historical Association for  
the year 1945, vol. 3, pt. 2. U.S. Government Printing  
Office. Washington, D.C.

Miller, Mary W., and Ronald W. Miller

1985 Natchez: walking guide to the old town. Historic Natchez  
Foundation, Natchez, Mississippi.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

FEB 16 1988

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Selma Plantation House, Natchez vicinity, Adams County, Mississippi

Section number 9 Page 3

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Phelps, Dawson A.

1966

Colonial Natchez: a French colony and Fort Rosalie and its successors. Unpublished typescript on file in the Natchez Trace Parkway Headquarters library, Tupelo, Mississippi.

Riedl, Norbert F., Donald B. Ball and Anthony P. Cavender

1976

A survey of traditional architecture and related material folk culture patterns in the Normandy Reservoir, Coffee County, Tennessee. Department of Anthropology, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee.

Rowland, Eron O.

1925

Peter Chester: third governor of the province of West Florida under British dominion. Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society: Centenary Series 5:1-183.

Selma--Chain of Title

n.d.

Title abstract in the Office of the City Planner, City Hall, Natchez, Mississippi.

Williams, John

1988

Personal communications. The informant resides in the Selma plantation house.

Williams, Nancy (Mrs. John)

1988

Personal communications. The informant resides in the Selma plantation house.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

FEB 16 1988

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Selma Plantation House, Natchez vicinity, Adams County, Mississippi

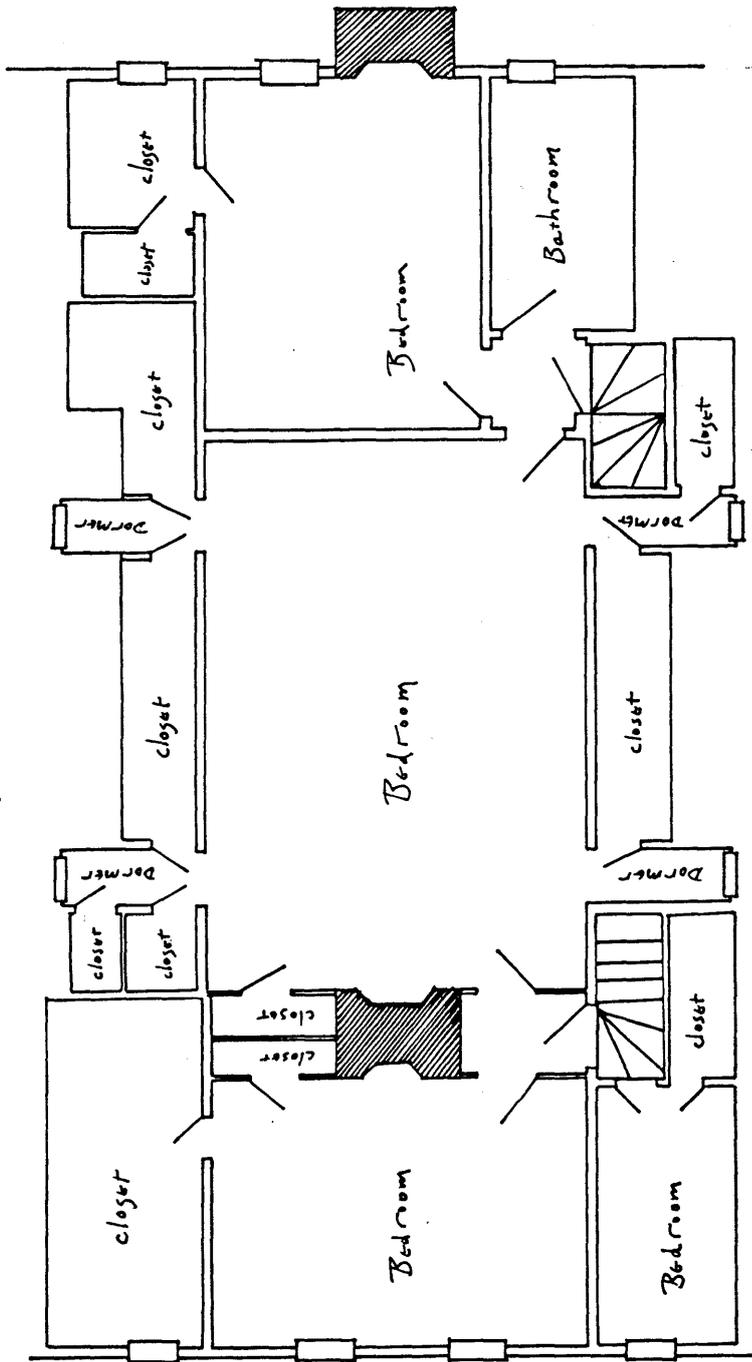
Section number 10 Page 1

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herein described and conveyed; and from said point of beginning run N 61° 23' W for 274.47 feet to an iron; thence go N 62° 15' W for 247.33 feet to an iron; thence go N 71° 51' W for 804.26 feet to an iron; thence go N 41° 32' W for 22.41 feet to an iron; thence go N 15° 47' E for 915.15 feet to the centerline of Bayou; thence run along said centerline of Bayou for the following bearings and distances: N 22° 27' E, 356.39 feet; S 69° 59' E, 394.3 feet; N 49° 43' E, 253.2 feet; S 71° 39' E, 197.72 feet; N 76° 12' E, 112.75 feet; N 5° 8' E, 196.16 feet; N 87° 51' E, 162.0 feet; S 43° 38' E, 330.85 feet; N 38° 40' E, 163.35 feet; S 79° 46' E, 161.0 feet; S 20° 39' E, 268.01 feet; S 68° 30' E, 82.3 feet; N 86° 31' E, 59.95 feet; and S 09° 04' E for 198.5 feet to an iron; thence S 54° 19' W for 572.42 feet to a point; thence S 26° 01' W for 1080.07 feet to an iron, being the point of beginning.

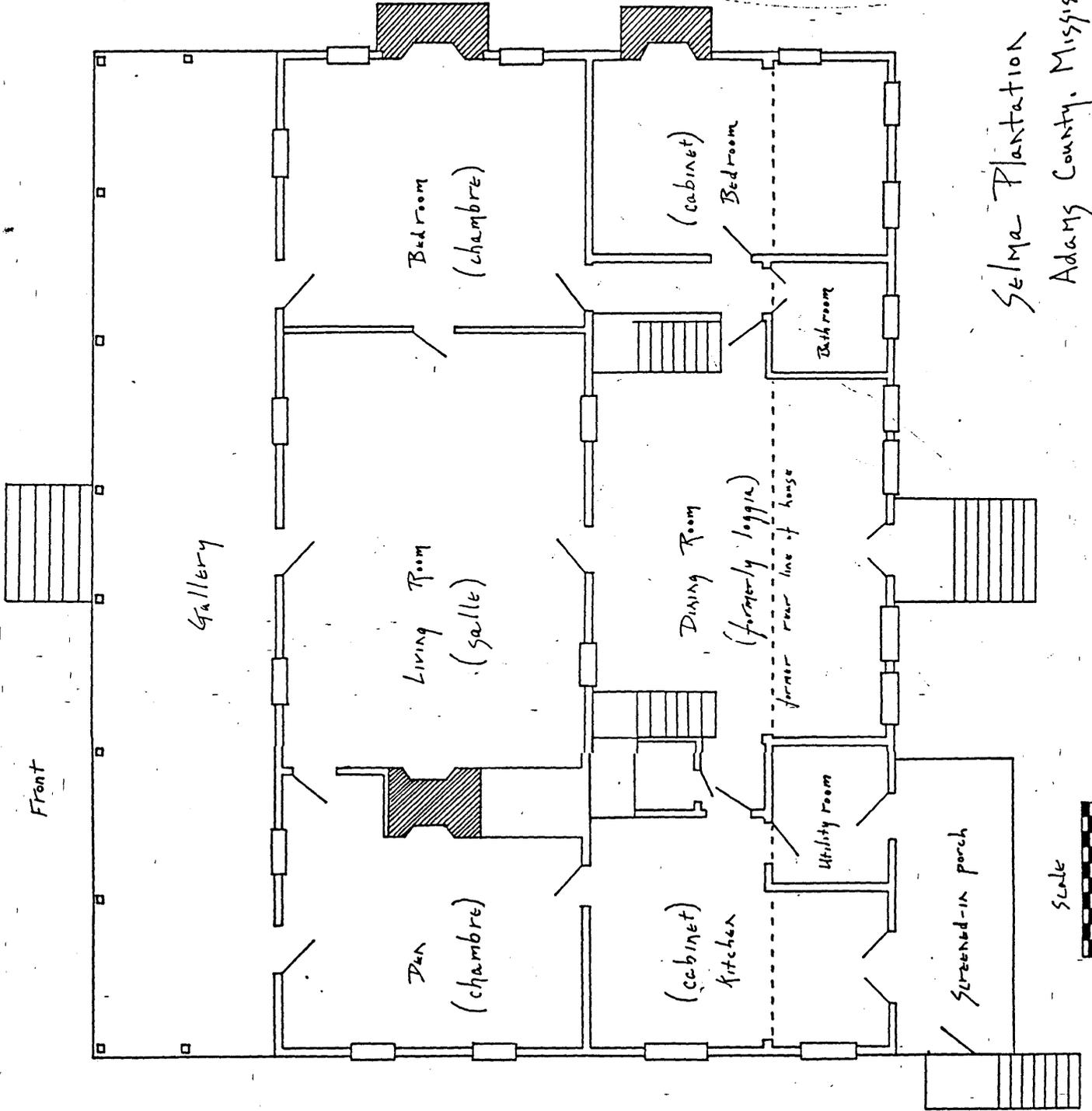


FRONT



Scale 10 feet

Selma Plantation  
 Adams County, Mississippi  
 Second Floor



Selma Plantation  
 Adams County, Mississippi  
 First Floor