

"Rosalie," Natchez, Mississippi.

Adams Co

HABS No. 17 - 1

HAES

MISS

1 - NATCH

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District No. 17

Historic American Buildings Survey  
A. Hays Town, District Officer  
Standard Life Building  
Jackson, Mississippi

HABS  
MISS.

!- NATCH

ROSALIE  
Natchez, Adams County  
Mississippi

Owner: Mrs. Rumble.

Date of Erection: 1820-23.

Architect: James Griffin.

Builder: No record.

Present Condition: Good.

Number of Stories: Two, and basement.

Materials of Construction: Brick.

Other Existing Records: See text.

Additional Data: See following pages.

R O S A L I E

Broadway Natchez Adams County Mississippi

The first American deed in connection with Rosalie tract appears in Book L of Adams County Records. In this document Gamaliel Pease and his wife, Frances, sell to Peter Little - "that tract of land situated in the city of Natchez at the old Fort, so called." This paper further says: "being the same tract of land which has been located by Josias H. McComas in pursuance of an Act of Congress of the United States, entitled an act for the relief of the legal representatives of Henry Willis, deceased." This record was signed in 1820, and proves that the site of the ancient fort, which automatically became government property following the Spanish evacuation, had been granted to Henry Willis. Following his death legal complications evidently prevented its sale for a number of years.

.The site is considered by most authorities as the scene of the bloody Indian Massacre in 1729.

.This ground, long known as the Rosalie Tract, included the site of the old French Fort, and was within the original Palisades.

.Peter B. Little was a Pennsylvanian, who came to Natchez in Spanish days, and soon amassed a fortune in the lumber business, being known as Mississippi's first lumber king. He founded the first steam saw mill in the state, and tradition says it was driven by an engine salvaged from a sunken steamboat.

In 1808 Mr. Little married his twelve year old ward, Eliza Low, who had been left to his care by her dying father. She had been orphaned by one of the yellow fever epidemics; so in order to safe-guard her interests, and prevent gossip, Mr. Little had a marriage ceremony performed, then straightway packed her up and sent the little bride to Baltimore to be educated. Here she remained twelve years, and according to tradition it was for her reception that Rosalie was planned and built.

.The real designer of Rosalie was James Griffin, of Baltimore, who married a sister of Mr. Little and settled in Natchez in 1816.

.Rosalie mansion is nearly all American, being built of brick burned on the place by slaves. The timbers, except the mahogany stair-railings, were carefully selected, sawed and seasoned at Mr. Little's mill long before the building was started.

.Rosalie mansion was finished in 1823. When first erected, the grounds of Rosalie included eleven acres and extended to, and even over, the brink of the precipice, including both sides of Silver Street.

.During the yellow fever epidemic of 1853, Mrs. Little succumbed to the disease, and tradition says Mr. Little was murdered several years later. In the settlement of the estate Rosalie was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Andrew L. Wilson, who came to America from Ireland during the siege of Derry.

.The Wilsons had no children of their own, but reared two foster children, Fanny McMurtry and Theodore Sensel, Sr. The former became Mrs. Stephen E. Rumble, and her descendants still own and occupy the old home.

When Natchez was placed under military rule, following the fall of Vicksburg, Rosalie was selected as headquarters for the Union forces. As such it was occupied almost two years by commanding officer W. G. Gresham and his staff, and was once visited by General Grant.

.From the first Mrs. Wilson was an ardent supporter of the Southern cause, and on several occasions entertained Jefferson Davis. Union officers who occupied her home soon learned to respect her honesty and bravery, and a cordial friendship sprang up between them and the Wilson household.

Compiled from data of  
Stuart Cuthbertson  
Mrs. Edith Wyatt Moore  
Mrs. Rumble

## R O S A L I E

Broadway Natchez Adams County Mississippi

Majestic "Rosalie", combining all that was good in the early Spanish precedent, and some of the best early American inspiration of Palladian study, is perhaps the finest architectural example of Early Mississippi.

.The approach elevation, with its large columns supporting the beautiful cornice and pediment, is an inspiration of grandeur and elegance. The pediment, graceful in its simplicity, is made of flush jointed tongue and grooved cypress ceiling, so thoroughly seasoned, that after all its years there is no visible jointing except upon closest inspection. In the center of the pediment is a large elliptical window with a small solid wood elliptical center piece from which springs a series of slender spider web design wood muntins and glass. The window is handed by a five inch moulded architrave.

.The cornice is a slender moulded wood projection with thin flat wood mutules. The frieze and architrave are narrow. Square brick pedestals about seven feet high up to the first floor line support the columns. The columns are stucco-covered brick. The brick of the shaft are ground to a radius and the brick of the base and cap are moulded. In some places the stucco has fallen and the brick are exposed. The steps to the porch are now cement, but retain the same graceful sweep as the original cypress steps. On each side of the steps is a wrought-iron hand railing. The entrance on first floor and porch doorway of the second are identical; they are large double paneled doors, with side-lights and elliptical fan-lights.

Their detail is very simple. The brick wall of these porches is plastered. The second porch ceiling is coved, and has a moulded circular centerpiece. The lower ceiling is also plaster, but is flush with the wood fascure (fascia?) being separated by a wood bead. The porch bannisters are round tapering wood spindles, with an oval hand-rail.

.The brick are soft red clay brick, and produce a harmonious effect with the white wood-work, the dark green blinds and the white and parchment color of the stucco.

.The wood shingle roof (originally slate) is a four corner hip roof covering the house proper up to and including the rear porch. This roof is topped with a square deck surrounded by flat wood bannisters.

.The most interesting elevation is the rear with its six large columns extending clear across. Here the grade is higher than the front, and the brick walks of the slaves quarters and kitchen run flush into the herringbone brick floor of the porch. There are four steps from this level to the doorway; these steps are solid cypress logs carved into treads and risers with moulded nosing and sweeping curved sides. The doorway here and above are identical with the front entrance. On the left of the porch is an exposed stairway. The second story porch has bannisters like the front porches. The rear walls are plastered. In the roof above the central bay is a single dormer lighting the attic.

.The slave quarters are a small two story building, slightly out of scale with the house, but adding considerable interest to the whole.

.The interior is a simple plan with the typical wide "through" hall on both floors, and the side stair hall, separated only by a graceful wood framed elliptical arch. The stair itself, delicate, refined and well executed, is similar to most stairways of the period. On either side of the hall are symmetrical rooms. The ones on the left are two parlors separated by sliding doors.

On the right front is the library and on the rear, separated by the stair hall, is the dining room. The rooms of the second floor are bedrooms, and line with the partitions below. The hall partitions and partitions bounding the stair hall are solid brick. All of the first story ceilings have plaster cornices, and ornamental plaster centerpieces.

.The original gold-leafed valances, the large mirrors with their ornate gold-leafed frames extending from mantel shelf to cornice, are as much a part of the house as the marble mantels themselves.

.The original furniture and books are still in the home, very much as they were in its early days.

.The house is finely constructed, with heavy joists and timbers, and very thick brick walls. The attic joists run diagonally across the attic floor. The roof is braced by heavy timber trusses, mortised and tenoned and pegged with wood. The fine condition of the building today is a tribute to its method of construction.

.Solemn, and beautiful, "Rosalie" stands today silently and truthfully recording the culture and refinement of a past century.