

Overview

The Historic Preservation Division of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (HPD of MDAH) is responsible for the development and implementation of a Statewide Preservation Plan under requirements by the National Park Services. The Plan addresses the preservation of Mississippi's historic and cultural resources, including architectural, historic and prehistoric properties. The Plan identifies the trends affecting and impacting historic and cultural resources so that informed decisions can be made about the management and care of these properties. Individuals, private businesses, community groups, local governments, and state and federal agencies can and should be active participants in the implementation of this Plan. Unfortunately, Mississippi does not have a statewide, coordinated governmental planning program to hold state agencies and local governments accountable for implementation of this Plan. However, the development of private-public partnerships among these groups to meet the preservation goals of the state of Mississippi will result in implementation of the Plan.

Planning Process

The Comprehensive Plan for 2005 through 2010 is an update and revision of the 1996 and 2000 Comprehensive Plans, building upon the earlier framework with modifications and some new goals and objectives derived from input from the public and the experience of the users. During the spring of 2004, the staff of HPD of MDAH conducted a well-advertised public meeting at the community center in downtown Hattiesburg, Mississippi. The meeting was well attended by a broad spectrum of Mississippi's community leaders – elected officials, economic development coordinators, merchants, businessmen, educators, housing authorities, tourism promoters, and representatives of non-profit organizations, in addition to preservationists. A questionnaire was sent to over 100 preservation partners throughout the state and public notices were placed in newspapers. Comments that were received from these constituents were incorporated into the Plan.

The Historic Resources of Mississippi

Antebellum houses and Civil War battlefields and related sites seem to be the places that most vividly represent the history of Mississippi to many residents as well as non-residents of the state. Indeed, many fine examples of the architecture from the antebellum period have been preserved, many of them beautifully restored, and they are often perceived as the epitome of Mississippi architecture.

However, the architectural legacy of the state is far richer than this, encompassing a wide array of significant buildings ranging from pioneer log houses to Art Deco skyscrapers. There are notable examples of virtually all major American architectural styles of the 19th and 20th centuries, including Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Second Empire, Romanesque Revival, Stick Style, Shingle Style, Victorian Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Neoclassical Revival, Beaux Arts, Italian Renaissance Revival, Craftsman Style, Mission Style, Spanish Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Art Deco, and more, as well as a fascinating and diverse range of traditional vernacular architecture. Many of these buildings have significance individually, but it is when they are grouped into the historic districts of neighborhoods, downtowns, and rural communities they most evocatively tell the story of Mississippi's people.

The prehistoric and early historic era Native American sites are also defining characteristics of the state's past, including a remarkable collection of ceremonial, burial, and midden mounds, as well as village and campsites (some of which are over 11,000 years old), fish weirs, and other diverse resources.

In addition, historic archaeological sites in Mississippi are important for their association with early historic inhabitants of Mississippi, particularly during the French, Spanish and English colonial periods, the Territorial period, and the early years of statehood. Historic archaeological sites provide important information about such subjects as early trading posts and Indian agencies, life in riverboat towns, plantation life, and tenant farming. Buildings, settlements, transportation routes, and cultural landscapes all have associated archeological components also. Many sites in Mississippi are also multi-component and can range from Mississippian to early historic sites, such as French settlements on what once were previously Natchezan settlements. Historical archaeological sites such as these are invaluable to the heritage of Mississippi because they provide such a wealth of information that is not readily available from other sources.

Transportation development in the state can also be seen through the historic fabric. Ships and boats, shipwrecks and other underwater resources along the Gulf Coast and in Mississippi rivers are symbols of a history involved with early exploration and marine industry. The historic roads that first connected pioneers with the larger world are maintained and preserved. The railroad was an important means of transportation and the symbol of connectivity within the state and the related buildings and equipment still allude to that period of the state's history. And most recently, properties associated with space exploration at the Stennis Space Center are the physical evidence of the state's impact on future transportation and exploration.

Because Mississippi has historically been an agrarian state, the historic landscape uniquely expresses the historic identity of the state. The natural

rural landscapes and landscape features structured the history of the state: development of towns, of industry and agricultural pursuits, of modes of transportation. The man-made landscapes that speak of a people's aspirations, desires, and artistic expression can be seen in the parks, gardens, cemeteries, and college campuses as well as public and private statuary and art.

The Documentation and Accessibility of information on historic resources in Mississippi

The Historic Preservation Division of MDAH contains the only comprehensive statewide body of information about the state's historic resources. Efforts over the past several years to produce archaeological context documents have resulted in a useful body of broad context information about Mississippi's prehistory. The Paleoindian and Early Archaic contexts have been published by the University of Alabama as a part of a larger work on the early archaeology of the Southeast, and the remaining contexts are being prepared for publication by MDAH. Survey work has provided documentation about more than 21,000 archaeological sites throughout the state, and archaeological survey work is ongoing, particularly directed toward locations where there is known or anticipated development activity.

Historical research and survey work has documented over 40,000 buildings and other historic properties throughout the state. Detailed architectural and historical surveys have been conducted in many of the communities that have the highest concentrations of significant historic properties, but comprehensive survey-based information is still needed for large areas of the state. Many scattered, individual historic properties remain unrecorded in much of Mississippi, though ongoing architectural and historical survey work continues on a regular basis.

Architectural and historical contexts are not as complete as for prehistoric resources. Historical overview contexts have been prepared for the colonial period and partially for the territorial period. Additionally, topical context studies have been written for several of the more important architectural styles and building types, and local context reports have been prepared for numerous local communities. A continually updated system of topical reference files and computerized topical lists of historic resources has proven to be invaluable in recent years, and has been particularly useful in providing a basis for assessing National Register eligibility. Much more context information needs to be compiled, however. The most critical need is for guidelines for assessing National Register eligibility for certain types of resources, such as schools, rural stores, and industrial facilities. Beyond this, there is a need for topical studies on a wide variety of subjects, and overviews are needed for the antebellum period, the Civil War, the post-bellum years of the nineteenth century, and the twentieth century up to and

including World War II. Additionally, studies should be done to provide contexts for identifying significant properties from the recent past, including those associated with the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s.

Of the historic and prehistoric resources identified and recorded in Mississippi, many have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Mississippi currently has approximately 1,270 listings in the National Register. These range from small, individual sites and buildings to districts encompassing more than 700 buildings.

There are other organizations and agencies that maintain information about historic properties in Mississippi, but their focus is more specific than that of the Historic Preservation Division. Certified Local Governments maintain information on historic properties within their own jurisdictions. In some communities, local historical societies or preservation organizations have reference files about historic sites, and in many communities public libraries maintain information of this type. The units of the National Park system in Mississippi all have a strong cultural resources emphasis. Other federal agencies, such as the Forest Service, have historic preservation programs directed toward the management of culturally-significant properties within their ownership or jurisdiction. Additionally, many of the state's colleges and universities have substantial collections of historical and archaeological reference materials.

Despite these sources of information, there is still a need for more widespread knowledge about and appreciation of historic resources among the general population of the state. In particular, there is a need for more books and other published information pertaining to the state's cultural resources.

There have been several major works published in recent years addressing the state's prehistoric and Native American legacy, as well as numerous specialized archaeological studies. These works include ***Choctaw Genesis*** by Patricia Galloway (1995), ***Excavations at the Lake George Site*** by Stephen Williams and Jeffrey P. Brain (1983), ***Tunica Archaeology*** by Jeffrey P. Brain (1988), ***The Wilsford Site (22-Co-516), Coahoma County, Mississippi: A Late Mississippian Period Settlement in the Northern Yazoo Basin of Mississippi*** by John Connaway (1984), and a booklet entitled ***The Natchez Indians*** by Jim Barnett (1998). The journal ***Mississippi Archaeology*** is an excellent source of information about the prehistoric and historic archaeology of the state. ***Indian Mounds of Mississippi: A Visitor's Guide*** (1999) was produced by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History through a grant from the Southeast Archaeological Center of the National Park Service. Intended to reach a broad popular readership, this free brochure features the state's twelve publicly-owned, visitor-accessible Native American mound sites. It is also available on-line as part of the National Park Service's "National Register Travel Itineraries." ***Mississippi Projectile Point Guide*** by Samuel O. McGahey

(2000) is a comprehensive view of Native American projectile points found throughout the state. The forthcoming book **Mississippi Archaeology Q & A**, by Evan Peacock, to be published by University Press of Mississippi in 2005, is an overview of archaeology in Mississippi.

Relatively few books and articles have been published that address the historic architecture of the state. An overview entitled **Historic Architecture in Mississippi**, written by Mary Wallace Crocker with research assistance from MDAH, was published in 1973. Other works addressing the architectural heritage of the state as a whole have included Mills Lane's **Architecture of the Old South: Mississippi and Alabama** (1989) and **Lost Mansions of Mississippi** (1996) and **Lost Landmarks of Mississippi** (2002) by Mary Carol Miller. **Written in the Bricks** (1999) and **Great Houses of Mississippi** (2004) by Mary Carol Miller and Mary Rose Carter provide an overview of the history and historic resources of fifteen Mississippi communities and thirty-five homes, respectively. There are several important works addressing specific individual communities. The rich architectural legacy of Natchez is addressed in a variety of books and articles, including **The Great Houses of Natchez** (1986) **Classic Natchez** (1996). Several other communities have published studies, including **The Buildings of Biloxi: An Architectural Survey** (1976, revised and reissued in 2000) and **Architecture in Claiborne County, Mississippi: A Selective Guide** (MDAH, 1974) and **Reflections: History and Homes of Columbus** (2001). Additionally, books have been published about several of the state's most important individual buildings, including the Old Capitol in Jackson, the Governor's Mansion in Jackson, "Beauvoir" in Biloxi, and "Longwood" in Natchez. A history of the present State Capitol (generally known as the "New Capitol" although constructed in 1901-03) is currently being prepared for publication by MDAH. Other historical accounts have generally focused on social and political history and have given little attention to the physical manifestations and symbols of the state's history and culture. Local communities have begun to privately publish their own history books with photographs from their past. These have allowed the general public to remember the historic resources lost in the community and remind them of the importance of these physical symbols of their past.

Many properties associated with Mississippi's rich African American heritage are included in **African American Historic Places**, published by the National Park Service in 1994. Some local communities have guides to African American sites. The most extensive published guide to African American historic sites in a single community in the state is **African American Associated Historic and Architectural Resources of Vicksburg, Mississippi**, published in 1993 by the City of Vicksburg and the Vicksburg Foundation for Historic Preservation, assisted by a federal Historic Preservation Fund grant through the Certified Local Government program. An extensive driving tour of Civil Rights sites in Jackson was published in 2002 by the City of Jackson with a Certified Local Government grant from MDAH and received local and national publicity of the publication. Other cities also

have developed brochures and walking tours to promote awareness of their African American resources. The state's Division of Tourism Development has recently published an African American Tour Guide, which contains statewide touring itineraries.

A Guide to the Campaign and Siege of Vicksburg and ***A Guide to the Corinth Campaigns of 1862*** are concise but scholarly guides to the major engagements that constituted these two campaigns. MDAH has also prepared entries for Mississippi sites included in ***The Civil War Trust's Official Guide to the Civil War Discovery Trail***, a Frommers Guide that features descriptions and visitor information about Civil War sites throughout the country. Mississippi Civil War sites are also included in ***The Civil War Battlefield Guide*** published by The Conservation Fund.

Appreciation for historic resources appears to be growing in the state. Newspapers often carry stories about historic buildings and archaeological activities, and the rise of heritage tourism has prompted a wider recognition of the tourist appeal of historic properties. Although the state has had few building projects in the past decade, legislators have seen grant programs for historic properties as positive public works projects to spur economic development in communities of all sizes throughout the state. In some communities, most notably Columbus, Natchez, and Vicksburg, heritage tourism is a very important aspect of the local economy. Other communities have begun to form relationships to promote their historic sites cooperatively. Interest in developing National Heritage Areas in the Mississippi Delta and the Mississippi Hills has led to better public acceptance of historic preservation as a tool of economic development.

Progress in Preservation

Through a myriad of partnerships at the federal, state, and local levels, through the efforts of private individuals, private non-profit organizations, and public agencies and representatives, much is being accomplished in historic preservation in Mississippi. The Historic Preservation Division of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History has continued to manage its mandated federal and state historic preservation programs with exceptional skill, effectiveness, and productivity, despite minimal funding and personnel shortages. Numerous historically significant properties in public ownership have been preserved, and many of them admirably restored or rehabilitated, through the Mississippi Landmark program, under the provisions of the Mississippi Antiquities Law, nationally one of the strongest and most effective state-level historic preservation laws. The Community Heritage Preservation Grant Program and the Mississippi Landmark Grant program have assisted communities in restoring and preserving buildings and sites that define the state's past and shape its future.

The number of communities with active local historic preservation programs has continued to expand, with a total of forty active Certified Local Governments (by late 2004) and several other communities with local governmental historic preservation programs in place.

The number of Investment Tax Credit Projects that adhere to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation has grown substantially. Although most of these projects are of a smaller scale (under \$500,000), their impact on downtown and neighborhood revitalization has been tremendous. Because of the increased interest in this program, the number of properties listed to the National Register of Historic Places in Mississippi has grown to 1270 (by the end of 2004).

The Mississippi Heritage Trust, the statewide private, non-profit preservation organization, has continued to promote the cause of preservation throughout the state, cosponsoring the annual statewide Historic Preservation Conference, recognizing significant achievement through the annual historic preservation awards, identifying threatened resources through the biennial "10 Most Endangered Historic Places" listings, and serving as a voice and advocate for historic preservation all across the state. Local private, non-profit groups have also taken an active role in the preservation of their communities.

The Mississippi Main Street Program, administered by the Mississippi Main Street Association, a private, non-profit organization, is one of the strongest partners among the state's preservation leaders and continues to influence the revitalization of the downtown business districts of towns all across the state. The program has for years been recognized as one of the nation's strongest, leveraging more than one *billion* dollars in private investments in historic downtowns. Much of this investment has utilized the historic preservation investment tax credits.

The Mississippi Blues Commission was created by executive order of the governor in 2003 and was codified into law by the legislature in 2004. The Commission's mission is to study and promote the sites and culture associated with authentic Mississippi Blues music and to create a "Mississippi Blues Trail." The director of MDAH is a statutory member of the Commission.

Through funding provided by the Mississippi Legislature and the Mississippi Department of Transportation, MDAH is working to implement the "Mississippi Civil War Trails" program. This \$6.2 million Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) project will include the restoration of the Coker House at Champion Hill, the Shaifer House at Port Gibson, and the 1917 Corinth Depot. All three sites will be used as interpretive centers for the respective Civil War battlefield areas. The Civil War Trails project will also include hiking and biking trails at Raymond, Brice's Crossroads, and Corinth, and interpretive wayside exhibits at numerous sites across Mississippi.

The National Park Service opened the Interpretive Center at Shiloh National Military Park in Corinth in the summer of 2004, bringing the number of NPS units in Mississippi to seven. In the fall of 2004 the six counties along and nearest to the Mississippi Gulf Coast were named as Mississippi's first National Heritage Area.

Threats and Challenges Facing Historic Resources

Despite these successes, there are still many challenges confronting historic preservation in Mississippi. The following are among the most serious threats to historic resources:

- Neglect and decay of historic properties, especially in urban and other economically-disadvantaged areas.
- Depopulation of many rural areas, leading to widespread abandonment of houses, retail buildings, churches, and agricultural buildings in these areas.
- Development pressures from dockside gambling in historic waterfronts and adjacent areas.
- Coastal erosion and subsidence of marsh shell middens, affecting coastal archaeological sites.
- Urban sprawl on the fringes of larger population centers.
- Leveling of thousands of acres of farmland for irrigation, resulting in the widespread destruction of archaeological sites.
- Consolidation of public schools and replacement of school facilities throughout the state, resulting in the abandonment or destruction of many older school buildings.
- Railroad abandonment, causing the loss, decline, or abandonment of transportation, industrial, and commercial properties in small rural communities, and diminishing the opportunities for economic revitalization in those areas.
- Erosion and improper maintenance along historic roads in the loess bluff areas.

Goals and Objectives

Several issues have continued to be of paramount concern in formulating goals and objectives for historic preservation for the next several years. The goals and objectives stated in the Plan have been developed to address these concerns, as well as other concerns expressed by members of the public and the historic preservation community.

The following goals and objectives are intended to guide historic preservation activities in the State of Mississippi during the years from 2005 to 2010 and to provide general direction for organizations and agencies. Specific tasks, projects and assignments will be detailed in work plans for those organizations and agencies, which will be prepared in order to implement this Comprehensive Plan.

1. Increase public awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of historic resources and of the various programs that can be used to assist historic preservation activities.

- Increase the visibility of the Historic Preservation Division of MDAH through more staff site visits, presentations and lectures, and participation in meetings and activities throughout the state.
- Disseminate information describing the funding sources of preservation organizations, as well as other agency programs that can support preservation efforts.
- Produce a newsletter to educate the public about Mississippi's cultural resources, technical preservation information, and communication about historic preservation programs and activities.
- Produce publications that address technical assistance issues related to historic preservation.
- Increase preparation and distribution of press releases and articles about a wide variety of preservation subjects.
- Utilize internet web sites, electronic newsletters, list-serves, digital imagery, GIS, and other types of electronic technology to enhance information management and communications capabilities.
- Organize educational events and activities to inform the public of preservation procedures, programs, and partners.

2. Increase identification and registration activities for archaeological sites and for architecturally and historically significant properties.

- Undertake increased survey work to identify and record historical and archaeological resources particularly where substantial development pressures or other threats exist.
- Provide funding and project supervision for survey and registration projects in communities throughout the state in cooperation with local governments and non-profit organizations.
- Promote the designation of National Historic Landmarks in Mississippi, with the goal of one Mississippi NHL designated each year.
- Prepare new historic context reports and update existing contexts to provide a sound basis for the evaluation of the eligibility of related properties for the National Register of Historic Places.

3. Continue to develop and maintain productive partnerships among various organizations and agencies to promote and accomplish historic preservation goals.

- Encourage the growth and strength of statewide and local, non-profit organizations as effective, independent advocates of preservation.
- Encourage participation of current and additional communities in the Certified Local Government program.
- Provide instructional information to local, state, and federal governmental groups and their representatives to increase their

capacity to administer their respective historic preservation responsibilities.

- Develop and maintain working relationships between Mississippi organizations and agencies and a variety of national and conservation organizations whose programs impact preservation efforts.
- Develop and maintain closer and more productive working relationships among preservation-related organizations, agencies, and institutions within Mississippi.
- Identify and document shipwrecks and other underwater archaeological resources through cooperative efforts.

4. Strengthen preservation legislation and promote effective historic preservation programs at all levels of government.

- Continue to designate historically, architecturally, and archaeologically significant publicly-owned properties as Mississippi Landmarks.
- Develop Mississippi Landmark eligibility criteria for various property types to ensure consistent assessment.
- Conduct reconnaissance surveys for all of those state-owned properties that have not been surveyed so that significant properties can be proposed for Mississippi Landmark designation.
- Promote the donation of preservation easements and encourage the designation of private properties as Mississippi Landmarks.
- Strengthen the relationship between MDAH and the Attorney General's office to provide effective enforcement of the Antiquities Law on all publicly-owned lands.
- Provide instructional information to local, state, and federal governmental groups and their representatives to increase their capacity to administer their respective historic preservation responsibilities.
- Administer grants programs related to the preservation of publicly owned properties.
- Compile and distribute a layman's guide to the various laws that protect historic properties.
- Ensure that there are appropriate laws and regulations to govern historic preservation at all levels of government.
- Acquire adequate funding, staff, facilities, and other resources to allow HPD of MDAH to manage the state public preservation programs; in addition, funding should allow for the management of federally mandated programs in a manner that is productive, consistent with federal requirements and accessible to the public.
- Establish and operate a field office of the HPD of MDAH in South Mississippi.
- Encourage communities to include a Historic Preservation component in their comprehensive plans.
- Urge agencies and organizations to implement and follow this Comprehensive Plan, and offer comments and recommendations for future updates of the Plan.

5. Accomplish the sustainable rehabilitation of historic buildings, with an emphasis on the role of historic preservation in accomplishing community economic redevelopment.

- Promote and achieve widespread participation in the Federal Investment Tax Credit program and promote the establishment of a state tax incentive program.
- Establish and administer effective and productive state grant programs.
- Compile and disseminate information about sources of funds that can be used for historic preservation projects.
- Provide information and assistance to support repair, rehabilitation, restoration, and conservation of historic buildings.
- Support, encourage, and accomplish the productive reuse of unused and underutilized historic buildings, in ways that are respectful of their character.
- Encourage and facilitate the donation of façade, scenic, and development easements to provide financial incentives for the preservation of significant privately-owned properties.
- Promote the development educational programs, including training in preservation-related building crafts and trades.
- Achieve a greater inter-relatedness between historic preservation, community revitalization, and tourism development and promotion activities.
- Promote the development of driving tours, walking tours, informational brochures, and other methods of increasing public awareness of historic resources in Mississippi communities.
- Promote the installation of interpretive signage for historic properties by private owners, historical organizations, and local governments.
- Continue and enhance the placement of state historical markers and the repair and replacement of damaged or lost markers while seeking matching state funding for historical markers.
- Promote a broader awareness of and preservation of significant properties associated with historical themes and topics that are often underrepresented in historic preservation activities, such as the fine arts, the performing arts, sports and recreation, industry, and medicine.
- Increase accessibility to and interpretation of historic places by the physically impaired.
- Broaden participation in and awareness of historic preservation by racial and ethnic minorities, including those of less numerous and less recognized ethnicities.
- Continue to develop educational outreach programs for children.

6. Accomplish the long-term preservation of significant archaeological sites, historic sites, and historic landscapes.

- Continue and enhance efforts to protect and preserve Civil War battlefields.

- Encourage and facilitate the donation of preservation, scenic, and conservation easements as a means of providing a financial incentive for the preservation of significant privately-owned properties.

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