

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received **JUL 6** 1983

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic A. J. Lewis House

and/or common same as above

2. Location

street & number South Magnolia ^{and} Street at Lewis Streets, N/A not for publication

city, town Edwards N/A vicinity of

state Mississippi code 28 county Hinds code 49

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

4. Owner of Property

name Richard P. McGinnis

street & number Route 2, Box 530

city, town Edwards N/A vicinity of state Mississippi

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Chancery Clerk
Hinds County Courthouse

street & number Courthouse Square

city, town Raymond state Mississippi

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Statewide Survey of Historic Sites has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1983 federal state county local

depository for survey records Mississippi Department of Archives and History

city, town Jackson state Mississippi

7. Description

Condition
 excellent deteriorated
 good ruins
 fair unexposed

Check one
 unaltered
 altered

Check one
 original site
 moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The A. J. Lewis House is a large, two-story residence in the center of Edwards. Situated on a corner, the house faces South Magnolia Street on the west with Lewis Street on its south side. One first notices the two levels of spacious verandas on the street sides, their porch posts connected by railings and balusters below, arcades above. The last arch on the east end of each veranda is closed off to make a utility room. At the rear a covered, enclosed passageway connects the main house to a back apartment. Around the house there are two groups of bay windows rising two stories, and a third group on the east side is on the first story only. The roof is asphalt-shingled, excepting the porch roof--it slants at 45 degrees; windowed gables peer in all directions. The roof comes to a truncated peak at the center, suggesting it may have at one time held a widow's walk.

There are two doors at the front, one above the other, opening onto the veranda; there are two doors to the rear, one leading directly to the back apartment and the other to the second floor via a long exterior staircase. There is also a door on each level connecting the veranda and the utility rooms. Windows are all standard double hung; those which face south or west have sixteen to twenty-one stained-glass "lights" of various colors mounted in the upper sashes. Those windows which face the veranda extend to the floor, permitting direct access to the porches.

The house proper has four chimneys; the three on inner walls have four flues each connected to fireplaces on each side of each wall on each floor. The fourth chimney, while enclosed, is on an outer wall and is connected to two fireplaces, one on each floor. Three of the chimneys rise six to eight feet above the roof surface, but the fourth has been capped near the roof level. A fifth, single flue chimney rises from the back apartment, though not connected to any visible fireplace. The foundation is brick and mortar, ranging from about two feet high in the northwest corner to about four feet on the southeast.

The house is constructed like a giant cooling machine (or an overgrown dogtrot); ten-foot-wide halls run down the center of the house from east to west, with three approximately eighteen-foot-square rooms coming off the hall on each side of each floor. Halfway down the first floor hall a large newel post guards the carved-oak staircase, and elaborate fretwork flanks it on the ceiling. Looking up the stairs, light streams in through the stained glass in the landing door to the back porch. Walls and ceilings are of smooth plaster. Ceilings are twelve feet high on the first floor and eleven feet on the second.

The three parlors and hallway downstairs are especially notable. All the parlors have large, mirrored mantels of fruitwood; that in the front parlor has an especially beautiful set of facing tiles. Hallway and front parlor woodwork are of oak. These rooms are interconnected by three pairs of carved pocket doors which, when rolled into the wall, leave openings about ten feet square. The other rooms on this floor have ornate mantels. The dining room is wainscoted to about three feet high all around. The kitchen is located on the enclosed first floor back porch.

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 checked="" 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 Ca. 1895 **Builder/Architect** Alonzo James Lewis, builder

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The A. J. Lewis House is significant for two reasons: 1) its quality of construction, design and craftsmanship are notable, not just in this small town, but in the area--it is a fine example of the exuberant Queen Anne style; 2) its builder was, for a time, the wealthiest person in the county, a rags-to-riches merchant and landowner.

Edwards was settled in the middle 1830s. By the turn-of-the-century, it was a flourishing community, its economy centered around the agriculture of the area. Alonzo James Lewis was one of the most important figures in the commercial development of Edwards and Hinds County.

Mr. Lewis grew up in Hinds County, and in 1869, after serving in the Confederate army, started a business in partnership with a Mr. Harris, whom he later bought out. Mr. Lewis was a dry goods outfitter, owned several warehouses for cotton and livestock and operated a cotton gin and cottonseed oil mill with another partner, Mr. Barber. He became the largest landowner in Hinds County and its only millionaire. A trustee of the Edwards (white) school, he served on the boards of two banks in Vicksburg and acted as unofficial banker in Edwards before the Bank of Edwards was founded, making loans, etc. His business decisions influenced the development of the area for years to come. He was clearly recognized as an important man; the Vicksburg Evening Post found it fit to report his acquisition of a Cadillac for his son in 1913. At his death in 1918 he was widely mourned by both blacks and whites.

This house was built between 1892 and 1895, more likely nearer the latter date. Mr. Lewis built his house with care. From its location at the highest point overlooking the town square he could look over his businesses and be accessible to the public. At the same time the siting of the house on the highest point overlooking the town square next to both the railroad station and the city hall expressed in no uncertain terms his relationship to the town. The house is not only unique in Edwards; we have not seen any other Mississippi town, certainly not in Hinds County, so dominated by just one house.

While we have no record of the architect or craftsmen, its design and execution are exemplary. The architect was building the largest house in town at its most prominent location for its most important citizen. His spacious verandas would not fit in a cramped urban setting; this is a country version of an urban mansion. Mr. Lewis is said to have personally selected the wood for the house, and it is reflected in the substantial beams and superior construction methods throughout.

One of the most notable events in the history of the house was its role in the Great Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1897, in which one third of the town's population perished. The Sisters of Mercy came from Vicksburg to heal the sick. Mr. Lewis volunteered his home to house them; he lost his daughter, Minnie, to the disease. He is reported to have outfitted their chapel in gratitude.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Battle, Louise. Interview, August, 1982.

Beville, Alonzo Newel, grandson of A. J. Lewis. Interview, October, 1982.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Edwards, Miss.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	5	7	2	5	5	5	0	3	5	7	9	3	6	0
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 The old homestead house and lot, being Square 7 South of railroad as per official map of Town of Edwards, bounded on the north by the A&V RR, on the east by the C. W. Barber lot, on the west by Magnolia Street, on the south by Lewis Street, less alley along east lot line. Being a part of SW1/4 of SW 1/4 of Section 27, T6N, R4W.

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

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard P. McGinnis, Owner

organization N/A

date March 12, 1983

street & number Route 2, Box 530

telephone (601) 852-4848

city or town Edwards

state Mississippi

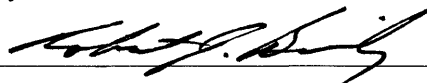
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

date June 27, 1983

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date

8/4/83


Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
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A. J. Lewis House, Hinds County, Mississippi
Continuation sheet

Item number 7, 8, 9

Page 1

7 - DESCRIPTION

The back apartment was originally a cookhouse, connected by a covered, open passageway to the main house. Two small bedrooms, a bathroom, and a pantry have been added to it.

There were at one time other outbuildings whose disappearance substantially predates 1944. The builder's grandson recalls a carriage house and a carbide house on the property (along with a metal stag and six concrete rabbits on the front lawn which he remembers vividly). The girl who delivered the milk in 1914 recalls a maid's house behind the cookhouse which she believes was moved to a neighbor's backyard.

8 - SIGNIFICANCE

To summarize, the house is significant because of its quality and what its quality represented. The house represents A. J. Lewis, the self-made American ideal, a Southern agricultural equivalent to Andrew Carnegie or J. D. Rockefeller. A biographer, ca. 1900, commenting on Mr. Lewis' \$300,000 fortune, states, "As he was not the owner of five dollars at the close of the war, this is an excellent illustration of what can be accomplished when one is determined to make the most of the talents and opportunities given him. In the acquirement of his handsome fortune, Mr. Lewis is conscious of never having wronged a soul, and for this reason he thoroughly enjoys his wealth and the good that can be accomplished with it."

9 - MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Mississippi. 2 vols. Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1891, 1:1126.

Gibbens, Jere, wife of A. J. Lewis' grandson. Interviews, July - August, 1982.

Hinds County, Mississippi. Board of Supervisors. Minutes of the August 1895 Meeting.

Hinds County, Mississippi. Land Rolls, 1892, 1895.

Mary Frances, Sister (Sisters of Mercy). Interview, October, 1982.

Pennybaker, Christine and Pennybaker, Carey, former owners of the A. J. Lewis House. Interviews, October, 1980 - June, 1982.

Vicksburg (Miss.) Evening Post. August - October, 1897.