

**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



1. Name

historic Denby House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 558 Conti Street N/A not for publication

city, town Mobile N/A vicinity of congressional district 01

state Alabama code 01 county Mobile code 097

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Edward P. Turner

street & number 558 Conti Street

city, town Mobile N/A vicinity of state Alabama

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Probate Division, Mobile County Court House

street & number 109 Government Street

city, town Mobile state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Nineteenth Century Mobile Archi-
title ecture: An Inventory of has this property been determined eligible? yes no
Existing Buildings

date 1974 federal state county local

depository for survey records Mobile City Planning Commission

city, town Mobile state Alabama

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Denby House is located on the northeast corner of Conti and Warren Streets. The building is raised on a low curbed terrace with a narrow lawn and some foundation plantings. The main section of the house is a rectangle with the long axis running parallel to Conti. The original U shaped rear wing has been altered by a concrete block construction.

The brick building, of one story elevation, has a low hip roof with the slightly overhanging cornice supported by small curved brackets set close together. Of the original 3 bay frame porch only the middle bay is still intact. The two supporting square columns have unusual brackets formed by four radiating brackets similar to those found in the Eastlake style. A central staircase with brick risers and concrete treads is framed by concrete capped cheeks. The original stairs were placed at both ends of the porch with a balustrade extending across the front in an unbroken line. None of the original balustrade remains although the current balustrade is copied after the original. The single leaf entrance door has two rectangular panels with curved heads and notched lower segments and two smaller notched panels below. Plain framing surrounds the door with scroll brackets supporting the architrave. A transom and sidelights completes the enclosure.

The building was in disrepair when it was rescued by the law firm of Edward P. Turner and adapted for use as offices. The interior detailing has been retained by the new owners. Window and door frames are decorated with only a simple outer moulding. The ceilings are of narrow beaded board and a chair rail extends the length of the hall.

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1873; restored 1981 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Architecture:

The Charles Denby House is a good example of a purely vernacular design developed without regard for the local Federal, Greek Revival or the indigenous Gulf Coast cottage styles. The hall plan is traditional, having two equally sized rooms on either side of a central hall. The simplicity of the interior trim and the one story brick elevation are a valuable record of the housing of the middle class of the 1870s. On the exterior, only the porch capitals and brackets found in the entrance door detailing are elaborately detailed.

The only other surviving example of a one story vernacular brick residence of the period is the Metzger House, at 7 N. Hamilton Street, which was constructed two years after the Denby House. In a similar, though more elaborate manner, the brick building has been embellished by a wooden porch and brackets running along the entablature.

Integrity:

The Denby House stands on its original site at the outskirts of the old inner city commercial area. The main historic fabric of the building is still intact including walls, windows, doors and cornice trim. On the interior, all of the original trim is still intact. In addition, the interior ceilings are still covered with the original beaded boards while a chair rail runs the length of the hall. The only alteration on the interior is the partial closing off of the north end of the hall to form a small extra room. The primary alteration that has occurred over the years is the reduction of the front porch from 3 bays to one with the resultant shift from two entrance stairs at either side of the porch to a single set of entrance steps perpendicular to the facade. The chamfered posts and brackets are original and the balustrade that had been lost over time was reproduced through photodocumentation. While the removal of two-thirds of the porch has changed the accent from a horizontal to a vertical one, the basic building remains unchanged and continues to establish a visual link with Mobile of the 1870s.

With the Reconstruction Period of the 1870s and the depression of 1873, the Mobile economy did not allow for the construction of extremely large brick buildings that had been common in pre-Civil War days. In fact, most of the working class housing was of frame, not brick, so that the Denby House and Metzger House (7 N. Hamilton Street) are the only two examples of 1870 one story brick middle class housing left in the inner city. Of these two, the Denby House is simpler lacking the refinements of the more expensively done Metzger House.

The house was built by Charles Denby who is listed in the City Directories as a carpenter. In 1873, he is listed in these same directories as a builder and may, indeed, have been involved with the construction of his own dwelling. The house is an example of the new demand for housing needed for craftsmen and laborers that occurred after the Civil War.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Deeds and mortgages from the Mobile County Probate Court; Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps; Tax Assessment Records; City Directories; Where Time Bears Witness to Sound Building, First National Bank, 1935; Nineteenth Century Mobile Architecture..., Mobile City Planning Commission, 1974.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property (.09) less than one

Quadrangle name Mobile

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	6	3	9	9	5	2	0	3	3	9	5	3	9	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

North side of Conti Street, beginning at the northeast corner of Conti and Warren Streets, running east on Conti for 54' with a depth of 70'.

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth B. Gould, Architectural Historian

organization Mobile Historic Development Comm. date 4/19/83

street & number P.O. Box 1827 telephone (205) 438-7133

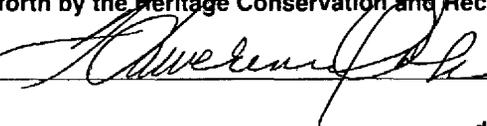
city or town Mobile state Alabama 36633

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 State Historic Preservation Officer

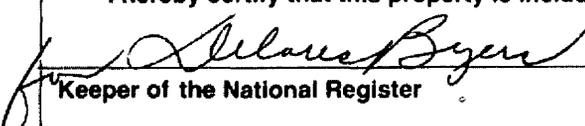
date 11/29/83

For HCRS use only

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

Entered in the National Register

date 1/5/84


Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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

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RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

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The decade of the 1870s was a transitional one--a time when older architectural forms continued and the Victorian had not yet fully blossomed. With the general lack of money in the decade of the 1870s, even those traditional forms that were used were often simplified. Such is the case with the Denby House in which the slightly overhanging cornice with small brackets, while derivative of the Italiante style, is understated. Most of these transitional buildings have been lost over time.

Major architectural periods are generally well represented in Mobile; however, buildings such as the Denby House must be recognized as an outgrowth of a particular moment in the city's architectural, economic and social development.