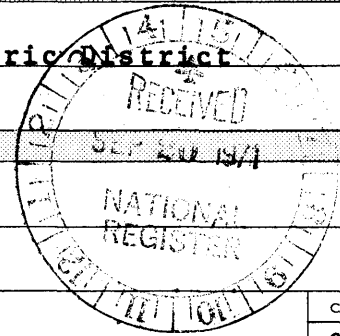


NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Mississippi</b>	
COUNTY: <b>Adams</b>	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
<b>APR 1 1 1972</b>	



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME  
COMMON:  
**Natchez Bluffs and Under-the-Hill Historic District**  
AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
CITY OR TOWN:  
**Natchez**  
STATE: **Mississippi** CODE: **39120** COUNTY: **Adams** CODE: **28** COUNTY: **Adams** CODE: **001**

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate):

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY  
OWNER'S NAME:  
**City of Natchez and multiple private**  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Natchez City Hall, 120 South Pearl Street**  
CITY OR TOWN: **Natchez** STATE: **Mississippi** CODE: **39120** COUNTY: **Adams** CODE: **28**

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION  
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**Office of the Chancery Clerk, Adams County Courthouse**  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Market Street**  
CITY OR TOWN: **Natchez** STATE: **Mississippi** CODE: **39120** COUNTY: **Adams** CODE: **28**

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS  
TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**Natchez Trace Parkway Survey**  
DATE OF SURVEY: **1940**  Federal  State  County  Local  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
**National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior**  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
**801 19th Street, N.W.**  
CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **District of Columbia** CODE: **08**

STATE: **Mississippi**  
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7. DESCRIPTION

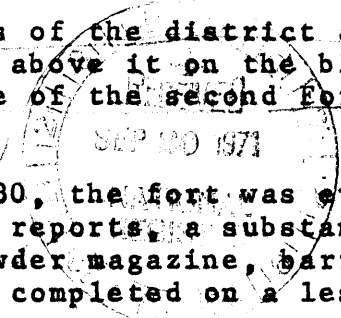
CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The boundaries of the Natchez Bluffs and Under-the-Hill Historic District are as follows:

Beginning at the intersection of the southerly line of Franklin Street with the westerly line of Broadway; thence westerly along the projection of the southerly line of Franklin Street to the east bank of the Mississippi River. Thence down the river in a southerly direction to the northerly edge of the right-of-way of U. S. Highways 65 and 84 (at the Natchez-Vidalia Bridge). Thence in a southeasterly direction along the right-of-way of U. S. Highways 65 and 84 to the intersection with the northerly right-of-way of the Natchez and Southern Railroad; thence along said northerly right-of-way in a northeasterly direction to the intersection with the easterly property line of the General Box Company property; thence along the easterly property line of the General Box Company to the southerly line of Green Street; thence along the southerly line of Green Street to the westerly line of Canal Street; thence along the westerly line of Canal Street in a northerly direction to the northerly line of Compress Street; thence along the northerly line of Compress Street in a westerly direction to the westerly right-of-way of the Natchez and Southern Railroad; thence along the westerly right-of-way of the Natchez and Southern Railroad and the westerly line of Broadway to the intersection with the southerly line of Franklin Street, the point of beginning.

The principal features of the district are the Natchez landing (Under-the-Hill) and, above it on the bluffs, the city park/promenade and the site of the second Fort Rosalie built by the French at Natchez.



Begun in 1730, the fort was eventually to have been, according to official reports, a substantial brick complex with platforms, vaulted powder magazine, barracks, and other buildings, but it was presumably completed on a less ambitious scale:

This fort is in the shape of a pentagon, each side of which measures fifty steps, tolerably secured against assault by its situation, being placed at a sufficient elevation to command the surrounding country. Its glacis is of turf and its parapet of thick oaken planks, and the inner fortification and ditch well stockaded. It is provided with some few cannon. Its garrison

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consists ordinarily of fifty men and three officers. (From "Journal of the Chickasa War," 1739, as reprinted by J. F. H. Claiborne in Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State, p. 68.)

When occupied by the British at the close of the Seven Years' War, Fort Rosalie (renamed Fort Panmure) was thus described in a report by the inspecting officer:

...to put this Fort in a state of Defence, the Platforms ought to be entirely New laid, as both the Timber and planks are so rotten, that they will not support the weight of the Cannon, the Stockades and Gates of the Covert way are in the same condition. When I took possession of it, one of the principal Gates of the Fort, and one of the Covert way leading to the water, were entirely unhinged, and the place not tenable against a party with small Arms, and the Communication between the Officers Barracks and the Fort open. (Major Robert Farmar to the Secretary of State, January 24, 1764, as reprinted in Mississippi Provincial Archives, 1763-1766; English Dominion, p. 9.)

A 1796 engraving of the fort from the Atlas accompanying General Victor Callot's Voyage in North America (reproduced by Justin Winsor in The Mississippi Basin, p. 453) depicts a palisaded enclosure containing a two-story barracks and five smaller structures, three of which appear to function as observation towers.

Fort Rosalie was disestablished by the United States in 1801 following acquisition of the Natchez District, but the site continued to capture the interest of travelers for years thereafter:

Fort Penmure [sic], on the edge of the bluff is now in ruins, but the situation, and the extent of the old ramparts, prove it to have been a post of considerable consequence. It effectually commands the river, without being commanded itself, and the view from it is very extensive, particularly over the flat swamps of Louisiana, on the opposite side of the Mississippi. (P. Cuming, Sketches of a Tour to the Western Country, p. 295.)

Although by the late nineteenth century, the remains of Fort Rosalie had largely been effaced, its location was designated on an 1891 map of Natchez drawn by Charles W. Babbit, city and

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county surveyor. Gerard Brandon, writing in 1899, noted that traces of the fort were still discernible near the cotton compress on the bluff, an observation confirmed by Dunbar Rowland eight years later. During the early 1940s a purported replica of the fort, complete with stockade, barracks, officers' quarters, storehouse, powder magazine, and blacksmith shop, was erected on the site by local entrepreneur Jefferson Davis Dickson, but the two buildings which remain standing today are ruinous and the area overgrown except for a clearing planted in vegetable gardens.

The top of the bluffs from the intersection of Silver Street and Broadway to Franklin Street is maintained by the City of Natchez as a public park and planted in grass, magnolias, oaks, cedars, and pines. The setting is further enhanced by a number of benches, a bandstand which commands a panoramic view of the river, and a fountain mounted on circular concrete tiers, a gift to the city by the local Rotary Club on that organization's fiftieth anniversary in 1969.

In seeking early accounts of the physical appearance of that portion of the historic district which became Natchez-Under-the-Hill, one is tempted to begin with a description by Pierre Lemoyne d'Iberville of what he encountered on the initial voyage of French exploration up the Mississippi River in 1700:

I reached the landing place of the Natchez....From ...the river one ascends a very steep hillside about 150 fathoms high covered completely with woods. Being on top of the hill one finds a country of plains and prairies filled with little hills, in some places groves of trees....(From Iberville's Journal, as reprinted by John R. Swanton in Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and the Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico, pp. 190-191.)

The details are insufficient for positive identification, however, and in one instance appear to preclude it, for the "hillside about 150 fathoms high" is only about one-sixth the height of that which today overlooks the landing.

One of the few first-hand descriptions of eighteenth-century Under-the-Hill after it had begun to acquire its river-port identity is that by George Willey (1787-1874), who in old age remembered that

...there were but two or three houses on the hill, the whole town being under the hill, which was then quite an extensive tract. Below, where is

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now the ferry landing, there was quite an extensive and heavy battery, known as "the King's Works," and just above, there was a quarter race track extending from the bluff towards the river. ("Natchez in the Olden Times," reprinted by J. F. H. Claiborne in Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State, p. 527.)

J. F. H. Claiborne noted that at the time of the American Revolution, all of Natchez had still been under the hill, with twenty frame and log houses and four stores built on the batture, or land reclaimed from the exposed river bed. In his description of a visit to Natchez in 1789 (reprinted by Edith Wyatt Moore in Natchez Under-the-Hill, p. 26), Father Antonios Gonzales of Sargossa, Spain, implied that the upper town had begun to emerge but was still secondary to Under-the-Hill. By the turn of the century, however, the balance had so shifted that an English traveler saw the landing in 1807 as only "a few houses immediately under the bluff." Yet on its own scale, and exuding its own flavor, the lower town grew along with the upper:

On looking round me for a moment, on landing, I was far from agreeably impressed with the general appearance of the buildings....The principal street, which terminates at the ascent of the hill, runs parallel with the river, and is lined on either side with a row of old wooden houses.... extending along the Levee to the north, commences the mercantile part of the "landing," lined with stores and extensive warehouses, in which is transacted a very heavy business. (J. H. Ingraham, The South-West by a Yankee, pp. 18-20.)

Although the physical layout of Under-the-Hill throughout its history has been subjected to change as a result of erosion and landslides alternating with buildup of the batture, the main street has always been Silver Street, running southwest from Broadway down the hill to intersect Fulton Street, which extends west to meet the river. Leading north from Fulton Street and lying between Silver Street and the river is Water Street (earlier there was a third artery, Levee Street, nearest the bank and generally parallel to Silver and Water Streets, but it has since been submerged). The southern portion of Under-the-Hill features the continuation of Silver Street and, branching from it near the former ferry dock, Ferry Street. Little Street, running in a plane with upper Silver Street, though farther against the bluff, was projected on early maps but apparently not developed. Short cross streets similar to Fulton Street were once in evidence up and down the landing: Maiden Lane, Porter Street, Earhart's

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Alley, and Cypress Street.

In addition to the racetrack, private dwellings, saloons, hotels, warehouses, fisheries, and grocery stores which lined the streets of nineteenth-century Under-the-Hill, there was a coalyard, incongruously but handsomely housed in a vaguely Italianate-looking structure on the river bank at Fulton Street, and an icehouse and a municipal waterworks on Water Street. The most distinctive features of the waterfront were the ark-like wharfboat moored at the foot of Fulton Street, its rambling superstructure surmounted on a low-slung hull and serving as a public steamboat landing, and the Bluff City Railroad, which operated on an inclined track between the wharfboat and a number of firms in the upper town.

Although the Natchez landing still supports a few commercial shrimp fishermen and a repair barge which services river tugs on an emergency basis, little remains physically to tell the story of its lusty past. There are six one and two-story rectangular brick buildings of undetermined age and original usage still standing on the east side of Silver Street, some of which are inhabited and all of which are delapidated. The most evocative remnant of the six is the third one to the south, a narrow, three-bay structure with "false front" embellished by a dentiled brick panel above the cornice line and carved wooden lintels over the second floor door and windows. An ornamental iron balustrade around the balcony is identical to that which once adorned the galleries of Windsor, the plantation home of the Daniell family which burned in nearby Claiborne County in 1890. (Parts of the Windsor balustrade, as well as a flight of exterior iron stairs, are installed at the Chapel of Alcorn College, Lorman, Mississippi, and it is not unlikely that a section of the balustrade was also removed to Under-the-Hill.) The almost-Federal style of the fourth building to the south is accented by stepped gables, dentiled brick cornice, soldier coursework over the second-floor fenestration, and decorative anchor irons and grille attic vents. Four shanties, three of them occupied, line the east side of Water Street, which extends approximately five hundred yards north along the river bank. At the opposite end of Under-the-Hill, less than half a dozen neat frame cottages, some with lawns and gardens, comprise the section known as "Little Mexico."

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8.  
of the more strategically located Fort Adams, thirty-five miles south of Natchez on the boundary between the United States and Spanish West Florida. The lands and buildings of Fort Panmure were sold in 1801 to William Dunbar, planter, scientist, and explorer of the Old Southwest, and ca. 1820 a subsequent owner,

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

The area in and around the Natchez Bluffs and Under-the-Hill Historic District is associated with the earliest recorded history of the Old Southwest. In 1700, Pierre Lemoyne d'Iberville selected the home of the Natchez Indians, where the city of Natchez now stands, as the future site of a fortified settlement. Sixteen years later the first Fort Rosalie was erected by Jean Baptiste Lemoyne Bienville, brother of d'Iberville, and named in honor of the wife of the Count of Ponchartrain, Minister of Marine Affairs. Control of the culturally advanced Natchez tribe, as well as domination of river traffic and communication, had influenced the choice of site, which within a few years became the nucleus of a thriving agricultural community. The success of the latter was largely based on abuses dealt the Indians, however (chief of which was appropriation of their lands), and in retaliation 232 French men, women, and children were massacred on November 28, 1729, and Fort Rosalie subsequently destroyed. The Natchez were in turn dispersed westward across the river by a punitive expedition sent from New Orleans and they never regained their tribal identity. Their tragedy would later be rendered by the French author François Auguste, Vicomte de Chateaubriand (1768-1848), into some of the most avidly read romantic fiction of the early nineteenth century: René, Atala, and Celuta; or the Natchez.

Fort Rosalie was rebuilt during 1730-1734, but with the decline in cultivation of French agricultural holdings in the area, it became a mere way station for river travel. In 1763, following England's triumph over France in the Seven Years' War, it was occupied by British troops and thereafter known as Fort Panmure in honor of a minister of George III. Although with the new name it assumed new significance (that of a frontier outpost on an international boundary), the fort was garrisoned for less than four of the sixteen years in which England held it before yielding to Spanish appropriation during the American Revolution. Pro-British settlers of the Natchez District staged an abortive rebellion in 1781, but Fort Panmure continued in Spanish possession until the American flag was raised over the works on March 30, 1798. It was occupied only briefly by the United States before being abandoned in favor

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Alexander, Capt. J. E. Transatlantic Sketches. Philadelphia: Key and Biddle, 1833. P. 249.  
 Brandon, Gerard. "Historic Adams County." Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, II (1899), pp. 206-218.  
 Chambers, Moreau Browne Congleton. "The History of Fort Panmure at Natchez, 1763-1779." Master's thesis, Duke University, 1942.  
 City of Natchez. A Request for an EDA Technical Assistance Grant for Planning of the Comprehensive Development of the

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	31° 33' 51"	91 24 24		°	'	"
NE	31° 33' 41"	91 24 13				
SE	31° 33' 13"	91 24 48				
SW	31° 33' 23"	91 24 58				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **75 acres**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Dawn Maddox, Architectural Historian**

ORGANIZATION: **Mississippi Dept. of Archives and History** DATE: **August 31, 1971**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Post Office Box 571**

CITY OR TOWN: **Jackson** STATE: **Mississippi 39205** CODE: **28**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name R. A. McLemore

**R. A. McLemore**

Title Director, Miss. Dept. of Archives and History

Date **August 31, 1971**

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

Robert M. Utley  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 4/11/72

ATTEST:  
[Signature]  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date February 15, 1972

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Peter Little, erected north of the fort site his mansion Rosalie, now headquarters of the Mississippi Daughters of the American Revolution. The remaining fort acreage is presently in multiple private ownership and partially developed into a residential district.

A lingering local tradition that the 1716-1729 Fort Rosalie physically survived the Natchez uprising to become the Fort Rosalie/Fort Panmure of later years is negated by contemporary communications of the French colonial government. It is more difficult to determine whether or not the two forts shared the same site, however. John Monette, in History of the Mississippi Valley, p. 214, described the 1716-1729 fort as "remote from the bluff which overlooks the river...near the eastern limit of the present [1848] city of Natchez," a statement which is substantiated by J. F. H. Claiborne and Dunbar Rowland. Contemporary references to the location of the first fort are given in relation to the principal village of the Natchez Indians, i.e., the fort is identified as being between the river and the village. The latter was estimated by eyewitnesses such as Jean Penicaut and Dumont de Montigny to be one league to one-and-a-quarter leagues from the river, which corresponds to the modern measurement of three miles between the river and the village site (now the Fatherland Plantation or Grand Village of the Natchez Indians and designated a national historic landmark). As shown on de Montigny's ca. 1725 map of Fort Rosalie and environs (reproduced by Robert S. Neitzel in Archaeology of the Fatherland Site: The Grand Village of the Natchez, plate 1), the fort was midway between river and village, thus indicating a distance of more than a mile from the river to the fort as opposed to the present approximately five hundred yards between the river and the site of the 1730-1734 fort. Shifting of the river's edge and the distortion of perspective in de Montigny's map are factors to be considered, of course, but in the case of the latter, it is clear that de Montigny did not intend to depict the fort on the brow of the bluff, for between it and the river are individual dwellings (Indian and French) with cultivated areas nearby.

In a report to Count Maurepas, Minister of the Navy, in 1731, Perier, Governor of Louisiana, noted that after the massacre of two years before, a fort had been built at Natchez "on the bank of the river," which specification perhaps implies that the earlier fort had not been so situated. At this point in time, the issue will likely be resolved only by archaeological excavation, but there is no doubt that the second fort was built on the bluff within the proposed historic district. Approximately equidistant from the site, and also within the district boundaries are the former locations of two local industries, both now demolished: toward the north, the nineteenth-century Natchez

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8. compress, where cotton bales were compacted en route to the loading docks on the wharf below, and on the south, a factory built ca. 1920 which manufactured lumber products (packing boxes, plywood, and veneer) for nearly four decades under a succession of ownerships.

The city park farther north along the bluffs has served as such since the emergence of the upper town, having been created as a public green or common during the administration of Manuel Gayosa de Lemos, Spanish governor of the Natchez District, 1789-1798. Trees were planted, and for a time the granting of lots was forbidden as far inland as Canal Street in order to provide open space for the benefit of the settlement. Although the area which it encompasses has diminished, the park continues to serve the same purpose as when it impressed early visitors to the city:

The front, or first parallel street, is laid out about one hundred yards back from the verge of the bluffs, leaving a noble green esplanade along the front of the city, which not only adds to its beauty, but is highly useful as a promenade and parade ground. Shade trees are planted along the border, near the verge of the precipice, beneath which are placed benches, for the comfort of the lounge. From this place the eye commands one of the most extensive prospects to be found on the Mississippi. To a spectator, standing in the centre of this broad, natural terrace, the symmetrical arrangement of the artificial scenery around him is highly picturesque and pleasing.  
(J. H. Ingraham, The South-West by a Yankee, pp. 22-23.)

In 1909 the Mississippi Daughters of the American Revolution dedicated a stone marker in the park to commemorate the terminus of the Natchez Trace, and near it fly the five flags which have been raised over Natchez: French, English, Spanish, Confederate, and American.

The river landing beneath the bluffs was presumably established early in the period of French colonization and served in turn the British, Spanish, and Americans who occupied the fort and populated the growing town. With the beginning of the Mississippi territorial period (1798), the landing became the southwesternmost outlet of the United States and a factor in negotiations for the Louisiana Purchase. Although characterizations of Under-the-Hill which date from the 1700s, like physical descriptions, are rare, its unsavory reputation appears to have originated in the early years of the century which

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followed. The Mississippi River, supporting flatboat and keelboat traffic, generated the development of a criminal element in Under-the-Hill which was augmented by the proximity of the Natchez Trace, a six-hundred mile trail which threaded the wilderness between Nashville and Natchez. Boatmen, gamblers, river pirates, highwaymen, and prostitutes populated the port, of which one visitor wrote in 1810: "...for the size of it, there is not, perhaps in the world, a more dissipated spot." The coming of steam navigation after 1811 apparently altered the image of Under-the-Hill only for the worse:

Dreadful riots occur then [in the spring of the year], - "fist and scull fighting," where eyes are gouged out, noses and ears bitten and torn off; at that season too the passengers of the steam-boats are plundered in the following manner: - In the evening a steamer stops at Natchez to land or take in goods, the passengers observe several houses lighted up, and hear the sounds of fiddles and merriment, and they run up to see what is going on; they find men and women dancing, gambling, and drinking, the bell of the steam-boat rings to announce that she is about to continue her voyage, the lights in the houses of entertainment are immediately extinguished, and the passengers immediately rush out, afraid of being too late for the boat, and run down towards the landing; ropes are drawn across the road, the passengers fall heels over head, a number of stout ruffians throw themselves upon them, and strip them of their money and watches, and they get on board in doleful plight, and of course never see or hear more of their plunderers. (Capt. J. E. Alexander, Transatlantic Sketches, p. 249.)

Changing conditions, however, in time wrought an accompanying change in the character of Under-the-Hill. The bandit-plagued trace gave way to a well-established stage route, and steamboating increased the volume of river trade to the extent that respectable mercantile firms and hotels found it expedient to share the landing with the barrooms and brothels. Growing security of travel by land and river and the transformation of Under-the-Hill into one of the world's most flourishing cotton markets stimulated a zeal for periodic clean-ups of its less reputable sections. One steamer passing downriver to New Orleans reported that she saw at Natchez

several boats crowded with persons who had been ordered from that place, in consequence of their

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8.

abandoned character, and also saw, at Ellis' Cliffs, eighteen miles below Natchez, one or two flatboats freighted with the same description of person, but principally females - all bound down the Mississippi. (Reprinted by Virginia Park Matthias in "Natchez-Under-the-Hill," The Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. VII, p. 220.)

One of the severest blows to the image of Under-the-Hill as, in the words of one critic, "the early American Sodom" was dealt not by vigilantes but by the tornado of 1840. Contemporary newspaper accounts indicate the landing was devastated, with 400 lives lost and over one hundred flatboats, two steamboats, a ferry, and numerous buildings destroyed by strong winds and waves ten to fifteen feet high. Although the lower town, like the upper, recovered in time, it thereafter increasingly reflected the interests of legitimate business operations.

At the beginning of the Civil War, fourteen companies of Confederate soldiers debarked from Under-the-Hill, but actual conflict did not reach it until September 2, 1862. On that date a gunboat from the USS Essex landed to procure ice for sick crew members and was fired on by the home guard. In retaliation for the killing of one seaman and the wounding of five others, the Essex shelled the Natchez heights and the landing, but the latter, being more exposed to gun range, suffered greater damage both from the bombardment and the fires which followed. One civilian, a seven-year-old girl, was killed before the town unconditionally surrendered.

Following the war and the passing of the golden era of steamboating, Under-the-Hill went into a gradual economic decline which terminated in its demise upon completion of the Natchez-Vidalia Bridge in 1940 and the simultaneous ceasing of ferry operations across the Mississippi. Yet the reputation and the appeal of the place persist, as demonstrated by the number of visitors to the antebellum mansions of the upper town who year after year find their way down Silver Street as well. A request for a technical assistance grant for development of the area as a major tourist attraction was submitted by the City of Natchez to the Economic Development Administration of the U. S. Department of Commerce in 1967 but was deferred. Local support for the proposal continues, however, and both private and public ownership recognize the need for including in any such undertaking the adjoining acreage on the bluffs in addition to the more obvious asset of the landing itself. The former is essential as a contiguous zone to protect the approaches to and the setting of Under-the-Hill, and it has intrinsic historic

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8. associations of its own which merit interpretation: the Fort Rosalie site and the Natchez Trace. The National Park Service of the U. S. Department of the Interior is currently considering the bluffs as a location for the southern terminus of the Natchez Trace Parkway, and the City of Natchez has offered to make its property there available for that purpose.

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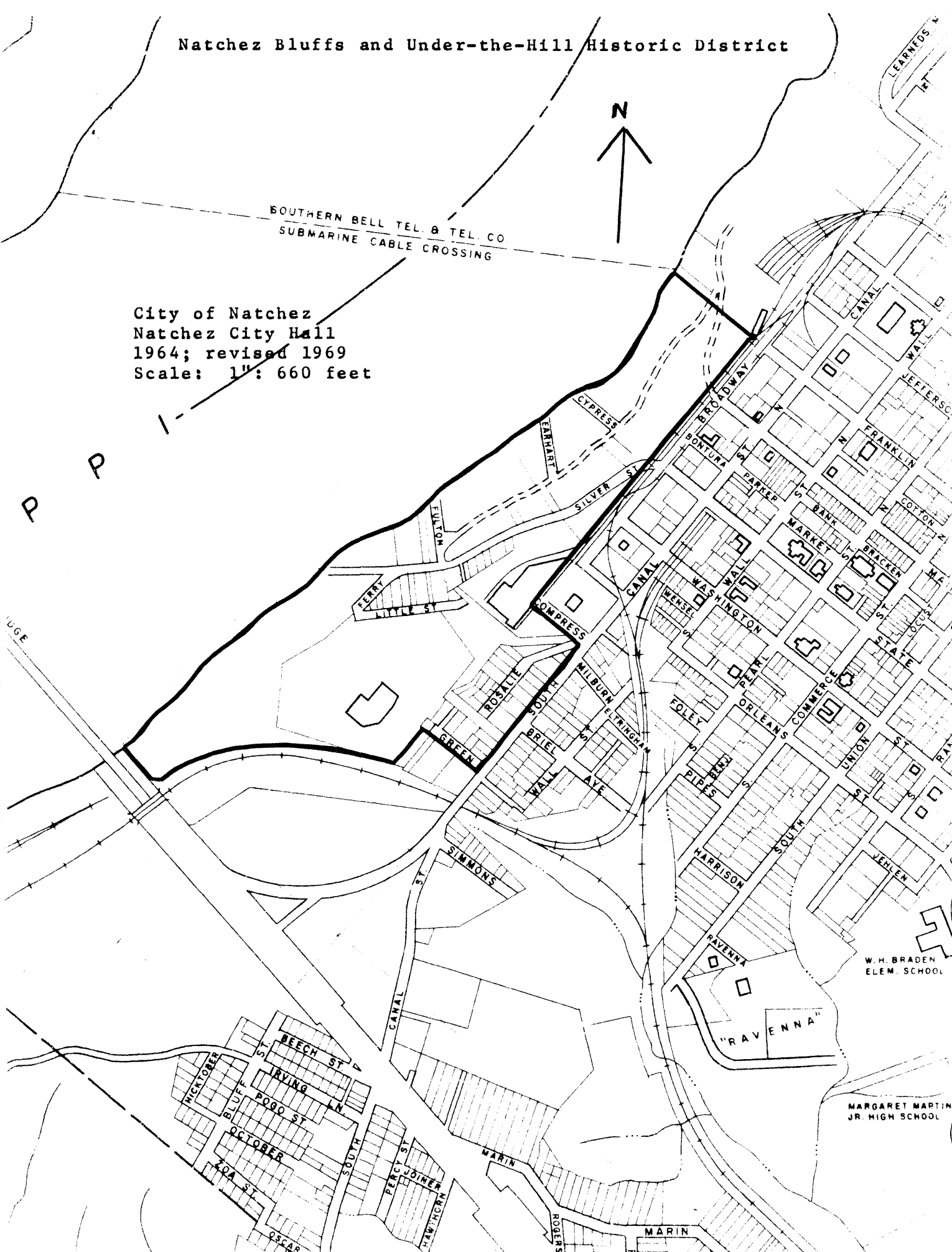
# Natchez Bluffs and Under-the-Hill Historic District



SOUTHERN BELL TEL. & TEL. CO.  
SUBMARINE CABLE CROSSING

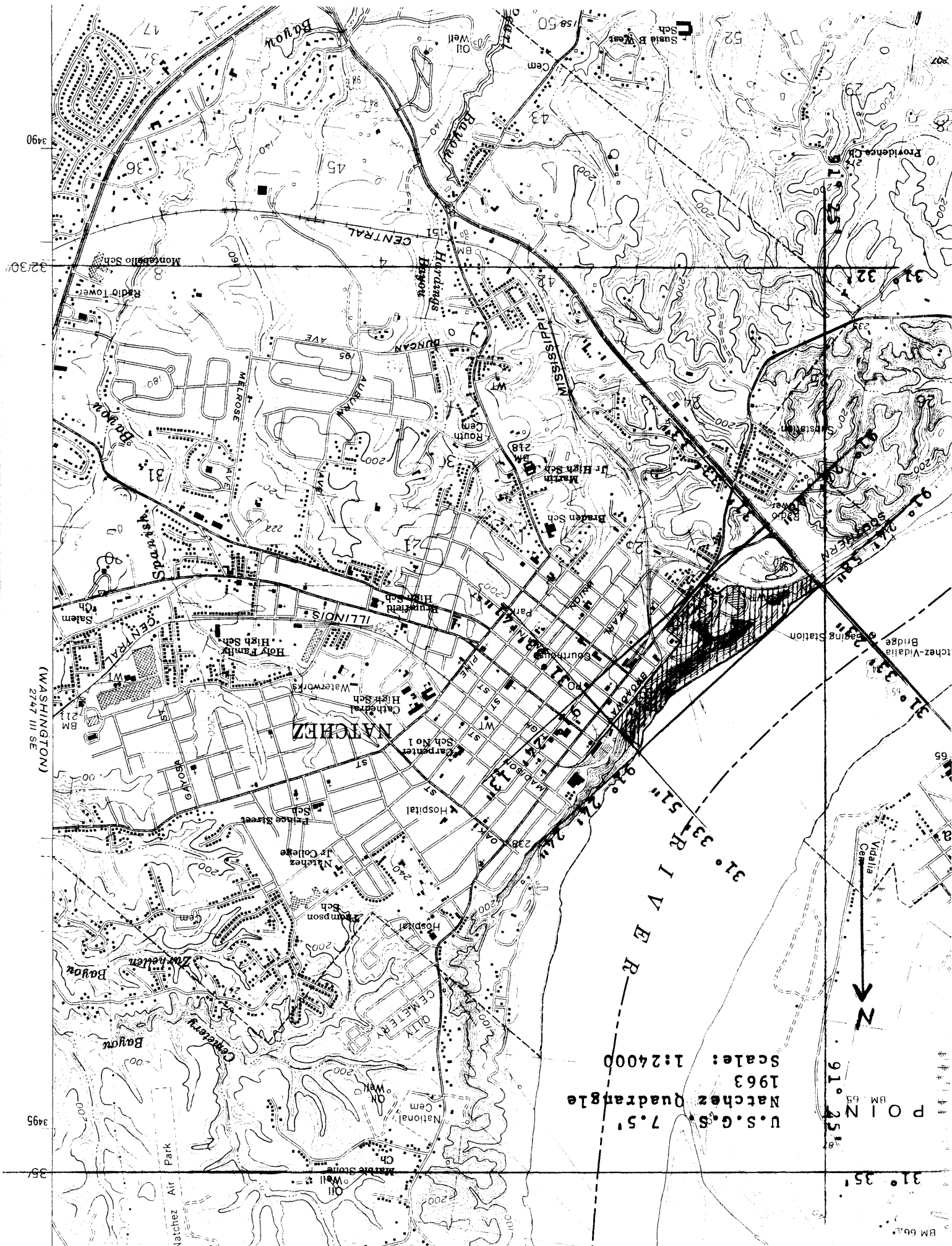
City of Natchez  
Natchez City Hall  
1964; revised 1969  
Scale: 1" = 660 feet

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W. H. BRADEN  
ELEM. SCHOOL

MARGARET MARTIN  
JR. HIGH SCHOOL



(WASHINGTON)  
2747 III SE

U.S.G.S. 7.5'  
Natchez Quadrangle  
1963  
Scale: 1:24000



P O I N T  
BM 69  
91° 25' E  
31° 35' N

3490

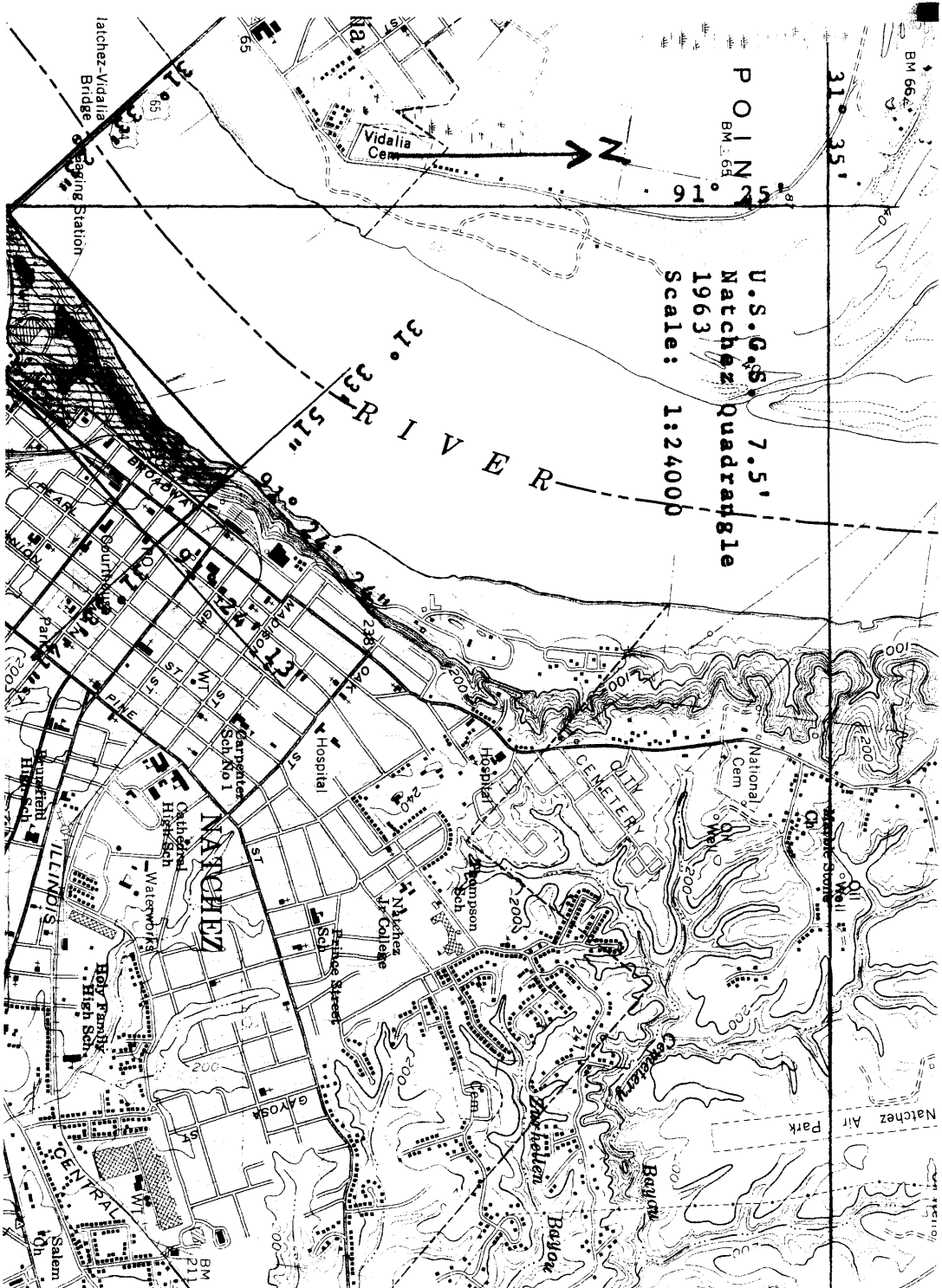
3230'

3495

35

BM 66





U.S.G.S. 7.5'  
 Natchez Quadrangle  
 1963  
 Scale: 1:24000

(WASHINGTON)  
 2747 III SE

3495

35