

PH0366773

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JAN 5 1977
DATE ENTERED	DEC 2 1977

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
* AND/OR COMMON

Elms Court (also Elmscourt)

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

42 John R. Junkin Drive

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Natchez

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Fourth

STATE

Mississippi

___ VICINITY OF

CODE

28

COUNTY

Adams

CODE

001

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 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 type="checkbox"/> 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

Mrs. Grace M. S. MacNeil

STREET & NUMBER

42 John R. Junkin Drive

CITY, TOWN

Natchez

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

Mississippi

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the Chancery Clerk, Adams County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Market Street

CITY, TOWN

Natchez

STATE

Mississippi

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey (1 photo)

DATE

1934

FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located on a 163-acre tract partially within the city limits of Natchez, Mississippi, is Elms Court, a five-bay, two-story frame residence covered by a pyramidal roof. As it was originally built in ca. 1836, Elms Court was similar in both design and plan to other large Natchez residences of the period. The facade was covered with flush siding and a giant order portico occupied the center bay. Flanked by six-over-six double-hung windows with black painted sash, the entrance frontispiece consisted of a large, eight-paneled door, sidelights and transom, and was framed by Ionic columns supporting a wide returned entablature. A broad center passage, which connected the north portico and the south (rear) gallery, separated double parlors on the east from dining room, stair alcove and library opposite. Much of the interior trim, such as the symmetrical architraves with corner blocks and simple wooden columnar mantels, today remains intact. A splendid recessed centerpiece with papyrus and acanthus ornamentation located in the center passage, and several more common pinwheel centerpieces located elsewhere on the first floor may also date to the original construction of the house.

When it became the residence of Ayers P. Merrill in 1852, Elms Court was enlarged and remodelled to the appearance known today. The north elevation was transformed from its early Greek Revival design to that of a more Romantic villa by the removal of the single-bay portico and installation of the existing double-tier cast-iron gallery along the entire facade. Added at the same time were symmetrical one-story wings with iron galleries. The entire north elevation, which is now painted white, was then blocked off and pencilled to simulate ashlar masonry, and painted varying hues of brownstone. The interior of the flanking wings, trimmed in typical Greek Revival fashion with battered-and-eared architraves and arched, or "New Grecian," marble mantels, contained a billiard room, an office, bedrooms and a kitchen. Curvilinear Gothic mantels replaced early wooden ones in two rooms in the older section. Most significantly, a new dining room was created when the small library behind the stair alcove was joined to the newly enclosed rear gallery, the seam being disguised by a wide arch supported by reeded pilasters, and the end chimney being moved to an interior wall to provide a symmetrical axis. A large punka, or fan, suspended from wrought iron brackets straddling the arch, was installed during the remodelling. The enclosed rear gallery also provided space for a small sitting room and vestibule on the first floor and a bath and sun room on the second. With the completion of the ca. 1852 remodelling, Elms Court assumed what is substantially its present-day appearance.

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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

ca. 1836, 1876

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Constructed in ca. 1836, Elms Court is a significant and well-preserved example of the Greek Revival style and is one of the most prominent "suburban villas" in the Natchez region. Its notable galleries, which were added across the entire facade in ca. 1852, are possibly the most lavish use of ornamental iron in Mississippi. In addition to its architectural interest, Elms Court is significant as the residence of Ayers P. Merrill, a locally important merchant, planter and diplomat.

In 1835, the widow of Governor Winthrop Sargent conveyed 228 acres of her plantation, "Gloucester," to Jefferson Beaumont, a wealthy Natchez businessman (Deed Book W:502). The following year Beaumont divided the property and sold a twenty-nine acre tract to Eliza and Katherine Evans, who constructed the original two-story, five-bay center section of Elms Court (Deed Book II: 282). The Evans sisters retained the title to Elms Court until, 1842 when it was sold to George W. Turner, who more than doubled its acreage over the following decade (Deed Book DD:451). In 1852, the property was purchased for \$25,000 by Francis Surget, Sr. (Deed Book II:306), ". . . an early pioneer and the richest and most successful planter of this [the Natchez] section" (Goodspeed, 2:431), who presented it to his daughter, Mrs. Ayers P. (Jane Surget) Merrill, as a wedding gift. The Merrills soon enlarged the house, redecorated portions of the interior, and installed the splendid iron galleries along the north elevation. Except for the addition of bathrooms in secondary spaces and certain other necessary modernizations, Elms Court stands today substantially as it did during the Merrill ownership.

Ayers P. Merrill was a native of Adams County, Mississippi, a graduate of Harvard and a student of law in the New Orleans office of Sargent S. Prentiss, the famous political orator. After his marriage to Jane Surget in 1851, he settled at Elms Court and became a successful planter. At the close of the Civil War, Merrill, whose wife had died in 1864, moved to New York and began the commission merchant partnership of Goodman and Merrill. In 1876, President U. S. Grant appointed Merrill United States Minister to the Kingdom of Belgium, a position he held for a few years until paralysis forced him to retire to Elms Court, where he died in 1882 (National Cyclopedia of American Biography, 12:314; Goodspeed, 2:430-32).

In 1895, James Surget bought Elms Court from Merrill's heirs and gave the property to his newly married daughter, Mrs. David L. McKittrick (Deed Book 3L:746). The house is now occupied by her daughter, Mrs. Grace M. S. MacNeil, who regularly opens it to the public.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Adams County, Mississippi. Chancery Clerk. Deed Books W, II, 3L. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Microfilm.

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

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 163

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>1,5</u>	<u>6,5,2,8,2,0</u>	<u>3,4,9,0,1,7,0</u>	B	<u>1,5</u>	<u>6,5,2,7,8,0</u>	<u>3,4,8,8,6,1,5</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	<u>1,5</u>	<u>6,5,1,9,6,0</u>	<u>3,4,8,8,6,2,0</u>	D	<u>1,5</u>	<u>6,5,1,9,5,0</u>	<u>3,4,9,0,1,8,0</u>

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Except for twelve acres recently added, the tract of land known as Elms Court reached its present size during the Merrill ownership (1852-1895). Because of the encroaching commercial and residential development of the city of Natchez, it is important that the total Elms Court tract be preserved as the setting appropriate for this significant "suburban villa." The tract consists of the land south and west of John R. Junkin Drive between the center lines of the Pearl Bayou and the Spanish Bayou.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

William C. Allen, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 571

CITY OR TOWN

Jackson

DATE

October 11, 1976

TELEPHONE

(601) 354-6218

STATE

Mississippi

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE X

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

Albert R. Hilliard

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

December 31, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

W. J. M. [Signature]

DATE

12/31/76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

Charles [Signature]

DATE

11.30.77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JAN 5 1977
DATE ENTERED	DEC 2 1977

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

9 - MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Jackson. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Statewide Survey of Historic Sites. Adams County. Elms Court.

The National Cyclopedia of American Biography.

Wilson, James Grant and John Fiske, eds. Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography. S.v. "Merrill, Ayers Phillips."