

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

For NCRS use only  
received JUN 25 1980  
date entered AUG 29 1980

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

**1. Name**

historic \_\_\_\_\_

and/or common Rodney Center Historic District

**2. Location**

street & number NW of Lorman \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Lorman \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district Fourth

state Mississippi code 28 county Jefferson code 63

**3. Classification**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 Multiple Ownership

street & number \_\_\_\_\_

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Location of Legal Description**

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

street & number Main Street

city, town Fayette state Mississippi 39069

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

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

date 1972, 1973  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Mississippi Department of Archives and History

city, town Jackson state Mississippi

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The rural town site of Rodney is located in southwestern Mississippi, approximately five miles east of the Mississippi River, ten miles west of the town of Lorman, fifteen miles southwest of Port Gibson, and twenty miles north of Natchez. Access to the proposed district along the sharp decline of the Rodney-Lorman Road underscores the relatively low elevation of the river-valley community.

Building types in the proposed district suggest a constant interrelationship between vernacular and more academic mid-to-late-nineteenth-century architectural resources. Though much of the housing stock and commercial buildings here and along the periphery of the district are no longer extant, the center of Rodney retains a diversity and interesting juxtaposition of built resources.

Three religious structures (nos. 3, 11, 15) in the north, south, and southwest quadrants of the district are the most visible and most architecturally significant structures in the community. By virtue of size, the buildings establish a small scale for the rest of the community, providing a clear visual focus and adding definition to the town center.

All buildings within the district are of frame construction with the exception of the Rodney Presbyterian Church (no. 5), the schoolhouse (no. 3), and the commercial building (no. 12). Building height is predominantly single story with gabled tin roofs. The earlier Greek Revival residences (nos. 1, 2, 7, 13, 14) feature similar architectural treatments, notably the inset gallery supported by square columns. The smaller folk-vernacular board-and-batten residences (nos. 4, 6, 10, 16, 18, 20) are so labeled by their lack of stylistic detail, and consistently utilitarian additions such as front porches and rear shed additions. The two extant frame commercial buildings (nos. 9, 12) offer striking similarities in terms of age, and roof and storefront configuration. These two structures are the last vestige of mid-nineteenth-century Commerce Street, which once offered a hotel north of the Piazza Store (no. 17), and a small park across the street from the Alston Grocery Store (no. 9).

During the boom period of the town, from 1820 to 1860, Rodney flourished as an important river community until a sand bar developed and changed the course of the river west of town. In 1930 the incorporation of Rodney was abolished after an executive proclamation by Governor Theodore Bilbo. Benign neglect and lack of local government have caused the retention of the town's scale and much of its important architectural and historical identity.

In 1979 an ad hoc committee for the preservation of Rodney was set up in order to formulate a preservation plan for the area. Members of the committee include representatives from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, the Mississippi Research and Development Center, the Bureau of Parks and Recreation, and the Natchez Trace Parkway Commission.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Black History
<input type="checkbox"/> invention				
<b>Specific dates</b>	<b>Builder/Architect</b>			

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Containing an interesting variety of rural-vernacular architectural resources, the Rodney Center Historic District is also historically significant for the state of Mississippi. From its incorporation in 1828 to its relative abandonment after 1870, the town was a primary settlement area and an important center for commerce along the Mississippi River and the Natchez Trace.

Known as Petit Gulf during the eighteenth century, the settlement was claimed by France, Great Britian and Spain, respectively, and ultimately by the U.S. government after the establishment of the Mississippi Territory in 1798. Early settlers here included Dr. Rush Nutt, a prominent agricultural scientist, and David Hunt, wealthy landowner. Hunt and Nutt were instrumental in the founding of Oakland College five miles north of Rodney in 1832.

As early as 1828 the town was sketched by French naturalist Charles Lesueur, whose rendering entitled "Petit Golphe" hands at the Howard Memorial Library at New Orleans. The town of Rodney prospered after 1830 as an important shipping point along the Mississippi River; two newspapers, the Rodney Standard and Southern Telegraph, were printed here. During the Civil War the U.S.S. Rattler docked at Rodney. In September, 1863, Union soldiers attending a religious service at Rodney Presbyterian Church (no. 3) were taken captive by a group of Confederate soldiers. The Rattler commenced firing on the church and town, extant testimony of which is a large circular hole near the stepped roof parapet of the church. In 1864 the town was raided by Maj. Gen. Napoleon J. T. Dana, Union Commander of the Vicksburg District.

After the Civil War Rodney experienced a rapid decline in commerce and population, accounted for by the change of river course, a fire in 1869 which destroyed most of the northern section (north of the proposed district), and by construction of a railroad through Fayette (Jefferson County seat) during the 1880s which caused all cotton shipments to bypass Rodney.

The architectural significance of the proposed district is derived from the collection of small-scale rural-vernacular buildings standing in situ. Contrasting astylar board-and-batten houses, Greek Revival cottages and commercial buildings, and the three pivotal religious buildings reflect mid-to-late-nineteenth-century building traditions in rural Mississippi. The most striking architectural feature repeated here is the inset gallery, present in the earliest late-Federal as well as the later transitional Greek Revival cottage residences. The predominant Greek Revival influence is also expressed in the pilastered storefronts of the two extant frame commercial buildings. The transitional Gothic-Greek influence is featured in the Mt. Zion Baptist Church No. 1 (no. 15), and the Greek Revival cottages with more picturesque Gothic detail, such as peaked window lintels.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Logan, Marie T. Mississippi-Louisiana Border Country. Baton Rouge: Claiborne's Publishing Division, 1970.

Mississippi Newspapers, 1805-1940. Prepared by the Mississippi Historical Records Survey Service Division, Works Progress Administration, 1942.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approx. 60

Quadrangle name St. Joseph, Miss.-La.

**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UMT References

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

A	<u>15</u>	<u>671300</u>	<u>3527000</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>670900</u>	<u>3526600</u>	
	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	
C	<u>15</u>	<u>6710000</u>	<u>3526150</u>	D	<u>15</u>	<u>6710425</u>	<u>3525950</u>
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

See boundary line on enclosed map.

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 Jack A. Gold, Survey and Planning Coordinator

organization Mississippi Department of Archives and History date May, 1980

street & number P. O. Box 571 telephone (601) 354-7326

city or town Jackson state Mississippi 39205

# 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 Elmer B. Hilliard

title State Historic Preservation Officer date June 20, 1980

For HCRS use only

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

W. Ray Luce date 8/29/80  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: Court Dubie date 8/26/80  
Chief of Registration

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## 4 - OWNER OF PROPERTY

Mrs. Margaret Berkley  
 213 Clifton Avenue  
 Natchez, MS 39120

Rodney Foundation  
 c/o M. James Stevens  
 02300 Beach Drive  
 Gulfport, MS 39501

Elliot Brumfield  
 Route 2  
 Lorman, MS 39096

Rodney Masonic Lodge F.&A.M.  
 Route 2  
 Lorman, MS 39096

Laura May Cross  
 727 Camilia  
 Baton Rouge, LA 70122

John Tassistro  
 4964 Alphonse Drive  
 Metairie, LA 70002

Mrs. Anita Durby  
 Route 2  
 Lorman, MS 39096

United Daughters of the Confederacy  
 c/o Mrs. E. A. Smith, President  
 P. O. Box 25  
 Yazoo City, MS 39194

Edgar Durby  
 Route 2  
 Lorman, MS 39096

Mrs. Sarah Wallace  
 814 Bowman Street  
 Vicksburg, MS 39180

Mrs. Annie Gibbs  
 Route 2  
 Lorman, MS 39096

Dale Williams  
 Route 2  
 Lorman, MS 39096

Mrs. Arcola May  
 Route 2  
 Lorman, MS 39096

Estate of Gertrude Whiting  
 Route 2  
 Lorman, MS 39096

Mt. Zion Baptist Church No. 1  
 Route 2  
 Lorman, MS 39096

Zion Chapel A.M.E. Church  
 Route 2  
 Lorman, MS 39096

Mrs. Joe Piazza  
 Route 2  
 Lorman, MS 39096

## 6 - REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
 1936   x   federal  
 Library of Congress  
 Washington D.C.

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## 7 - DESCRIPTION

## Inventory of Sites in the District

*All structures and sites contribute to the historical integrity of the proposed district.*

1. Tassistro House, Commerce St. One-story flanking-gable frame residence, with inset gallery supported by square Tuscan columns around front (west) and south elevations, frontispiece entrance, and peaked window lintels. Greek Revival, ca. 1845.
2. Hurley House, Commerce St. One-and-a-half-story flanking-gable frame residence, with inset gallery supported by square Tuscan columns, gabled dormer with Palladian window, frontispiece entrance and peaked window lintels. Greek Revival, ca. 1850.
3. Old Rodney Schoolhouse, Commerce St. One-story two-by-three-bay hip-roof brick structure with tin roof. Front (west) wall demolished for use as garage. Ca. 1840.
4. Residence, Commerce St. One-story flanking-gable board-and-batten structure, with front porch and central chimney. Rural folk house vernacular, ca. 1900.
5. Rodney Presbyterian Church, Commerce St. Two-story gable-roof brick structure with stepped gable ends and interior-end bell tower. Late-Federal, ca. 1832. Listed on the National Register, 1972.
6. Residence, Commerce St. One-story gable-front board-and-batten frame structure. Rural vernacular, ca. 1920.
7. Residence, Rodney-Lorman Rd. One-story flanking-gable nine-by-two-bay frame structure with inset gallery supported by attenuated, chamfered porch posts along front (west) and rear (north) elevations. Three entrance doors with transoms are spaced along the front. A trellised well house is situated at the northwest and southwest corners of the house. Late-Federal, ca. 1835.
8. Residence, Commerce St. One-and-a-half-story five-by-three-bay flanking-gable frame structure with full-length front porch and frontispiece entrance. Rural vernacular, ca. 1910.
9. Alston Grocery Store, Commerce St. One-story gable-front frame structure. Three-bay facade features a central double-leaf paneled entrance door flanked on both sides with a large six-light rectangular window with paneled blinds. Shed porch is carried around front (west) and north elevations. Greek Revival, ca. 1840.
10. Residence, Commerce St. One-story gable-front board-and-batten structure, set back from street with two sheds in front. Rural vernacular, ca. 1900.

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## 7 - DESCRIPTION

11. Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Commerce St. Extension. One-story board-and-batten gable-front structure. Carpenter Gothic, 1868. Listed on National Register, 1972.
12. Commercial building (vacant), Batchelor St. Two-story hip-roof brick structure, with masonry lintels and corbelled roof cornice. Shed porch along front (north) elevation. Greek Revival, ca. 1850.
13. Residence, Olive St. One-story four-by-one bay frame structure, featuring an inset gallery and paired entrance doors. Greek Revival vernacular, ca. 1840.
14. Residence (vacant), Olive St. One-story four-by-two-bay frame structure, with inset gallery, bracketed gallery cornice, frontispiece entrance, and peaked window lintels. Late Greek Revival, ca. 1860.
15. Mt. Zion Baptist Church No. 1. One-and-a-half-story gable-front frame structure with heavy denticulated boxed cornice on gable end. Pointed-arch entrance door with archivolt trim. Interior-end tower features polygonal belfry with domed cap. Transitional Greek Revival-Gothic Revival, ca. 1850.
16. Residence, Olive St. One-and-a-half-story three-by-two-bay flanking-gable frame structure on elevated brick pier foundation. Enclosed shed porch along west (rear) elevation. Rural folk house vernacular, ca. 1840.
17. Piazza Store (vacant), Commerce St. One-story double-gable-front frame structure with shed porch across the east (front) elevation. Storefront features double-leaf paneled entrance doors framed by flat-faced pilasters, and windows with paneled blinds also framed by pilasters. Greek Revival, ca. 1830.
18. Piazza House, Commerce St. One-story three-by-one-bay frame structure with shed porch and extended ell off the west (rear) elevation. Rural folk house vernacular, ca. 1890.
19. Rodney Masonic Lodge F.&A.M., Commerce St. Two-story gable-front two-by-three-bay frame structure. Central entrance with double-leaf paneled-entrance doors; exposed rafter ends. Rural vernacular, ca. 1890.
20. Zion Chapel A.M.E. Church, Commerce St. One-story two-by-three-bay frame structure with gabled single-bay front porch. Rural vernacular, ca. 1900.
21. Rodney Cemetery. Located along wooden bluff east of the Presbyterian Church. Contains graves of many early Rodney residents. Listed on the National Register in 1972 as part of the Rodney Presbyterian Church nomination.
22. Confederate Earthworks. Overlook old river bed along bluffs of the cemetery. Listed on the National Register in 1972 as part of the Rodney Presbyterian Church nomination.

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## 7 - DESCRIPTION (Archaeological)

Rodney is situated at the interface of two physiographic systems represented by Loess Bluffs and the Mississippi Basin. The relative steepness of the river banks along the eastern bank of the Mississippi River afforded ideal landings for river transportation during the nineteenth century. Being situated on the lower terrace of the Loess Bluffs Rodney was a thriving river town prior to the American Civil War. However, four years of war stifled the river economy of Rodney. The final blow to Rodney's growth ended when the river began moving westward away from Rodney following the Civil War. Several landings were established south of the original settlement in a vain attempt to follow the river. It will remain for archaeology to explain the intent of structural remains at and below ground surface. In addition to these remains is an excellent Confederate redan with protective trenches on the crest of the bluff above the cemetery and overlooking the town. This important vestige of Rodney's role during the Civil War consists of an earthen fort approximately twenty feet square with trenches extending westward and southeastward along the perimeter of the bluff.

## 8 - SIGNIFICANCE (Archaeological)

Rodney offers the historical archaeologist a near unique opportunity to study an early nineteenth century river settlement in Mississippi. The first settlers inhabited an area immediately north of the present settlement of Rodney, however, the shifting of the Mississippi River's bed to the west caused by a sandbar formation caused a shift in the population of Rodney to the south. In 1869, most of the original northern settlement burned, and no attempt was made to rebuild. The economic decline of Rodney, caused by the Civil War, the shift in the course of the river, and finally the burning of the northern end of town, was too much for the town to overcome. Preliminary archaeological investigations scheduled to take place during the summer of 1980 will concentrate in the northernmost area of Rodney on the site of the original settlement. In addition to this area along the lower terrace, an effort will be made to investigate the earthwork on the bluff above the town to determine the extent of its occupation during the Civil War.

## 11 - FORM PREPARED BY

William C. Wright, Historical Archaeologist  
Mississippi Department of Archives and History  
P. O. Box 571  
Jackson, Mississippi 39205

May, 1980  
(601) 354-7326



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## 8 - SIGNIFICANCE

Zion Chapel A.M.E. Church (no. 20) is exemplary of rural church construction by blacks in Mississippi around the turn of the century. Many of the asylar board-and-batten residences in the district also date from this period. There are no incompatible intrusions within the proposed district. District boundary lines were drawn according to density of development and the proximity of structures to the three pivotal religious buildings.

Preservation efforts began in Rodney during the early 1970s with the support of the Rodney Foundation and the Rodney Foundation and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, in an effort to preserve the Rodney Presbyterian Church and the Sacred Heart Catholic Church. In 1979, the ad hoc committee for the preservation of Rodney was formed to create a statewide base of support and a preservation plan for Rodney and environs.

## 9 - MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

U.S. Department of the Interior, Natchez Trace Parkway Survey. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1941.