

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received \_\_\_\_\_  
date entered \_\_\_\_\_

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic N/A

and/or common Aberdeen Multiple Resource Area

## 2. Location

street & number The incorporation limits of Aberdeen

N/A  
not for publication

city, town Aberdeen N/A vicinity of

state Mississippi code 28 county Monroe code 095

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

## 4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Owners

street & number Multiple Addresses

city, town N/A vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state N/A

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Chancery Clerk Building

street & number 201 W. Commerce St.

city, town Aberdeen state MS 39730

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date \_\_\_\_\_  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Description

|   |                                       |   |   |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Condition                                     |                                       | Check one                                     | Check one   |
| <input checked="" 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 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 Aberdeen Multiple Resource Area is bounded by the incorporation limits of the town of Aberdeen. Included within the boundaries of the Aberdeen Multiple Resource Area are four districts, one thematic group and seven individual properties. The four districts are residential in character, while the thematic group is commercial. Four of the individually nominated properties consist of antebellum houses and their outbuildings and three are early twentieth century structures (two houses and the City Hall). The districts and individual properties will be discussed more fully in their individual nominations.

Highway 45, the main artery through town, divides Aberdeen in half as it extends from the northwest section of town to the southeast and then crosses the Tombigbee River. The community's commercial area is located on this highway (known in town as Commerce Street) between Hickory Street and Locust Street. The largest concentration of historic resources is found near the nucleus of the original town. This area stretches north about one-half mile and south about one mile from Commerce Street. The area's approximate boundaries are Marshall Street on the north, Locust Street on the east, High Street on the south and Franklin Street on the west. South of Highway 25 was an area of early development also. The Austin Pollard House is the only extant antebellum building with any remaining architectural integrity in this area. Most of the new development in Aberdeen, whether commercial or residential, is concentrated on the western side of town. Commercial strip development stretches along Highway 45 from Thayer Avenue northwesterly to Highway 8. Further north on Highway 45 is Stinson Air Field and the beginnings of an industrial park. Southwest of Highway 45, south of Highway 8 and north of Commerce Street is a new subdivision.

Aberdeen is situated on the west bank of the Tombigbee River in the Black Prairie region. The Black Prairie or Black Belt forms a fertile crescent-shaped area extending from Corinth in Alcorn County south to Macon in Noxubee County and eastward into Alabama. Its surface ranges from flat to gently undulating. As a natural grassland, the prairie could be easily cultivated and drew many cotton planters to northeast Mississippi. By the 1850's, the Black Prairie region was the main center of cotton production in the United States (Arthell Kelley, "The Geography," in A History of Mississippi [two volumes], ed. Richard Aubrey McLemore [Jackson: University and College Press of Mississippi, 1973], pp. 5,7; and John Rodabough, Scrapbook of local history articles from The Aberdeen Examiner, article dated March 4, 1971 located in Evans Memorial Library, Aberdeen).

Aberdeen, founded in 1836 on the banks of the Tombigbee, was destined to become one of the largest cotton ports on the river between 1845 and 1858 (Rodabough, Scrapbook). The community was surveyed in two separate parcels known as Old Aberdeen and New

## 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> art          | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering                       | <input type="checkbox"/> music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian               |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy             | <input type="checkbox"/> theater                    |
| <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

Black History

Specific dates See Individual Builder/Architect N/A

### Nominations

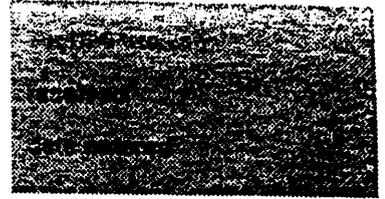
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Aberdeen (pop. 7184), the seat of Monroe County, is primarily significant historically as a cotton shipping port for the Black Prairie region in the antebellum period and architecturally for its surviving examples of mid-to-late nineteenth century buildings and, to a lesser extent, for its early twentieth century residential architecture. The town's extant antebellum buildings symbolize the prosperity, culture and power that belonged to Aberdeen's citizens at this time. Perhaps the preeminent symbol of Aberdeen's antebellum status is the Monroe County Courthouse, already listed in the National Register. Another significant period of expansion for the community lasted from c. 1880 to 1930. This era saw the construction of locally significant examples of the Queen Anne, the Colonial Revival, the Neo-Classical, the Bungalow and the various "revival" styles. Additionally, Aberdeen boasts one of the finest Neo-Classical city halls in the state. The town's Old Post Office and Courthouse is also significant as one of the few Mississippi expressions of the Richardsonian Romanesque style. The Johnson-Butler House, a bungalow at 210 High Street, and the Tudor Revival C.C. Day House at the northwest corner of S. Meridian and High Streets are also among the best examples of their respective styles in Mississippi.

The Aberdeen Multiple Resource Area nomination consists of seven properties (all of them are houses except for the City Hall), four historic districts and a thematic group of commercial buildings. Of the individual properties, four date from the antebellum period and three from the early twentieth century. The four historic districts -- the North Aberdeen Historic District, the South Central Aberdeen Historic District, the W. Commerce Street Historic District and the Harmon Subdivision Historic District -- are all overwhelmingly residential in character. They all contain buildings that illustrate Aberdeen's two greatest periods of prosperity, except for the last district named. The Harmon Subdivision Historic District consists of five bungalows that are believed to have all been constructed within a five year period beginning ca. 1925. The Commercial Buildings of Aberdeen Thematic Group are located on Commerce and N. Meridian Streets. The thematic group consists of a row of seven buildings at 110-122 E. Commerce Street, an individual building at 133 E. Commerce Street and a cluster of three buildings at the northwest corner of Commerce and Meridian Streets (100-104 W. Commerce and 107 N. Meridian).

Aberdeen is located on land that the Chickasaws ceded to the United States Government in the Treaty of Pontotoc in 1832. Most of the 1830's were "Flush Times" for Mississippians. An abundance of



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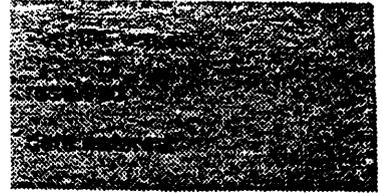
Aberdeen. The town's ties to the river are reflected in the street patterns of Old Aberdeen. The streets were laid out in a grid pattern with the intersections of the streets forming right angles. The whole is "tilted" so that the streets running from east to west are parallel with the Tombigbee River. New Aberdeen, which was west of Meridian Street, was surveyed a few months later. Its streets also form the familiar grid pattern, but run directly north and south or east and west, without reference to the river or Matubby Creek. The geographical development of Aberdeen will be discussed more fully in the statement of significance.

Aberdeen was incorporated in 1837 and by the following year had a population of 2,700 (Reuben Davis, Recollections of Mississippi and Mississippians [1889; reprint ed., No city cited: University and College Press of Mississippi, 1972], p.254). The town's first decade of existence was one of steady growth. The buildings remaining from this early period, which have been identified in this survey, are all houses. Included among these are the Capt. Thomas Coopwood House (the earliest section of which reputedly dates back to at least 1836), the Col. Abner Prewett House (1840), and Scuppernong (1842). All three houses have been extensively remodelled and/or enlarged; however, these changes themselves are, in many cases, significant. The Capt. Thomas Coopwood House, for example, is comprised of an 1836 brick building connected to an 1852 Greek Revival, frame cottage by an enclosed porch. The brick building itself has undergone some minor alterations which will be discussed more fully in the house's individual nomination. The front facade of the Col. Abner Prewett House has been extensively altered. It is speculated that the house originally had a full-width, two story gallery. This gallery's box columns were probably utilized in the construction of the central, two story portico flanked by one story galleries now gracing the front facade. Scuppernong is a one-and-one-half story, frame, Gothic Revival house. Its front (east) facade received its Gothic Revival treatment sometime after 1870 (John Rodabough, "Antebellum Homes," Part XV, The Aberdeen Examiner, April, 1972). No documentation has yet been discovered on the house's original appearance.

Three other houses from this time period -- the Mark Prewett House (1840), Cedar Grove (1844) and Kenwood (1846)--were drastically altered in the mid-twentieth century and lost a great deal of their architectural integrity. The Mark Prewett House was a two story house with a full-width, front gallery until at least 1937. Sometime after that, the house was reduced to a one-and-one-half story structure with a front portico. Cedar Grove, the two story, Greek Revival home of pioneer Needham Whitfield, was remodelled into a bungalow in the mid 1930's (Present owner of Cedar Grove, interviewed by Susan Enzweiler, architectural historian with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, at Aberdeen, Miss., August 7, 1986). Kenwood

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was almost completely torn down in 1940 and rebuilt on its original foundation. Such original features as four out of its six columns (minus their Corinthian capitals), the balcony and part of the stairway were incorporated into the reconstruction (Discover Aberdeen Festival Committee, Discover Aberdeen.... [Aberdeen: no publisher cited, no date], p. 8). Neither of the latter two houses is located in a district nor do they retain enough architectural integrity to be nominated individually. The Mark Prewett House is a noncontributing element in the W. Commerce Street Historic District.

With the town's fortunes bound to cotton and the river, Aberdeen's prosperity peaked in the late 1840s and the 1850s. Cotton warehouses, none of which are extant, lined the river bank north of Commerce Street. The palatial homes of planters and other wealthy citizens were scattered about town. Many of the ones still extant line W. Commerce Street. These include the Reuben Davis House (already listed in the National Register), the Dr. William Alfred Sykes House and the Old Homestead. Other mansions, namely Holliday Haven and the Adams-French House, are located on Meridian Street, now one of the major north-south routes through town. All of the aforementioned mansions are two story, three or five bay wide, frame houses executed in the Greek Revival style usually with a central hall plan. The Old Homestead also exhibits Gothic Revival and Italianate influences. Either a central portico or full-width, undercut gallery graces the front facades of these homes. They usually feature either panelled box columns or paired, fluted columns. The wraparound gallery of the Reuben Davis House with its eight single, Doric fluted columns is an exception. So is the Old Homestead because it features a two story portico on both (north and east) of its street elevations. Lastly, each of the mansions displays a second story balcony in its gallery or porticoes, save for the Adams-French House, which has three, and the Reuben Davis House which has none.

Small cottages, usually Greek Revival in character, attest to the vibrancy of Aberdeen's middle class during the decade and a half before the Civil War. These frame houses are one to one-and-one-half stories and three or five bays wide with a central hall plan. Three of those which are Greek Revival in design -- the Felix G. Henley House, the William A. Dunklin House and the Austin Pollard House -- have a central, front portico with box columns. McDearman is a predominantly Greek Revival cottage with a Carpenter Gothic front porch. The porch features wide, flat columns displaying panels with delicate, incised work in a somewhat abstract, vine-like pattern with leaves, buds and flowers. A simpler, vine-like motif appears on the porch frieze. Below the frieze are elaborately foliated corner brackets. The Mary Frances Gregg House is Italianate in its design, but also shows some Gothic Revival influences. Its full-width front porch was altered in the early twentieth century but the soffits still

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display heavy carved panels. The frontispiece contains tall, double-leafed doors with round-arched windows that are flanked by sidelights. There is, however, some question as to whether or not these doors are original. A Greek Revival style transom may have been removed to accommodate them. Above the frontispiece and the front windows are ornately carved lintels. The front elevation's frieze is accented by paired brackets interspaced with oval shaped windows. The side gables feature oval, four light windows with heavy, semicircular hood moldings. The Gothic Revival features are manifested in the interior. The most prominent is the central hall's wainscoting which has a heavily molded, pointed arch motif.

From 1880 to 1930, Aberdeen experienced a building boom as evidenced by the number of Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Neo-Classical and Bungalow style houses in town.

The town's Queen Anne style buildings are generally modest, one to one-and-one-half story, frame houses. Their principal stylistic features are their massing and form and their spindlework porches. Sanders Place (204 College Place) and 404 S. Franklin Street are more elaborate examples of the Queen Anne style. Sanders Place is a three story, irregularly massed house on a shady corner lot. The focal point of its design is the polygonal tower on its southwest corner. The house's wraparound front porch reflects a Colonial Revival influence in its classical detailing. In sharp contrast to the restraint of Sanders Place stands 404 S. Franklin. This asymmetrically massed cottage features a profusion of exuberant Queen Anne detailing. The front porch exhibits turned posts, a spindled frieze and a sunburst motif in its small gable. The porch is flanked by a polygonal tower and a projecting, gabled bay with rounded corners; both are sheathed in tongue-and-groove beaded board laid either diagonally or vertically. They also exhibit panelling, imbricated shingles and various other components of Queen Anne design.

From the remaining structures, it appears that the Colonial Revival and Neo-Classical styles were at least as popular for domestic architecture as Queen Anne. The majority of these are one-and-one-half story, frame cottages, usually three bays wide, with a wraparound front porch and a hip or truncated hip roof pierced by gables. Larger, more sophisticated examples include Rosemont (407 S. Meridian), Crestwood (501 W. Monroe) and Buena Vista (308 S. Franklin). These two-and-one-half story houses have the same features mentioned above but their elements are more ornate.

The bungalows of Aberdeen show more variety in their form and design elements than do the previously discussed styles. Examples of all four principal subtypes--front-gabled, cross-gabled, side-gabled and hipped roof--are located in the community. They are typically one-and-one-half story, three bays wide and sheathed in horizontally laid boards, though at least one is covered in wood shingle siding and

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others are of brick. The front-gabled bungalows generally have a small front porch which is centrally located or is set off-center. Those with side gables typically feature either a front stoop, a full-width, undercut front porch or a front porch which terminates at a projecting bay. At least one, the Felix Lann, Sr. House at 310 S. Hickory, has a wraparound porch. Most of the side-gabled bungalows also have a large dormer on their front facades. The cross-gabled and hipped roof bungalows are not as common as the preceding subtypes in Aberdeen. The cross-gabled bungalows usually have a small, gabled porch set off-center into the front gable. A less common variation features a full-width porch under the front gable. The hipped roof bungalows have a large front porch. The design elements varied from bungalow to bungalow. Many are quite plain, with no particular style. Others may feature a classically inspired frontispiece, but also have imbricated shingles in their gables. Still others display Craftsman style elements. The most unusual bungalow in Aberdeen is the Johnson-Butler House at 210 High Street. This one story, cross-gabled house with a second story upper room features Japanese design elements.

Eclecticism exerted a strong influence in American architecture from 1880 to 1930. This movement, coinciding with a building boom in Aberdeen, has had a lasting impact on the town's streetscapes. Perhaps the best expression of late nineteenth century eclecticism in the town is Victoria (209 S. Franklin). This house mixes Picturesque Gothic, Stick Style and Eastlake elements into a charming combination. The variety of early twentieth century "revival styles" represented among Aberdeen's cultural resources include Gothic (First Methodist Church at 300 College Place), Georgian (727 W. Commerce St.), Dutch Colonial (206 W. Canal St.), Spanish (St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church on the northeast corner of S. James and Washington Streets, 513 W. Jefferson St., 305 S. Franklin), Tudor (410 S. Hickory St., C.C. Day House on the northwest corner of S. Meridian and High Streets.) and Swiss Chateau (509 High St.).

Aberdeen's neighborhoods are a kaleidoscope of architectural styles. Antebellum houses, late nineteenth century residences, bungalows and post-World War II homes are intermingled along the town's residential streets. None of the residential historic districts, save for the Harmon Subdivision Historic District, illustrates only one time period in American architectural history. The Harmon Subdivision Historic District, though, is comprised of bungalows that, judging from their architectural style and the brief time span (c. 1925-1930) in which they were all built, were probably constructed for speculation purposes. The house lots in all of the districts are of varying sizes, ranging from fifty feet wide to well over one hundred feet wide. Generally, the twentieth century structures have the smaller lots implying that larger lots may have been subdivided. Also, in the past, many buildings in Aberdeen were

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lost through either natural disasters or demolition. The resulting vacant lots which are scattered throughout the North Aberdeen Historic District and the South Central Aberdeen Historic District, however, are not eyesores. These lots are well-maintained and have the appearance of expansive lawns due in part to the variety of lot sizes.

The Harmon Subdivision, W. Commerce Street, North Aberdeen and South Central Aberdeen Historic Districts are overwhelmingly residential in character. The Harmon Subdivision Historic District is exclusively residential and the W. Commerce Street District is nearly so, except for the Dr. William Alfred Sykes House which now houses the Chamber of Commerce offices. In the North Aberdeen Historic District, 86% of the properties are residences, while 14% of them are churches. Less than two percent of the properties in the South Central Aberdeen Historic District are used for commercial purposes and the remaining buildings are homes. The Commercial Buildings of Aberdeen Thematic Group is exclusively commercial.

The Aberdeen Multiple Resource Area nomination is based on a survey which was begun in 1984 and resumed and completed in 1986-1987. The initial survey was spearheaded by P. Ana Gordon and Tomas Blackwell, architectural historians with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. They were assisted in the field by two architecture students from Mississippi State University, Joan Embree and Spence Kellum. During the latter phase of the survey, the field work was completed and the historical research was done by Susan M. Enzweiler, architectural historian with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Richard Cawthon, Chief Architectural Historian with the Department, surveyed and researched Aberdeen's commercial area. He was also responsible for coordinating the project. The entire area included within the incorporation limits of Aberdeen was surveyed. Almost every property over fifty years old was surveyed, unless its loss of architectural integrity precluded estimating a date of construction or it had suffered too many alterations to be considered significant and also lay outside of any district boundaries.

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| Historic District   | Pivotal   | Contributing | Marginally Non-Contributing | Non-Contributing | Intrusive | Total      |
|---------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------|------------|
| W. Commerce St.     | 2         | 13           | 2                           | 4                | 0         | 21         |
| S. Central Aberdeen | 12        | 132          | 6                           | 28               | 1         | 179        |
| N. Aberdeen         | 5         | 28           | 2                           | 6                | 0         | 41         |
| Harmon Sub-division | 0         | 5            | 0                           | 0                | 0         | 5          |
|                     | <u>19</u> | <u>178</u>   | <u>10</u>                   | <u>38</u>        | <u>1</u>  | <u>246</u> |

197  
Total Contributing

49  
Total Non-Contributing

Breakdown of Contributing Elements by Category

| District            | Buildings | Sites    | Structures | Objects  | Total    |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|------------|----------|----------|
| W. Commerce St.     | 14        | 0        | 1          | 0        | 15       |
| S. Central Aberdeen | 144       | 0        | 0          | 0        | 144      |
| N. Aberdeen         | 33        | 0        | 0          | 0        | 33       |
| Harmon Subdivision  | <u>5</u>  | <u>0</u> | <u>0</u>   | <u>0</u> | <u>5</u> |
| Totals              | 196       | 0        | 1          | 0        | 197      |

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cheap land, easy credit from state banks, high prices for cotton and the development of the Petit Gulf variety of cotton combined to create an economic boom in the state. Many people from the older southern states migrated to Mississippi. During the 1830's, cotton production quadrupled and the slave population increased by 197%. Between 1833 and 1837, seven million acres of land were sold in the state (Porter L. Fortune, Jr., "The Formative Period." A History of Mississippi [2 vols.] 1:252; William K. Scarborough, "Heartland of the Cotton Kingdom." A History of Mississippi [2 vols.] 1:310, 314 and John Edmond Gonzales, "Flush Times, Depression, War, & Compromise." A History of Mississippi [2 vols.] 1:289).

Aberdeen was founded by entrepreneurs who hoped to cash in on this bonanza. The present town is comprised of two contiguous parcels of land that were both surveyed into lots which were then put up for sale in 1836. Meridian Street, which runs north and south, is the boundary line between Old Aberdeen and New Aberdeen.

Old Aberdeen was located in Fractional Sections 26 and 35 between present-day Meridian Street and the Tombigbee River. Eighteen investors founded this town, but the major impetus behind Old Aberdeen was Robert Gordon, a Scottish immigrant and a friend of the Chickasaws. Gordon envisioned a business district on the west bank of the river with a commercial or manufacturing district just southwest of it. He also reserved a block as Court Square. Contrary to town planning of that day, Gordon planned for the courthouse to be located in a residential area. The first lot sales for Old Aberdeen occurred in January 1836 (Helen Mattox Crawford, "Aberdeen Is Created, 1836." The Journal of Monroe County History of Mississippi 12:5-8).

New Aberdeen was the project of six developers from the east side of the Tombigbee River. Comprised of Augustin Willis, Thomas C. Branch, William W. Topp, Parker Alexander, Samuel Ragsdale and Robert Smith, the group was known as Topp and Company or the Hamilton Syndicate. They incorporated in January 1836. The deeds for the land their company purchased were recorded in April 1836. Included among these lands were Section 27 and the NE 1/4 Section 34. On June 15, 1836, Topp and Company deeded these parcels in trust to Charles W. Walton so that he could survey and sell town lots in "said contemplated town known as New Aberdeen" (Crawford, "Aberdeen Is Created, 1836.", 12:9-10).

A newspaper ad describing the burgeoning town of Aberdeen (probably just Old Aberdeen) was sent to several regional newspapers on July 24, 1836. It related that Aberdeen had a population of five hundred, a steam saw and grist mill, "numerous buildings of a costly

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and permanent character," plus over one hundred workmen who were constructing other buildings. The ad further characterized Aberdeen as "the head of Steamboat navigation on the Tombigbey [sic] River" and reported that plans were underway to build a railroad connecting the town and Pontotoc, approximately forty miles to the northwest (Crawford, "Aberdeen Is Created, 1836." 12:11-12).

The state legislature incorporated Old Aberdeen and New Aberdeen as the town of Aberdeen on May 12, 1837. Included within the community's incorporation limits were all of Fractional Section 35 that is more or less north of present-day Highway 25, all of Fractional Section 26, south of Matubba Creek, and the SE 1/4 Section 34 (Helen Crawford, "Aberdeen...Looking Backward Through the Years at the History of the City," The Aberdeen Examiner, May 22, 1986, p. 4B).

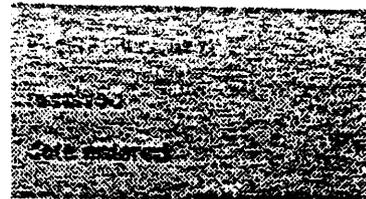
In that same year, 1837, the "Flush Times," which had spawned so many new towns in Mississippi, ended in a panic. A reversal of federal land policies coupled with falling cotton prices induced an economic depression which lasted until 1849. The financial crisis peaked from 1838 to 1842. By the mid-1840's all the banks in Mississippi were closed and no new ones would be chartered before the Civil War. As dismal as the economy was, though, it did not prevent the plantation system from spreading into central and northern Mississippi. Mississippians relied on the services of banks chartered by other states or commission merchants and brokers. The cotton culture thrived in the Magnolia State, and by the 1850s Mississippi had become the leading cotton-producing state in the nation (Gonzales, p. 294 and Scarborough, p. 310, 322).

Although Aberdeen never had a railroad before the Civil War, it prospered as the sole cotton shipping point for a large region of northern Mississippi and western Alabama. The town attained its prominence as a commercial center because of its location at the head of steamboat navigation on the Tombigbee River. Exports from and imports to this area passed through Aberdeen. On January 6, 1847 an article in the Advertiser related that Aberdeen had fifteen mercantile establishments, two cotton warehouses, two cotton sheds and offices and shops for the numerous professionals, shopkeepers and craftspeople in town (Davis, p. 263 and Crawford, "Aberdeen...Looking Backward," p. 4B).

Improvements in the river channel and an increase in runoff water due to the cultivation of former forest land caused the Tombigbee to rise sooner and more full. Now towns further upriver from Aberdeen could be reached by steamboat. This upriver trade benefited Aberdeen's merchants who processed both the upriver and downriver

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cargoes (Rodabough, Scrapbook).

The river trade built Aberdeen. By 1850, the town's population was almost five thousand in a county with a total population of 21,172. The decade of the 1850s saw the apex of the river trade for Aberdeen, perhaps the largest-volume cotton port on the Tombigbee River. The town averaged shipments of thirty thousand bales annually. However, by 1858-1859 Aberdeen was losing thousands of bales of cotton to West Point where it was shipped by the Mobile & Ohio Railroad (No Author Cited, Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Mississippi, 2 vols. [Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1891], Vol. 1, Part 1:248 and Rodabough, Scrapbook).

Aberdeen's Greek Revival mansions best symbolize the town's significance as a cotton shipping point for the Black Prairie region. None of the warehouses, offices or shops connected with the antebellum cotton trade remain. The smaller planter's and Greek Revival cottages also reflect the prosperity that was based on cotton. Antebellum Aberdeen had a thriving middle class whose fortunes were tied to the more affluent planters' class that they served.

The Monroe County Courthouse in Aberdeen symbolizes that community's successful struggle to become the county seat. Athens, the geographical center of the county, was the county seat from 1830 to 1847. Aberdeenians launched an effective campaign to wrest this honor away. The first courthouse in Aberdeen was a simple, frame building and was greatly criticized by the residents of Athens. Consequently, Aberdeen spared no expense on its new Greek Revival courthouse, constructed in 1857. Described as a "Court House Palace," the building symbolizes Aberdeen's political dominance and importance in Monroe County from antebellum times right up to the present. The Monroe County Courthouse was individually listed in the National Register in 1978 (Monroe County Courthouse, Monroe County, National Register Nomination. Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson).

Aberdeen suffered during the Civil War and Reconstruction as did most of Mississippi. Although no major battles were fought near the town during the Civil War, Reconstruction spawned Ku Klux Klan activity in the area which resulted in a Federal regiment being sent to Aberdeen to stop the violence (Collection of Rollins Family Letters: Letter written by Jennie Shaw of Monroe County dated March 30, 1871). Most of the state suffered economically in the post-bellum period because of an international depression in cotton prices. From 1865 to circa 1900, cotton production continually outstripped demand. The plummeting cotton prices and resultant depression left many

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members of Mississippi's rural upper and middle classes destitute. The situation was even worse for the newly-freed blacks. A large number from both races migrated out of state (James H. Stone, "Historic Mississippi." Historic Preservation in Mississippi: A Comprehensive Plan, p. 32-33).

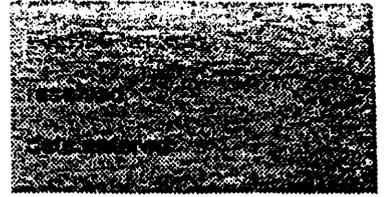
There were signs of recovery in Aberdeen, however. In a letter dated June 26, 1876, John P. Shaw wrote from Aberdeen that in terms of agriculture, Monroe County was having one of its best years in a long time (Rollins Family Letters: Letter written by John P. Shaw of Aberdeen dated June 26, 1876). Monroe County farmers were also diversifying their crops in the late nineteenth century. Corn, wheat, oats, field peas and sorghum were cultivated in Monroe County in addition to cotton. Farmers were working to improve their stock and began experimenting with sheep husbandry (Goodspeed, Vol. 1, Part 1:247).

Aberdeen's position as a cotton shipping point and a center of trade was strengthened in the post-bellum period with the coming of the railroad. There were no railroads in Aberdeen before the war, despite local support for them. The Mobile & Ohio Railroad was the first company to build a spur into Aberdeen. The line became functional on October 14, 1869. The M & O Depot (listed on the National Register in 1983) symbolizes Aberdeen's late, but important, entrance into the Railroad Age. The Illinois Central Railroad located a branch line into Aberdeen in 1873 and opened it in 1884. A railroad station designed by the nationally prominent architectural firm of Burnham & Root was constructed in 1888 in Aberdeen. That building is no longer extant (Mobile and Ohio Depot, Monroe Co., National Register Nomination. Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson; No Author Cited, "Every Name Has Its History." Illinois Central Magazine 19:23; and Thomas S. Hines, Burnham of Chicago: Architect and Planner. [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974], p. 38).

With improved transportation systems and a sound agricultural base, Aberdeen's commerce flourished after Reconstruction. Because of the town's position as a storage and trading point for cotton, many people came to Aberdeen and conducted other business there as well (John E. Rodabough, "A History of the Negroes of Aberdeen and Monroe County, 1790-1916," M.A. thesis, Mississippi State University, 1964, p. 32-33). From approximately 1880 to 1930, Aberdeen enjoyed a period of prosperity and expansion based on a diversified economy whose foundation rested on cotton. This wealth also helped the town solidify its position as the political and social center of Monroe County. During this period the population remained fairly stable,

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fluctuating between four and five thousand people. Aberdeen had electric street lights by 1885 but its streets were not paved until sometime after 1894 (Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: 1885, 1890, 1894, 1899, 1905, 1910, 1918).

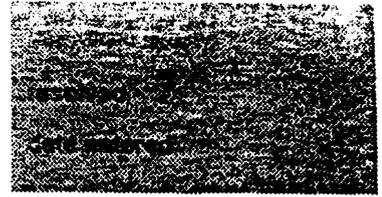
By 1885, according to the Sanborn Maps, there were at least four cotton yards, one cotton warehouse and two cotton gin/grist mills in Aberdeen. The Farmers' Cotton Yard, roughly bordered by Commerce, Hickory, Washington and James Street, was slated to have its northeast corner prepared for the construction of a new Post Office and Federal Courthouse (1885-1887). Other industries in Aberdeen included the Hope Oil Mill, Compress & Manufacturing Company, S.H. Berg's Saw Mill & Lumber Yard and George Reynolds' Mills. There are no extant buildings remaining from these businesses, except, perhaps, for a board and batten structure located in the Federal Compress and Warehouse Complex on N. Meridian Street. It is difficult to determine at this time if the building was part of Hope Oil Mill.

Throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, Aberdeen's major industries were based on either cotton, lumber or oil. Exceptions, however, included the Aberdeen Ice Factory located north of Quincy Street and H. L. Brown's broom factory. This manufacturing trend continued well into the twentieth century, as other industries were also developed. These included three bottling plants (Aberdeen Bottling Works in 1903; Aberdeen Coca-Cola Company in 1912; a contract for a Ne-Hi Bottling Plant in 1929), a clothing factory, a button factory, a sandlime brick factory, an ice cream factory, a creamery and iron works and machine shops (Sanborn Maps; Dunbar Rowland, ed., Mississippi... 3 vols. [Atlanta: Southern Historical Publishing Association, 1907], Vol. 1:18 and Crawford, "Aberdeen...Looking Backward," p. 6B-8B, 11C passim).

A very significant phenomenon in the commercial world of late nineteenth century Aberdeen was the emergence of an elite group of black businessmen and merchants. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, all of Aberdeen's merchants put forth a concerted effort to attract black customers. Undoubtedly, the most successful were those businessmen who were black themselves. They provided necessary services and recreational outlets for their people. Other blacks, such as barbers, also served a white clientele because it was not socially acceptable for whites to be barbers. From the scant information that remains, we know that blacks had businesses on Commerce Street (the exact buildings are not known) and on S. Meridian Street in the block between Commerce and Washington Streets. The late nineteenth century commercial buildings on the west side of the latter

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block probably housed black businesses. However, these buildings have been extensively altered, including having their front facades stuccoed to "preserve" them, and have consequently lost their architectural integrity. The homes of some of the black merchants still stand, however, and are contributing elements in the South Central Aberdeen Historic District. They will be discussed more fully in the statement of significance for that district. (Rodabough, Scrapbook, "A History of the Negroes of Aberdeen . . .," pp. 34-38; and Miriam Sykes Henley, daughter of local black merchant, Tom Sykes, interviewed by Susan Enzweiler, architectural historian with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, at Aberdeen, Miss., December 17, 1986).

A political group calling themselves "rednecks" gained power in state government after the turn of the century. Their racist policies made life difficult for Mississippi's black citizens. Many, including members of Aberdeen's black middle class, left the state for better opportunities elsewhere (Rodabough, "A History of the Negroes of Aberdeen . . .," pp. 64,66).

The buildings that best illustrate the prosperity of Aberdeen during 1880 to 1930 are its commercial buildings and residences. The eleven commercial buildings comprising the thematic group date from circa 1885 to 1918. During this time period Aberdeen's commercial core was altered from wood to brick construction, resulting in the majority of the surviving properties. The individually nominated properties dating from this time period -- City Hall (125 W. Commerce St.), the Johnson House (210 High St.) and the C. C. Day House (517 S. Meridian St.) -- are among the most sophisticated expressions of their respective styles within the state. The largest proposed district, the South Central Aberdeen Historic District, has an overwhelming majority of its contributing resources constructed during this period. Most were built between 1876 and 1915. The largest concentration of these houses within the district line both sides of S. Franklin Street. A significant cluster of Queen Anne and Colonial Revival houses is also located at the other side of the historic district, on S. Maple Street between Jefferson and Madison. Other houses from this period are scattered throughout the district, as are earlier and later residences. The North Aberdeen Historic District is comprised of houses and churches dating from the 1840s up to 1930. The cultural resources of this district are generally well-distributed through the time period. The same is true for the W. Commerce Street Historic District where the contributing houses date from the 1840s up to the mid-1930s. All the contributing resources in the Harmon Subdivision

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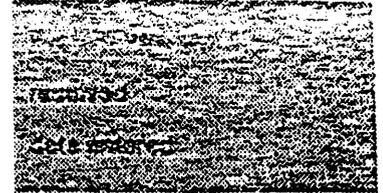
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Historic District date from c. 1925-1930, judging from their stylistic features.

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History was strongly urged by the Monroe County Historical Society to conduct a survey of the cultural resources within the county. The survey of Aberdeen and the subsequent Multiple Resource Area nomination are the first phase of this county-wide project. The project was begun in Aberdeen for several reasons: 1) Aberdeen is by far the largest community in the county and, as such, was expected to have the greatest number of significant resources, 2) as the county seat and because of its location on the Tombigbee River, Aberdeen is the county's most prominent town, 3) a partial survey of Aberdeen had been begun in 1984 by this Department and 4) there was much enthusiasm and support in Aberdeen for this project, both at the local government level and among the general population. It is hoped that city officials will utilize the findings of this survey in their planning projects. The Aberdeen-South Monroe Chamber of Commerce has already expressed an interest in preparing a booklet on restored mansions in Aberdeen based on this MRA nomination. The survey of the rest of Monroe County will be completed as our budget and constraints on staff time allow.

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## #10. Geographical Data

|                                |                   |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| A. Capt. Thomas Coopwood House | 16/355485/3743510 |
| B. Old Homestead & Sykes Barn  | 16/356660/3743600 |
| C. Adams-French House          | 16/357110/3744000 |
| D. Aberdeen City Hall          | 16/357055/3743620 |
| E. Johnson House               | 16/356945/3742990 |
| F. William A. Dunklin House    | 16/356910/3742950 |
| G. C. C. Day House             | 16/357075/3743030 |
| H. Holliday Haven              | 16/357085/3742930 |
| I. Austin Pollard House        | 16/357190/3742290 |

The boundary for the Aberdeen MRA is the current city limit of Aberdeen. The community's northern boundary is Matubby Creek which meanders southeasterly into the Tombigbee River. The river forms the eastern boundary. At a point just north of the new Highway 25, the boundary heads due west from the river for  $\frac{4}{5}$  of a mile, then southwesterly for a half mile, and, finally, west again for almost  $\frac{3}{10}$  of a mile until it meets the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad tracks. The boundary follows the tracks for approximately  $1 \frac{1}{5}$  miles as they head in a southwesterly direction. Just south of where a spur joins the track, the boundary zigzags northwesterly until it reaches Highway 45 at a point located approximately a half mile north of the junction of this highway and Egypt Road. From this point, the boundary extends east for just over a half mile, then directly south for  $\frac{7}{10}$  of a mile and then east again until it reaches Matubby Creek.

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## #10. Geographical Data

### Harmon Subdivision Historic District

- A 16 355540 3743700
- B 16 355710 3743690
- C 16 355710 3743610
- D 16 355540 3743620

### W. Commerce Street Historic District

- E 16 356100 3743960
- F 16 356285 3743950
- G 16 356280 3743470
- H 16 355765 3743480
- I 16 355760 3743690

### North Aberdeen Historic District

- J 16 356680 3744000
- K 16 357150 3744000
- L 16 357145 3743810
- M 16 356665 3743510

### South Central Aberdeen Historic District

- N 16 356335 3743670
- O 16 356540 3743670
- P 16 356665 3743480
- Q 16 356940 3743610
- R 16 357420 3743550
- S 16 357260 3742890
- T 16 356305 3742910