

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED JUL 17 1979  
DATE ENTERED FEB 14 1979

**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

1907 House

*(Type in parentheses)*

AND/OR COMMON

Magee Plantation

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Fort Stephens Road

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Prentiss

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Third

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Mississippi

CODE

28

COUNTY

Jefferson Davis

CODE

065

**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 type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Future Museum

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Prentiss Institute Junior College

STREET & NUMBER

Fort Stephens Road

CITY, TOWN

Prentiss

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Mississippi 39474

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the Chancery Clerk  
Jefferson Davis County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Drawer M

CITY, TOWN

Prentiss

STATE

Mississippi 39474

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Statewide Survey of Historic Sites

DATE

1977

\_\_\_ FEDERAL  STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

CITY, TOWN

Jackson

STATE

Mississippi 39205

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

## CHECK ONE

## CHECK ONE

\_\_\_EXCELLENT

\_\_\_DETERIORATED

\_\_\_UNALTERED

\_\_\_ORIGINAL SITE

\_\_\_GOOD

\_\_\_RUINS

XALTERED

XMOVED

DATE 1927

XFAIR

\_\_\_UNEXPOSED

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Situated on the rolling land of the Piney Woods region of southeastern Mississippi, the 1907 House, a former plantation dwelling, faces south on the historic Fort Stephens Road, an early nineteenth-century highway between Fort Stephens, Alabama, and Natchez. Framed with hand-hewn long-leaf heart pine, the one-story gable-roof structure has a three-bay south facade protected by a porch and sheathed in hand-sawn flush boarding. The other three sides are clapboarded. Four pierced and squared posts support the porch and are joined by a makeshift board balustrade. The west elevation has a single-sash window on the north end, a double-hung four-over-four sash window in the center, a plank-door entrance on the south end, and a rectangular ventilator (now sheathed) in the gable. The north (rear) elevation has a triple-pane single-sash window on the west end and a plank door entrance on the east. The three-bay east elevation has a triple-pane single-sash window on the north end and double-hung windows near the center and on the south end. Doors, architraves, and porch posts are painted blue, clapboards white. The structure is supported by a brick pier foundation.

The interior of the house has one large room (the original partitions of which have been removed) and a two-room rear lean-to. The north wall separating the main room from the lean-to has two original plank doors opening into the rear rooms. Horizontally boarded walls culminate in a cornice board set at a forty-five degree angle in the main room, with wooden ceiling panels running north-south. At present, the house is being used for storage and contains several pieces of primitive furniture, including a desk, cupboards, and an upright map-storage case.

During the 1920s, the property was extensively altered to accommodate the expanding needs of the institution which owned it. A row of slaves' cabins, arranged in a semicircle approximately fifty feet north of the former plantation house, was demolished, apparently concurrently with the relocation of the house one hundred feet northwest of its original site. A 1940 plan of the house drawn by the Works Progress Administration Writers Project shows the main room divided into four sections, with two entrances on the south facade; two exterior chimneys on the south ends of the east and west walls; and, in the west yard, a separate kitchen building connected to the house by a walkway. After 1940, the kitchen, exterior chimneys, and main-room partitions were removed; a potbellied stove (no longer extant) was installed, with a brick chimney built through the roof; windows with original hinged plank shutters and the two front entrances were replaced by double-hung sash windows and casings; a new central entrance was cut; and a tin covering was applied to the roof.

A grist mill, constructed during the 1930s and used for vocational training, stands on the western boundary of the 1907 House property. The mill, powered by a gasoline engine, has board-and-batten exterior walls and intact millstones on the interior. The Fort Stephens Road continues east fifty feet past the 1907 House to the campus of Prentiss Institute Junior College. A dormitory is situated adjacent to the house, and the administration building is located approximately one hundred feet east on the Fort Stephens Road. The adjoining campus area to the east contains several older one-story wood-frame classrooms and dormitories, new dormitory buildings, a library, and a science building.

# 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 checked="" 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 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		

SPECIFIC DATES ca. 1820

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The 1907 House is the site of the 1907 founding of Prentiss Normal and Industrial Institute, one of the oldest educational institutions for blacks in Mississippi. Architecturally, it is representative of the rural vernacular cottage constructed during the nineteenth-century settlement period in Mississippi. Said to have been built as a plantation residence ca. 1820 from long-leaf pine hand-sawn by slaves (A. L. Johnson interview; Works Progress Administration, Source Material), the house and eighty acres were purchased by the founders of Prentiss Normal and Industrial Institute in 1907 (Deed Book 21:347).

Mississippi's Piney Woods region was settled after the War of 1812 by travelers going west from Fort Stephens, Alabama, to Natchez. The area is noted for its examples of folk architecture, including the "dogtrot," "shotgun," and four-room cottage type similar to the 1907 House. Built for plantation owners Tobias (d. 1855) and Nancy (1804-1890) Magee, the house exhibited major elements of craftsmanship shared by other vernacular folk houses, such as the use of hand-sawn boards and a comparatively spacious four-room interior plan.

The Prentiss Normal and Industrial Institute was organized in June, 1907, by Jonas Edward and Bertha LaBranche Johnson, who with other ambitious blacks purchased the former Magee property from W. L. Polk, a white landowner who had bought it from the Magee family in 1901 (Deed Book 7:10). The 1907 House was used both as living quarters for the Johnsons and as a classroom facility for the school. Jonas Edward Johnson, an Alcorn College graduate, was president of the school from 1907 until his death in 1953. His wife, a graduate of Tuskegee Institute, then became president, and upon her death in 1971, she was succeeded by her son, A. L. Johnson.

Licensed by the state as a private high school in 1909 and as a private junior college in 1931, Prentiss Institute Junior College received county funds for the operation of its elementary and secondary education programs until 1959. In that year a public school was organized in the town of Prentiss to serve the educational needs of the county's black children. Most of the elementary and secondary courses offered by Prentiss Institute Junior College were discontinued after 1959, although several are still available through the junior college curriculum. Accreditation of the institution is currently under study by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.



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7. Physical Appearance

The house and grist mill (roof now collapsed) are the only built resources within the boundaries of the nominated three acres. The mill is significant because of its use for vocational training (see Description). Alterations to the structure by the school over the past seventy years reflect the changing uses of the property and have not adversely affected the architectural integrity of the structure. Restoration plans for the house call for the stabilization and preservation of the existing fabric of the building for its future use as a museum (see Significance). There are no other campus buildings over fifty years old which contribute to the school's educational significance in the state. There are no existing remains of the slaves' cabins (see Description). Relocation of the house during the 1920s did not affect its integrity of site because the present house site retains the property's original rural landscape setting. The original building site is included within the boundaries of the nominated property.

8. Significance (cont'd)

The significance of the building during the years 1820-1907 may be described in its use as a plantation house (see Significance for its architectural importance). The Prentiss Normal and Industrial Institute served the educational and vocational needs of the region's black youths during a time (early twentieth century) when similar vocational opportunities were not usually available to black students in the public schools of Mississippi. The historical thrust of the nomination is grounded in the use of the property after 1910 by the college.

12. Certification

The proper common and historic name for this property is 1907 House. Listing on the inventory form as typed is incorrect and should have been reversed, with Magee Plantation the historic name and 1907 House the common name. However, given the common usage by the college of the property as the 1907 House, and the historic association of the house with the founding of the college, use of 1907 House as both common and historic name is justified. Further, the association of the property with Black History would make the use of Magee Plantation a less desirable historical association in terms of the significance of the property for Prentiss Institutue Junior College, and its association with Black History in the state.

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8 - SIGNIFICANCE

The educational mission of Prentiss Institute Junior College throughout its history has been grounded in vocational training such as farming, brick masonry, and carpentry, augmented by courses in basic mathematics, business, and the physical sciences and humanities. Emphasis is placed on developing the fundamental educational skills of low-income underprivileged black students in order to prepare them for vocational careers or for transfer to four-year colleges.

Restoration of the 1907 House is planned by Dr. Melerson Dunham, affiliated with the campus ministry, and President A. L. Johnson. Dr. Dunham foresees the restoration of the house as a museum commemorating the founding of the college.

9 - MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Gold, Jack A., architectural historian. Personal inspection, March 8, 1978.

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9 - MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Sketch Map

1907 House

Jefferson Davis Co., Miss.

Drawn by

Jack A. Gold, MDAH

1-12-79

