

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

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**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

NRIS Reference Number: 06000250

Date Listed: March 31, 2006

Property Name: Dockery Farms Historic District

County: Sunflower

State: Mississippi

none  
Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

for Daniel J. Vivian  
Signature of the Keeper

March 31, 2006  
Date of Action

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Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 6. Function or Use

The historic functions are hereby changed to:

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/storage  
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/agricultural outbuilding  
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/processing

The current function is hereby changed to:

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum

Section 8. Statement of Significance

All of the names listed as significant persons are hereby removed since the property does not meet Criterion B.

Social history is hereby added as an area of significance, to more accurately reflect the history of the property.

[These changes were made in consultation with and approved by the National Register staff of the Mississippi State Historic Preservation Office.]

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The Mississippi State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

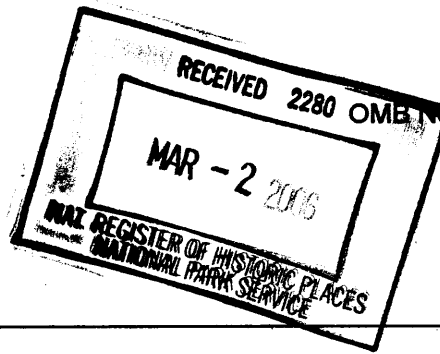
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**DISTRIBUTION:**

**National Register property file**

**Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**

NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 10-90)  
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name:  
other names/site number: **Dockery Farms Historic District**

**2. Location**

street & number: **Hwy 8 East** not for publication \_\_\_  
city or town: **Dockery (Cleveland, MS)** vicinity X \_\_\_  
state: **MS** code: **133** county: **Sunflower** code: zip code: **38732**

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant X nationally \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_ locally. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Kenneth H. P. Paul FEBRUARY 23, 2006  
Signature of certifying official Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register,  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the  
National Register  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the  
National Register  
 removed from the National Register  
 other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action  
James J. Vivian 3/31/06

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**5. Classification**

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**Ownership of Property:**

private

**Number of Resources within Property:**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

**Category of Property:  
District****Contributing****Noncontributing****8**

buildings

**1**

sites

**1**

structures

**10**

objects

Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A**Number of contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register**N/A

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**6. Function or Use**

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**Historic Functions:**

AGRICULTURE

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Music

**Current Functions:**

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**7. Description**

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**Architectural Classification(s):****Materials:**

foundation: concrete or concrete triangular blocks

roof: corrugated tin

walls: cypress wood board &amp; batten, corrugated tin

other: rolled brick image asphalt siding

**Narrative Description:**

See Continuation Sheets

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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**Applicable National Register Criteria**

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations:**

## Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

**Agriculture**  
**Performing Arts**

**Period of Significance**

**1900-1956**

**Significant Dates**

**1930**

**Significant Person(s):**

**Dockery, Will; Patton, Charlie; Wolf, Howlin'; Johnson, Tommy; Williamson, Sonny Boy; James, Elmore; Brown, Willie; House, Son; Staples, Roebuck(Pops)**

**Cultural Affiliation(s): N/A****Architect/Builder**

**Will Dockery and his farm workers**

**Narrative Statement of Significance:**

See continuation sheets.

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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**Bibliography** See continuation sheet.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record  
# \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository:

**Dockery Farms Foundation**

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property: 6 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	15	721180	3734480	C		
B				D		

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description** See continuation sheet.

**Boundary Justification:** See continuation sheet.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title: William Lester, Executive Director	date: 3/22/05
organization: Dockery Farms Foundation	telephone: 662-719-1895
street & number: 229 Hwy 8	zip code: 38732
city or town: Cleveland	state: MS

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Property Owner(s)**

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name: Dockery Farms Foundation	telephone: 662-719-1895
street & number: 229 Hwy 8	zip code: 38732
city or town: Cleveland	state: MS

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**

The Dockery Farms site is located on the north side of Highway 8 East and south of the Sunflower River. The site sits on the high bank of the Sunflower River above the original ferry landing. The site contains native hackberry, cottonwood, pecan, cypress, chestnut oak, redbud, wild plum thickets and cedar trees. Kudzu covers the riverbank to the north of the site. The site is 740.6 feet deep from north to south and is 487.78 feet wide from east to west.

The complex consists of 8 buildings and 1 structure that were designed and built by Will Dockery and his farm workers in the 1920s and 30s. In addition, there is one site of 1 ruin. All of these buildings constitute a unique site that is original with minimum repairs performed by farm workers over the years. The Dockery Farms location is a fine example of Mississippi plantation early twentieth century agricultural buildings designed and built by a landowner and his workers. The sign on the Seed House is a well-known symbol associated with the origins of American blues music.

**1. (C) Seed House c.1930**

The Seed House is constructed of post and beam cypress supports that allowed wagons and trucks to drive under it so that cotton seeds could be loaded by gravity. The trap doors and their onsite blacksmith-made hardware remain in place and are original. The east facade is covered with corrugated tin and is 47.8 feet wide and 32 feet tall. Some of the original white paint remains under the eaves. The north facade has lost its stairway to the second floor entry, but the pipe that carried the cotton seed from the gin to the Seed House remains in place. The north facade is 20.2 feet wide and 32 feet tall. The west facade is covered with corrugated tin and is 47.8 feet wide and 32 feet tall. The roof of the Seed House is covered with corrugated tin. Three large tin aerator turrets adorn the Seed House straddling the ridge beam. The inside of the Seed House has exposed 2x8 cypress wood studs and exposed beams and rafters, a pine tongue-and-groove wood floor and eight functioning trap doors that allowed cotton seed to be gravity loaded into wagons or trucks. The Seed House has no windows. Overall the building remains original. Only maintenance repairs performed by the farm workers have been done to the Seed House over the years.

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The sign on the Seed House is recognized world-wide as a symbol relating to the origins of American blues music. The sign is on the south façade, which is 20.2 feet wide and 32 feet tall and covered in corrugated tin. It reads:

Dockery Farms  
Est. 1895 by  
Will Dockery 1865-1936  
Joe Rice Dockery  
Owner

The word "owner" was over painted by William Lester in 1983 at the death of Joe Rice Dockery at the request of the Dockery family. The sign remains original in all other aspects.

**2. (C) Cotton Gin c.1930**

Faces south and is 89.3 feet wide, 24.2 feet deep, and 35 feet tall. The gin has steel frame construction and sits on a concrete foundation. All facades are covered with corrugated tin, as is the roof. Some original silver paint remains on the roof and all sides of the gin. The Murray cotton gin machinery, with its diesel Minneapolis-Moline power plant and three Murray Model 90 combing lint cleaners remain inside and are original, though not operational. The Cotton Gin is connected to the Seed House on its south façade at the second story level by a tin sheet metal pipe 12" in diameter that carried the de-linted seed to the Seed House for storage. Little maintenance has been conducted on the Cotton Gin and it remains original.

**3. (C) Mule Shed/Hay Barn c.1925**

Located to the east of the Seed House, faces south and is 47.1 feet wide, 48.1 feet deep, and 28 feet tall. It is cypress wood frame construction and sits about 14" off of the ground on triangular concrete foundation blocks. The south façade is sided with cypress and board and batten strips. In the center of the south façade is a door. The east façade has cypress siding from the ground up about 6', leaving the rest of the distance, which is about 10", open (cypress studs are exposed) for air ventilation when hay was stored inside the shed. The east façade also has a cantilevered overhang that exhibits unique cypress wood construction. The north façade is cypress wood with board and batten strips and also has a door in its center. The west façade has cypress siding from the ground up about 6', leaving the rest of the distance, which is about 10", open for air ventilation. The west façade also has a cantilevered overhang that exhibits unique cypress wood



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construction. The roof is covered in corrugated tin. Some original white paint still remains on this building. The Mule Shed/Hay Barn has oak flooring in its one large room and is 24.2 feet wide, 48.1 feet deep, and 22 feet tall with exposed studs and roof beams and rafters.

**4. (C) Cotton Storage Shed c.1925**

Located north of the seed house and the gin, on the south bank of the Sunflower River. It has cypress wood frame construction and sits on triangular concrete foundation blocks about 16" above the ground and is 63.6 feet wide, 21.2 feet deep, and 22 feet tall. The south façade is open with six square posts supporting the roof. The cotton bales were loaded into the shed through the open south façade to be stored before they were shipped out. The east, north, and west facades and the roof are covered with corrugated tin. The original sign advertising The Murray Company (makers of the cotton gin equipment) still hangs on the south façade of the shed. The inside of the Cotton Storage Shed is open with 2x10 pine flooring. The Cotton Storage Shed remains original.

**5. (C) Commissary, ruins c.1900, burned c.1960**

Located to the south and west of the Cotton Storage Shed it faces east, and was about 31 feet wide, about 61 feet deep, and about 21 feet tall. The building was destroyed by fire in the late 1950's/early 1960's. The ruins are at the entrance to the Dockery family home site. It was of post and beam wood construction with red brick veneer painted white exterior and had a flat roof made of asphalt and roll asphalt covering. The roof also contained a large sky light. The east façade contained the front glass door and two large glass windows covered with woven metal mesh for protection. Two cast iron columns helped to hold up the corrugated tin awning. The east façade also was the location for a large concrete front porch that was about 31 feet long and about 10 feet deep. The front porch remains in weathered original condition. The north façade was red brick veneer painted white and had several small windows along the top eave. The west façade was red brick veneer painted white and contained at least one small window and a back door connected to the family home by a concrete sidewalk. The south façade was red brick veneer painted white and had several small windows along the top eave. The Commissary remains in ruins except for the porch, which remains in weathered original condition. Several blues scholars note that this porch was often the scene of impromptu concerts.

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**6. (C) Long Fertilizer Storage House c.1925**

Located west of the Seed House along the west side of the driveway to the Dockery residence. The Fertilizer Storage House has cypress board and batten strips for siding and a corrugated tin roof and is 16.3 feet wide, 80.2 feet deep, and 20 feet tall. It is a one-storied structure. The south façade has a wood louvered air vent in the eave. In the east façade is a large door for wagons or trucks to unload their cargo. The north façade has a small rectangular wood louvered air vent in the eave. The west side has a small window with a shutter that is nailed closed. Some original white paint still remains on this building. The inside of the Fertilizer Storage House is open with exposed beams and rafters and pine wood floors. All chemicals have been removed. The Fertilizer Storage House remains original.

**7. (C) Small Storage House c.1930**

Located on the north side of the Service Station and on the south side of the long Fertilizer Storage House. It is 28.7 feet wide, 12.7 feet deep, and 15 feet tall and one storied. It has cypress wood frame construction with red brick image roll asphalt siding and asphalt shingle roof. The south façade has a door and hasp with lock and a small 4-pane window. The east, north, and west façades have no openings. Original white paint remains on window frame and cornice boards that delineate the roofline. The Small Storage House remains original.

**8. (C) Ruffin Scott House c.1930**

The Ruffin Scott House is located on the west side of the Cotton Storage Shed. Ruffin Scott, the long time Dockery carpenter, was the last person to live in the house. Ruffin moved off the farm in 1995. The house is of wood construction with brick image roll asphalt siding and has a corrugated tin roof. The Ruffin Scott house is 40.9 feet wide, 21.2 feet deep, and 20 feet tall and is a one-storied building. The south façade has 2 windows. The east façade has a back door and 2 windows. The north façade has a lean-to shed made of corrugated tin. The west façade has a screened-in front porch with a main entrance door. The inside of the Ruffin House consists of 2 small rooms and a small kitchen, pine wood floors, wood plank walls and ceiling. The House remains original, though in serious disrepair.

**9. (C) Service Station c.1935**

Faces south and sits on the north side of Hwy 8. The one-story structure is made of wood frame construction with a flat asphalt roof. The Service Station is 79.4 feet wide, 43.7 feet deep, and 19 feet tall. The south façade is covered by pine-lap siding and some pressed tin siding. It has 3 large plate glass windows, 2 doors, and 2 large garage doors that push upward and roll on tracks

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into the ceiling of the work bays. The south façade has a sign that is mounted on the eave that states "Dockery Service Station." Three red and white Coca-Cola signs were also mounted on the south façade, but they were stolen some years ago. The east façade is covered with pine lap siding and some of the concrete block wall is exposed. The north façade is covered with pine lap siding. A storage room lean-to was removed from the north façade some years ago. The west façade has pine lap siding, metal sunshades over the windows, and a door to the office. The inside of the Service Station has an exposed concrete slab floor, a small foyer with storage cabinets, a large general office that was the Dockery Farms office and a small private office for Joe Rice Dockery. The small office has dark cypress walls. The rest of the Service Station has pine board siding with pine-beaded ceilings. The Service Station has a large open room that was used as a small store. The glass front counters remain original, as does the large maple butcher block. The Service Station also has 2 work bays for automobile repairs. The work bays each have a garage door. The Service Station remains original with only minor maintenance repairs made by the farm workers and some local contractors.

**10. (C) Mule/Baptismal Water Trough c.1930**

The site also contains the original mule water trough and the cast iron hand water pump that was used to fill the trough. The water trough was also used by the local black churches as a snake-free baptismal fount. The mule/baptismal trough is made of concrete with large steel turnbuckles that were made in the blacksmith's shop on the farm and support the concrete walls of the trough.

In December 2004, Dockery Farms LLC donated the buildings to the Dockery Farms Foundation, a Mississippi Private Operating Foundation. The Dockery Farms Foundation is actively developing plans for the site consistent with its mission to preserve the property for educational purposes and the public interest. The Dockery Farms site is not presently open to the public, though impromptu visitors are common.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Dockery Farms complex is of exceptional national (quite possibly international) significance in the area of music. In addition, Dockery Farms represents a significant example of American agricultural, economic, racial and social heritage. Dockery Farms and the Delta were established to produce cotton, America's most important export of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The migration of whites and blacks to the Delta to cultivate cotton created a culture, which in turn gave birth to the Blues. Dockery Farms, as is well-documented, was an integral part of the Delta tradition which produced the Blues. Dockery Farms was the home of both Will Dockery, the plantation founder, and Charley Patton, known as the father of the Blues. The buildings at the Dockery Farms site, an authentic intact group of historical structures, uniquely convey a time and place. If not preserved, this "cradle of the blues" would be lost to American culture (Cobb p. X of the preface).

**Cotton in the Yazoo Mississippi Delta**

Cotton was the reason that whites and African-Americans came to the frontier Delta in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Cotton was the indispensable raw material for the textile mills, which established the industrial revolution in Great Britain. Because of cotton, the Delta was particularly sensitive to world prices and international trade. The sheer power of "King Cotton" shaped America's racial history and played a leading role in America's economic and social development. It is vital for Americans to understand the interconnectedness of cotton, African American workers and the blues. Dockery Farms provides an extraordinary opportunity for observing the Delta, which one author describes as "a primary taproot of black culture in America" (Dunbar, p. 5)

**Will Dockery and Dockery Farms**

"You might say, it all started right here," said B.B. King, standing near the Dockery Farms Seed House, while narrating the documentary film *Good Morning Blues*.

It is impossible to pick up an article or book or watch a documentary on the origins of the blues without some reference to Dockery Farms. But before the blues, Dockery was wilderness. Music scholar Robert Palmer vividly described Will Dockery's experience and the creation of Dockery Farms in his 1981 book, *Deep Blues*.

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Will's [Dockery] ancestors on both his mother's and father's sides had left the Carolinas with their slaves sometime before the Civil War. They settled near Hernando, Mississippi, just south of Memphis in the hill country, and for a while they lived very well, but the Civil War left both families practically destitute. Before the war, they would have sent a particularly bright son to one of the best eastern colleges, but Will's father and mother had a difficult time paying for his education at nearby Ole Miss.

Around 1885, fresh out of college and ready to make his mark in the world, Will left his parents' farm. With the help of his grandmother ("Will," she told him, "here's a thousand dollars and the world to make a living in, and that's all we can do for you") and credit from an uncle who was in the cotton business in Memphis, he established himself in Cleveland, Mississippi, a little settlement that had sprung up not far from the Sunflower River. First he bought land and a sawmill and went into the burgeoning local lumber business. By 1895 he owned a tract of forty square miles that was bisected by the river. Optimistically, for much of the land was wooded and wild, he called it Dockery Farms. He built a home – a frame structure, not ostentatious but pleasant enough and subject to incessant additions – and moved in; soon after that, he took a young wife....

As blacks from southern Mississippi began drifting north, they found that Will Dockery wasn't interested in tricking them out of their wages or otherwise mistreating them, unlike some other white men, and they told their friends. Bill Patton figured he was in a good position to get a better deal than a common day laborer – he had a big family and could provide plenty of hands at cotton picking time – so in 1897 he and Annie and the children packed up their few belongings and trekked north to Dockery's....(Palmer 49-57)

**Charley Patton and the Blues**

Charley Patton was born in 1891 near Edwards, Mississippi. It was at Dockery that he met his musical mentor Henry Sloan and developed his musical style. As Palmer continued:

Several guitarists were living on the Dockery plantation and at least one of them, Henry Sloan, played a rough, rhythmic sort of music Bill Patton must have found

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positively barbaric compared to the hot but polite playing of the southern Mississippi string bands. Charley loved the new music and began following Sloan everywhere, watching, listening, and learning....

We know that Patton dogged his every step, at least for a few years, and it's probably safe to surmise that Patton reworked Sloan's style to fit his own expressive needs, just as Tommy Johnson and Son House later devised very personal and very different reworkings of Patton.... And we know that by 1918, when Sloan followed the swelling tide of black migration north to Chicago, Patton had his own disciples and was the most celebrated bluesman in the vicinity of Dockery's (Palmer 57, excerpted).

Although Patton traveled considerably during his life time, it was to Dockery that he consistently returned. By 1915 he was working on the Dockery plantation, and that year he married Minnie Toy. Having borrowed a guitar to learn to play, he soon became an accomplished musician. By 1916, Patton was considered one of the finest guitarists in Bolivar and neighboring Sunflower Counties. Later that year, he was forced to leave Dockery as a result of a family argument. By 1918 he had returned to Dockery. In 1921 he left Dockery again, returning in 1925. In 1926 Howlin' Wolf moved to Dockery from Tupelo at age 16. Also, during this time other future Blues performers moved to Dockery or visited often to learn from and play with Charley Patton.

By 1928 Patton's stock piece "Maggie" had been recorded by Tommy Johnson as "Maggie Campbell Blues." By 1929 Roebuck "Pops" Staples had moved to Dockery and was learning from Patton. Patton made his first recordings for the Paramount record label in 1929 and 1930 in Richmond, Indiana. He was thrown off Dockery for the third and final time in 1930.

In 1934, Patton was taken to New York by talent scout W. R. Calaway to record for the American Record Company. In three days, at the end of January, he recorded 29 songs.

Charley Patton's major works include:

*When Your Way Gets Dark*

*Revenue Man Blues*

*Screamin' and Hollerin' the Blues*

*Pony Blues*

*Banty Rooster Blues*

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*Spoonful Blues*

*High Sheriff Blues*

*Shake It and Break It*

*Mississippi Bo Weavil Blues*

*Down The Dirt Road*

*Bird Nest Bound*

*Poor Me*

*Pea Vine Blues*

*Hammer Blues*

*Moon Goin Down*

*Green River Blues*

On April 28, 1934, Charley Patton died in Indianola, Mississippi. As Paul Oliver wrote in his pioneering 1969 book, *The Story of The Blues*:

One of the most important figures in the whole story of the blues is Charley Patton. Few other bluesmen sang with such fierce conviction and with such growling earthiness, and though the number of singers who were directly influenced by him is not large, he was the inspiration of a great many....(34)

A great many blues singers were either taught by Charley Patton or came under his influence at Dockery's. Jake Martin, who had also been born near Edwards, in 1886, joined him in 1916. The following year he went into the Army but returning in 1919 settled on Dockery's plantation where he remained for nearly thirty years. Better known are the names of Willie Brown, who came to the nearby town of Drew at the age of about twenty in 1911, and Son House, whose association with Patton and Brown commenced almost twenty years later....

It was the opinion of many who heard them that Willie Brown was a better guitarist than Patton, the pupil excelling his master. But Patton's voice and guitar quality permeate Brown's playing and singing (37)

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At the time [1917] when Tommy Johnson was in the Delta, Henry Sloan was considering leaving Dockery's and Charley Patton was the undisputed master of the Delta blues...(40)

Similarly, as historian John Ray Skates noted in his 1979 work, *Mississippi: A Bicentennial History*:

Even before he left Dockery's, Patton had become both a teacher and a hero to other aspiring Negro blues singers, and his disciples multiplied with astonishing speed....

Few Mississippians have heard of Charley Patton or Son House or Honeyboy Johnson or Bo Carter or the influence of Dockery's Plantation on American music. That does not alter the fact that, notwithstanding such great classical musicians as Leontyne Price of Laurel and composer William Still Grant of Wilkinson County, Mississippi's greatest musical contribution may be the music of Delta sharecroppers. And one of Mississippi's chief legacies to America may be music. (147-148)

In 2003, Patton was posthumously awarded 3 Grammys for a boxed special limited edition package, which has sold over two million sets.

**Other Dockery Blues Musicians**

Many other influential blues musicians either lived at Dockery or played and studied with Charley Patton or both, including: Willie Brown, Son House, Robert Johnson, Roebuck "Pops" Staples, and Howlin' Wolf.

**Dockery Farms Today**

"Dockery Farms is the quintessential Delta plantation," states Luther Brown, Director of the Delta Center for Culture and Learning, in his summary paper on Dockery Farms:

It was wilderness in 1895 when Will Dockery started farming on the banks of the Sunflower River between Ruleville and Cleveland, Mississippi. As the canebrakes and forests were cleared, and crops planted, Dockery grew, eventually supporting



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2,000 workers and encompassing over 6,000 acres of row crops, with additional acreage in Arkansas and other parts of Mississippi. Unlike many plantations of that day, Dockery Farms did not rely on sharecropping, but rather paid its laborers. Dockery had its own US Post Office. The Farm complex included boarding houses, a horse stable, a seed house, on which is painted the famous sign naming the farms and Will Dockery and son Joe Rice Dockery as proprietors. From this seed house, one could see Dockery railroad terminal, which had its own doctor and well-stocked commissary. It supported two churches, and had a graveyard of considerable dimensions. Under Joe Rice Dockery's leadership, the Farms organized an insurance and burial association for laborers, and even provided vaccination against endemic Delta diseases. The Farms also gain a reputation for dealing fairly and honestly with both Black and White workingmen, and helped many save enough money to begin farming on their own elsewhere.

No other plantation is as intimately associated with earliest days of the Blues as Dockery Farms. Here, Charley Patton, Son House, and Willie Brown, all widely recognized as progenitors of the Blues, lived at the same time. They were followed by the Staples family, and undoubtedly many other unrecorded musicians. These blues performers played in the boarding houses and commissary at Dockery, and in the juke joints of neighboring towns like Drew, Ruleville, and Boyle. They were joined by Robert Johnson, Sonny Boy Williamson, Elmore James, and Howlin' Wolf, all of whom played in the heart of the Delta, and all of whom undoubtedly rode the "Peavine Railroad" from Dockery to Cleveland, Rosedale, or further destinations.

The Blues transformed American music. It is a direct ancestor of virtually all popular American musical genres, including its children Rock and Roll, and R&B, and its urban great-grandchild, Rap. Its impact on Rock is most direct. Charley Patton's song *Spoonful* became a hit for Eric Clapton and Cream. Robert Johnson's *Love in Vain* contributed to the success of the Rolling Stones, and his *Crossroads* has been re-presented by many bands.

Joe Rice Dockery kept extensive files that contain over 3,000 letters, photographs, and magazine articles on Dockery Farms, the blues, and the community and culture that created the blues. In addition, over 5,000 pages of farm receipts, payroll ledgers, legal documents, and other farm

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related materials remain in original condition. (See Appendix 2) These records and files were originally maintained in the Commissary and later the Service Station, where Joe Rice Dockery kept the farm office from approximately 1936-1982. The Service Station continued as the office headquarters for Dockery Farms until 1999. The Foundation is custodian of these records related to the operation of the farm as well as the personal files of Joe Rice Dockery.

All of this information, as well as the physical site have been instrumental in documenting the historic significance of Dockery Farms. As Mr. Brown concludes in his paper:

Dockery Farms is a true icon of the Delta culture. It summarizes extremely complicated relationships and patterns in a single, easily recognized image. Dockery grew directly from the land that the River created. It experienced the transition from wilderness to labor intensive agriculture, and then the further transition to mechanized production, accompanied by the dispersal of farm labor to the rest of the country. It is rightfully seen as the Birthplace of the Blues, and hence of much of popular American music and culture. It has seen the mass movement of people and Delta culture from the rural South to northern and western cities.

The significance of Dockery Farms is hardly lost on those who trace the roots of popular culture. Over a dozen published books discuss or describe the Farms. At least 150 websites, in English, French, German, Japanese, and Chinese, either describe the Farms or picture the historic sign on its seed house. Other sites hawk Dockery Farms t-shirts and promote modern recording artists who have adopted the Dockery Farms name or logo. Dockery is a destination of choice for anyone engaged on a blues pilgrimage or otherwise trying to retrace American cultural history, and tourist groups or classes stand in front of the seed house for photos virtually every day.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

Part of Lots 10 and 11 in Section 33, Township 21 North, Range 4 West, Sunflower County, Mississippi, being more particularly described by metes and bounds as follows: Commencing at a 2" iron pipe found marking the Southeast corner of said Lot 10 in said Section 33 thence run North 00°10'50" West along the East line of said Lot 10 in said Section 33 for 1,016.45 feet to a ½" iron rod found on the North right-of-way line of Mississippi State Highway No. 8; thence run North 83°10'00" West along the North right-of-way line of said Mississippi State No. 8 for 1,131.65 feet to the Southeast corner and the Point of Beginning of the tract of land herein being described; thence continue North 83°10'00" West along the North right-of-way line of said Mississippi State Highway No. 8 for 192.04 feet to a ½" iron rod set; thence run North 06°50'00" East for 456.81 feet to a ½" iron set on the top bank of the Big Sunflower River; thence continue North 06°50'00" East for 283.95 feet to a point in the center of the Big Sunflower River; thence run South 68°50'47" East along the center of the Big Sunflower River for 232.24 feet; thence run South 75°54'01" East along the center of the Big Sunflower River for 255.54 feet; thence run South 06°50'00" West for 210.47 feet to a ½" iron rod set on the Top Bank of the Big Sunflower River; thence continue South 06°50'00" West for 156.29 feet to a ½" iron rod set; thence run North 83°10'00" West parallel with the North right-of-way line of said Mississippi State Highway No. 8 for 171.29 feet to a ½" iron rod set; thence run South 06°50'00" West for 84.65 feet to a ½" iron rod set; thence run North 83°10'00" West parallel with the North right-of-way line of said Mississippi State Highway No.8 for 115.18 feet to a ½" iron rod set; thence run South 06°50'00" West for 199.59 feet to the point of beginning and containing 5.9152 acres of land more or less. Being subject to an easement for the purpose of ingress and egress over and across the above described property being more particularly described as follows: Beginning at the Southeast corner of the above described property thence run North 83°10'00" West along the North right-of-way line of Mississippi State Highway NO. 8 for 31.48 feet; thence run North 10°00'28" East for 57.30 feet; thence run North 04°26'09" East for 58.16 feet; thence run North 01°22'02" West for 75.31 feet; thence run North 07°30'54" West for 60.40 feet; thence run North 17°23'27" West for 50.73 feet; thence run North 29°01'40" West for 138.70 feet; thence run North 49°06'47" West for 40.46 feet; thence run North 06°50'00" East for 24.14 feet; thence run South 49°06'47" East for 57.52 feet; thence run South 29°01'40" East for 144.28 feet; thence run South 17°23'27" East for 54.50 feet; thence run South 07°30'54" East for 57.21 feet; thence run South 83°10'00" East for 23.32 feet; thence run south 06°50'00" West for 199.59 feet to the point of beginning.

**Survey Data:**

**NORTH REFERENCE TO THE NORTH RIGHT-OF-WAY LINE OF MISSISSIPPI STATE HIGHWAY NO. 8 AS BEING NORTH 83°10'00" WEST ACCORDING TO MISSISSIPPI HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT PROJECT NO. 1269F-338: CLASS "B" SURVEY; REFERENCE MATERIAL USED PLAT OF TOWNSHIP 22 NORTH, RANGE 4 WEST, SUNFLOWER COUNTY MISSISSIPPI,**

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MDOT PROJECT 1269F-338 PLANS, DEED BOOKS I-40 PAGE 277, G-34 PAGE 632, K-24 PAGE 375, P-24 PAGE 631, A-39 PAGE 64, U-27 PAGE 561, A-32 PAGE 153, D-31 PAGE 515 AND Z-30 PAGE 393; FIELD SURVEY DATE MARCH 2005; REFERENCE MONUMENTS USED AS SHOWN ON PLAT.

**Boundary Justification**

The property described above is the parcel of ground historically associated with the center of Dockery Farms, now the Dockery Farms Foundation site.

**Photographs**

**Photo 1 of 11:** c.1950 Aerial view of site, viewing westward

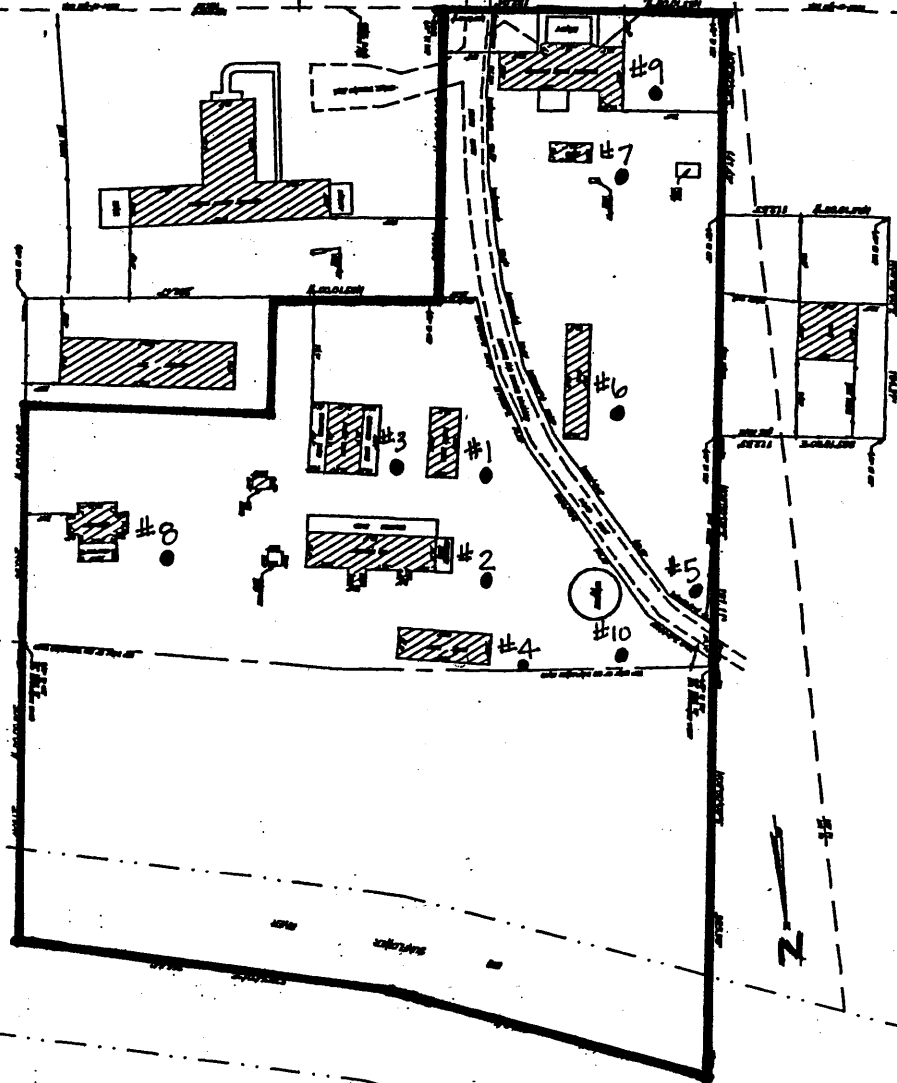
The following information is the same for all remaining photographs:

- 1.) Dockery Farms Historic District
- 2.) Sunflower County, Mississippi
- 3.) William Lester
- 4.) Spring 2005
- 5.) Mississippi Department of Archives and History

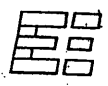
**Photo 2 of 11:** Seed House, view of south façade  
**Photo 3 of 11:** Service Station, view of south façade  
**Photo 4 of 11:** Muleshed/Hay Barn, view of south façade  
**Photo 5 of 11:** Cotton Gin, view of south façade  
**Photo 6 of 11:** Mule/Baptismal Water Trough, facing north  
**Photo 7 of 11:** Fertilizer Storage Building, view of south façade  
**Photo 8 of 11:** Small Storage Building, view of south façade  
**Photo 9 of 11:** Cotton Storage Building, view of south façade  
**Photo 10 of 11:** Ruffin House, view of south façade  
**Photo 11 of 11:** Commisary ruins, view of east portion



This is a survey plat for the Dockery Farms Historic District in Sunflower County, Mississippi. The plat shows the layout of the historic buildings and structures within the district. The buildings are numbered 1 through 10, and their status as contributing or non-contributing is indicated by a solid black dot (●) or an open circle (○). The plat also shows the location of the Mississippi State Highway No. 8 and the Sunflower River. The survey was conducted by Eley Engineering, PA, on 10/10/2011. The scale of the plat is 1" = 40'. The plat is drawn to show the location of the buildings and structures within the district, and the location of the Mississippi State Highway No. 8 and the Sunflower River. The survey was conducted by Eley Engineering, PA, on 10/10/2011. The scale of the plat is 1" = 40'.



Dockery Farms Historic District  
 Sunflower County, Mississippi  
 ● = contributing



**ELEY ENGINEERING, PA**  
 225 N. GULF BLVD., SUITE 100 - MEMPHIS, TN 38102  
 (901) 525-1100

SURVEY PLAT FOR  
 DOCKERY FOUNDATION  
 MISSISSIPPI STATE HIGHWAY NO. 8  
 SUNFLOWER COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

SCALE 1" = 40'  
 DATE 10/10/2011  
 DRAWN BY [illegible]  
 CHECKED BY [illegible]