

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

FEB 21 1993  
NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Oakes, Augustus J., House  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 308 Monroe Street N/A  not for publication  
city, town Yazoo City N/A  vicinity  
state Mississippi code MS county Yazoo code 163 zip code 39194

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	_____ objects
			<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Kenneth A. P. Paul FEB. 16, 1993  
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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. Mal M. Woz 4/8/93  
 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

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

WORK IN PROGRESS

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival  
Queen Anne

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick  
walls weatherboard  
roof asphalt shingles  
other tin cresting ornaments

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Oakes House is a two-story, wooden frame dwelling occupying two city lots on Monroe Street in Yazoo City. The house is prominently sited on a high ridge above Main Street and the commercial downtown of the city. Stylistically, the Oakes House exhibits what can be termed the "free classical" style, combining elements of the Colonial Revival and Queen Anne styles. The house is a two-story structure with a low, pyramidal hipped roof; the southeast front corner projects into a semi-octagonal tower/bay which rises through both stories and terminates in a steep octagonal roof. Though the tower adds an asymmetrical, Victorian quality to the front facade, it is nearly concealed by the most prominent exterior feature of the house, its two-storied veranda which envelops the front (south) facade and wraps partially around the east and west sides. On the west side the veranda curves around the corner of the house; on the east it is canted diagonally to correspond with the octagonal tower/bay behind it.

The veranda is supported by paired wooden columns in a simple Tuscan order. As is evident from an early-20th-century photograph of the house [see illustration] these are not the original columns, but are in the same location and configuration as the originals. Some of the original columns (those shown in the photograph) survive on the premises; they are of wood but have elegantly detailed Ionic capitals of cast terracotta. As shown in the early photograph, the second story level of the veranda originally had a balustraded railing, now also missing. Other than the replacement columns and the missing balustrade, the Oakes House is in notably original condition. The veranda is somewhat deteriorated by water damage and rot, but retains its original form and detailing.

The house rests on low brick foundation piers. The spaces between the piers around the house perimeter have been infilled with brick. The front steps to the veranda are of poured concrete with brick flanking walls.

The structure of the Oakes House is a classic wooden balloon frame. Wooden sills and posts form the internal frame and are sheathed on the exterior with diagonal board siding over which is laid the narrow, horizontal weatherboards which form the outer wall surface of the house. The Oakes House is unusual in the density of its wooden sheathing, however; the interior walls are also formed of two layers of wood.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Education

Ethnic Heritage: Black

Commerce

Period of Significance

c. 1885-1924

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Oakes, Augustus J.

Architect/Builder

Oakes, Augustus J.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Oakes House derives its significance from its association with A. J. Oakes, a prominent Yazoo City educator and businessman and one of the most important African-Americans in this region. The period of significance begins with the date circa 1885, the date Oakes moved into this house, and ends in 1924, the year of his death.

Augustus Josephus (A.J.) was born on March 22, 1854, (Family Bible), in Yazoo County (Yazoo, p. 462), the first child of John and Mary Oakes. John Oakes was born in 1810 (Family Bible) in South Carolina a free man from birth (Yazoo, Its Legends and Legacies by H. Decell and J. Prichard, Yazoo Delta Press, 1988, p. 462). Mary Oakes was born in 1815 (Family Bible) in South Carolina and purchased her freedom and that of her children (Yazoo, p. 462). John and Mary married and moved to Yazoo City sometime before the birth of A.J.

Between the birth of A.J. and the start of the Civil War, the family migrated to Vicksburg, Mississippi, and remained there until after the War ended in 1866. During the family's stay in Vicksburg, A.J. Oakes attended school and upon their return, A.J. enrolled in a private school in Yazoo City until 1870, and then State Normal School at Holly Springs until 1874. (Yazoo, p. 463).

Throughout A.J.'s life, he displayed a commitment to the education of the African-American population in Yazoo City. He served as a principal; first of Green High School in Sardis, Mississippi, for four years, then in 1877, he served as principal of the Yazoo City Graded School until 1884. (Yazoo, p. 463). In 1884, he founded Oakes Academy, a private school, and served as its principal for the next sixteen years (Yazoo, p. 463).

Perhaps A.J. Oakes' education as an entrepreneur and businessman began with his parents. Mary was a skillful entrepreneur and operated an eating house on Main Street (Deed Book NW, p. 387). She and John first purchased Lot 399 on which the original structure of the Oakes House stood in 1866 from John and Mary Doherty for \$500 (Deed, p. 37). Then four years later on December 20, 1870, they purchased the adjoining Lot 398, from John Agnew and John A. L. Quackenboss for \$200. (A.J. Oakes is believed to have lived in a residence  See continuation sheet)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

- Prichard, JoAnn, and Harriett Decell. Yazoo, Its Legend and Legacies. Yazoo City: Yazoo Delta Press, 1988.
- Miscellaneous Oakes Family Papers, including Oakes Family Bible (with family birth and death dates) (In possession of Oakes African-American Cultural Center/Yazoo County Fair and Civic League, Inc.).
- The Yazoo Sentinel, (Yazoo City, MS) May 25, 1905 (special anniversary issue).
- Sanborn Insurance Maps of Yazoo City, MS, 1886, 1889, 1895, 1900, 1905, 1911, 1927.
- Probate Records, Yazoo County Courthouse, Yazoo City, MS (Deed, July 16, 1886, X p. 37; Dec. 28, 1870, BB p. 778; Feb. 23, 1874, NN p. 387; June 5, 1877, AB p. 182; Sept. 17, 1885, AF p. 555; March 13, 1886, Al p. 111; Jan. 26, 1887, Al, p. 419; July 24, 1909, CE p. 245; Nov. 14, 1924, Chancery Court No. 5905, Docket No. 11, p. 64.)

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

Specify repository:

Oakes House African-American Cultural Center, Yazoo City, MS

39194

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A 

1	5	7	4	2	0	6	0	3	6	3	6	7	4	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property occupies Lot numbers 398 and 399 in Yazoo City, Yazoo County, Mississippi, and is approximately 100' x 150' in size.

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

The above described two lots are the original lots on which the Oakes House was built. This same property is in the possession of the Oakes African-American Cultural Center.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Rodner B. Wright, AIA, Assoc. Prof. & Patrick A. Snadon, Assoc. Prof.  
 organization School of Architecture, Miss. State U. date November 17, 1992  
 street & number P. O. Drawer AQ telephone 601-325-2202  
 city or town Mississippi State state MS zip code 39762  
 Owner: Yazoo County Fair/Civic League, Inc.; P.O. Box 1192; Yazoo City, MS 39194

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetOakes, Augustus J., House  
Yazoo City, Yazoo Co., MSSection number 7 Page 1

Nailed to the inside of the structural posts is another diagonal layer of boards. On top of that is a layer of horizontal boards nailed flush which form the interior wall surfaces to which the original canvas-backed wallpapers are applied (and still survive). The wooden structural skeleton of the house is thus sandwiched between four layers of sheathings: two outside and two inside. This number of sheathing layers seems unusual in Mississippi. Undoubtedly the Oakes family lumberyard accounts for the prodigious quantity of wood used in the house.

The wooden detailing of the exterior is extensive and elegant. Small continuous dentil blocks and moldings ornament the cornices of the veranda and the tops of the window frames; the recessed entrance door and the similar door above it opening onto the veranda are both outlined with delicate wooden moldings and Colonial Revival urn and finial forms. The glass doors, sidelights, and transoms are filled with clear leaded and beveled glass in Neoclassical patterns.

The vertical axis created by the lower and upper central doors is carried onto the roof by a large wooden dormer with a pedimented gable and a tripartite window filled with wooden glazing bars in their original diamond and rectangle pattern. The original wooden shingle roof is still intact beneath the present covering of asphalt shingles, and despite the re-roofing, some of the original metal gable ornaments and cresting elements survive to enliven the roofline. Two interior chimneystacks of dark red brick are articulated with multiple courses of corbel tables.

The rear gallery of the main block of the house is, like the front veranda, of two stories. It is supported by square posts with spandrels of wooden lattice-work. Decorative chamfers and notches in the posts, however, indicate that these lattice-spandrels are not original. The upper back portions of the posts on the second story of the gallery show indications of a fire; perhaps the original spandrels were replaced due to fire damage. (The rear, northwest, bedchamber also shows indications of fire damage.) The service staircase is on the rear gallery and is enclosed below, but emerges in an open well on the second story of the gallery. This placement of the service stair indicates that the rear gallery probably served as an outdoor "service corridor" between the kitchen ell and the main house.

The Oakes House plan represents an interesting amalgamation of national architectural trends with local Mississippi planning conventions. It is basically a two room deep, double pile plan bisected by a central stair hall. To the back is a service ell containing the kitchen, and an L-shaped gallery spanning the rear of the house. Onto this conventional southern plan are imposed some of the asymmetries typical of late Victorian Queen Anne style houses, including the octagonal tower/bay discussed earlier and the lateral extensions of the rear rooms, the outsets of which form walls which terminate the ends of the front veranda.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetOakes, Augustus J., House  
Yazoo City, Yazoo Co., MSSection number 7 Page 2

Not all of the original functions of the first floor rooms of the Oakes House are known. The front room to the right (northeast) of the hall, with its octagonal bay, probably served as the formal parlor; the room to the left (southeast) of the hall perhaps contained a sitting room or library. The rear room to the right (northwest) of the hall was the dining room. These three rooms and the hall are joined by large sets of sliding pocket doors which, when thrown open, connect the rooms and hall in an impressive visual sweep typical of Queen Anne "space-flow" planning. The dining room and parlor have back-to-back angled fireplaces. All the mantelpieces are of dark-varnished Colonial Revival style millwork. Some contain mirrors above the mantle shelf, all have glazed tiles surrounding the firebox. The interior door and window frames are reeded; the doors are five-paneled and topped by transoms. The staircase is intentionally grand. Its square newel post is topped by a neoclassical urn of turned wood; the post itself rests on an unusual semi-circular podium formed from the radius of the three lowest steps. The room to the left rear of the hall (southwest) may have served as a less formal family room-living room or, perhaps, as a downstairs bedroom. The second story rooms in the house were all presumably bedchambers.

The one-story kitchen ell is connected to the main house by a small pantry which opens on the rear gallery. The ell wing contains two rooms, the kitchen itself, and a smaller room behind which might have functioned either as a servants' room or as a wash room. The construction and millwork details of the kitchen ell point to its being of an earlier date than the main house. The horizontal wooden weatherboards of its walls have a curved profile while those of the main house are square-cut; its window and door trim is of a Victorian reeded type with turned corner rosettes, and the posts supporting its one-story gallery are turned while those of the main house rear gallery are square in section.

In establishing relative dates of the main house and the kitchen ell, the Sanborn Insurance Maps of Yazoo City are useful. The first Sanborn Map of the city is 1886. At that date the Oakes family are shown to have been residing in a small, one-and-a-half story house on the site, with a detached rear kitchen. The 1889 and 1895 Sanborn maps show no significant changes. The Sanborn Map for 1900, however, shows significant alterations. The outline of the main house has almost doubled in depth, indicating a substantial enlargement, if not a rebuilding. The earlier detached kitchen has been replaced by a rectangular kitchen ell with a gallery on the southwest and a covered breezeway connecting it to the main house. This kitchen ell corresponds exactly to the present kitchen ell in its proportions and placement on the site; probably they are the same. This means that the present kitchen ell was built between 1895 and 1900. Another Sanborn Map exists for 1905. It shows the addition of a gallery along the rear (northwest) of the main house, and two added rooms, one on the rear (northwest) of

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetOakes, Augustus J., House  
Yazoo City, Yazoo Co., MSSection number 7 Page 3

the kitchen ell, the other at the southwest corner of the rear gallery. The Sanborn Map of 1911 shows no changes to the house.

The Sanborn Map of 1927 indicates a substantial remodeling. The 1927 outline corresponds exactly to the house as it currently exists, while the kitchen ell remains unchanged from its earlier configuration. The main house then, in its current form, dates from between 1911 and 1927, but stylistically it appears that the house was probably remodeled soon after 1911, perhaps circa 1915. The house retains the earlier kitchen ell of c. 1895-1900. An inspection under the house suggests that portions of the foundations and structural framing of the earlier house were incorporated into the remodeled house. The floor joists of the present front veranda run parallel to the front facade rather than being keyed perpendicularly into it as is usual for such joist construction. The sill and joist framing of the octagonal tower/bay is done in an equally ad hoc manner, which suggests that it too was added to an existing framing situation. Finally, the brick foundation piers conforming to the area of the earlier house (the northeastern two-thirds of the present house) appear to be of earlier construction than those of the western portion of the house.

John and Mary Oakes purchased lot 399 (the eastern lot of the pair on which the house sits) in 1866 for \$500. They then purchased lot 398 (the adjacent lot to the southwest) in 1870 for \$200. The difference in price suggests that there was an existing dwelling on lot 399 in 1866 when they purchased it. If, as discussed above, this pre-1866 dwelling was incorporated into the c. 1895-1900 rebuilding indicated by the Sanborn maps, and parts of the foundations and framing members of this 1895-1900 house were incorporated into the c. 1915 final rebuilding, then portions of the northeastern side of the Oakes House may date to before 1866.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetOakes, Augustus J., House  
Yazoo City, Yazoo Co., MSSection number 8 Page 1

across the street from his parents until 1885, when he sold the property. At that time, he apparently moved into his father's house at 308 Monroe Street.) The accumulation of land by the Oakes family within Yazoo City provided a financial base for the entrepreneurial activities of A.J. Oakes throughout his career. For instance, on September 17, 1885, A.J. conveyed his interest in Lots 398, 399, and Lot 428, and lots along Main Street for an amount of \$2,000 (Deed Book, AF, p. 55) from his father, plus he borrowed \$800 from Yazoo Building and Loan Association, using part interest in property Lots 398, 399, 333, 334, and four shares of stock in B & L (Deed Book, AL, p. 419). Considering the timing of these transactions, it is believed that this amount provided him with working capital for the Oakes Academy. Seven months later, A.J. repaid \$1,500 of his loan to John, Sr. (Deed Book, AL, p. 111).

By December 11, 1897, A.J. Oakes paid \$53.40 in city taxes for the following lots: 398 and 399; 411, 428, 429, 430, and 526; pt. 323, 332, and 333, 496, 539, 1 of 478 and 333 Lintonia Addition (Tax receipt on A. J. Oakes, Proprietor stationery).

In 1900, A.J. resigned his position at the Oakes Academy as principal to devote full time to his lumber company, Oakes Lumber Yard, and the construction business. On May 25, 1904, Yazoo City experienced a devastating fire which destroyed just about all of the central business and several residential areas. The Oakes Lumber Yard was spared and A.J. Oakes played a significant role in the rebuilding effort of the city.

On May 26, 1908, A.J. Oakes and the Trustees of the Public Schools of Yazoo City entered into a contract to build a school building for \$3,500. It is believed to be the new Yazoo City Graded School (copy contract between the Trustees and A.J. Oakes, May 26, 1908). In addition, it is believed that A.J. Oakes purchased the bonds to enable the city of Yazoo to finance the construction.

By January 1, 1910, A.J. Oakes' contribution to the city tax roles had grown to \$321.33 (Tax Receipt on Oakes Lumber Yard stationery) up from \$53.40 in 1897. The significant increase in taxes paid in 1910 compared to that of 1897 can in part be attributed to the creation and success of the Oakes Lumber Yard. October 2, 1924, Augustus Josephus (A.J.) Oakes died at age 70 years old. At the time of his death, his personal estate was valued at \$3,600, not including property.

A.J. Oakes was survived by his two daughters (Annie D. and Mary A.) from his first marriage to A.A. Hendrix of Uniontown, and his second wife Emma L. of Johnson City and their three children (Alma A.; Conrad L. and John E.) (Yazoo, p. 463).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Oakes, Augustus J., House  
Yazoo City, Yazoo Co., MS

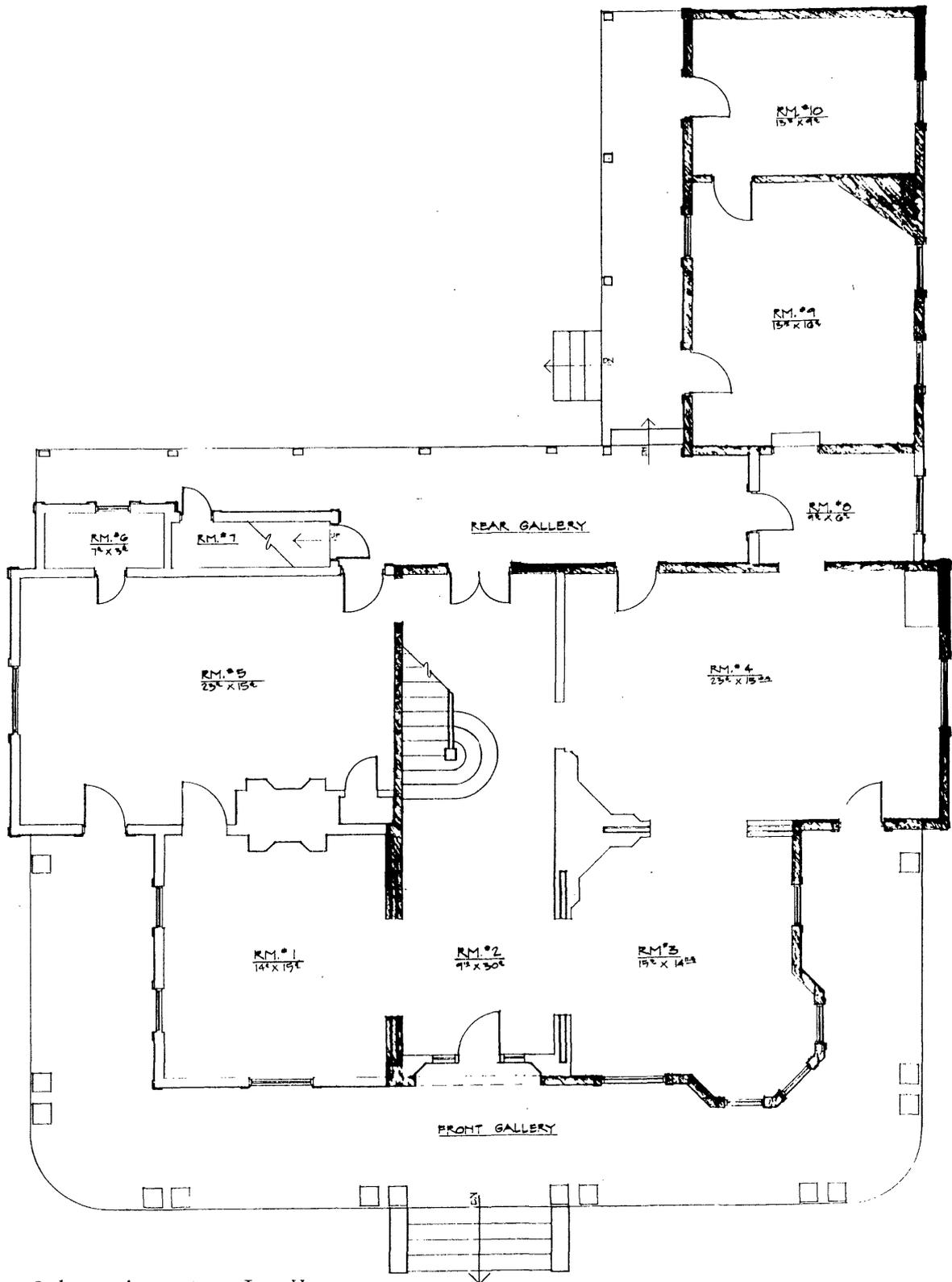
Section number 8 Page 2

---

It is believed that A.J. Oakes' father, John, may have been a craftsman--perhaps a carpenter--which would explain A.J.'s life long involvement in the lumber and construction business. It seems likely that A.J. Oakes himself was responsible for the design and rebuilding of his house both in the 1890's and again c. 1915.

Perhaps the most significant observation to emerge from the Oakes House research is that as the Oakes Family accumulated wealth and status, they rebuilt their Yazoo City house time and again. That they used residential architecture to express their socio-economic rise is not unusual. What is significant, however, is that rather than follow the usual white, middle-class model of residential mobility by moving to ever larger and grander houses, the Oakes Family continuously rebuilt their original house in larger and grander form. The geographical mobility of black families within Yazoo City was undoubtedly limited. This may in part explain why the Oakes Family remained and continuously rebuilt their home rather than to move or build elsewhere. But part of their rootedness surely grew from their loyalty to and leadership within the black community and the neighborhood which witnessed their rise to prominence.

The Oakes House is currently undergoing rehabilitation for use as the Oakes African-American Cultural Center. The center will provide for art awareness and art education, showcase artifacts that relate especially to the African-American community, and conduct seminars, crafts demonstrations, poetry and prose workshops, and other educational and historical lectures and classes.

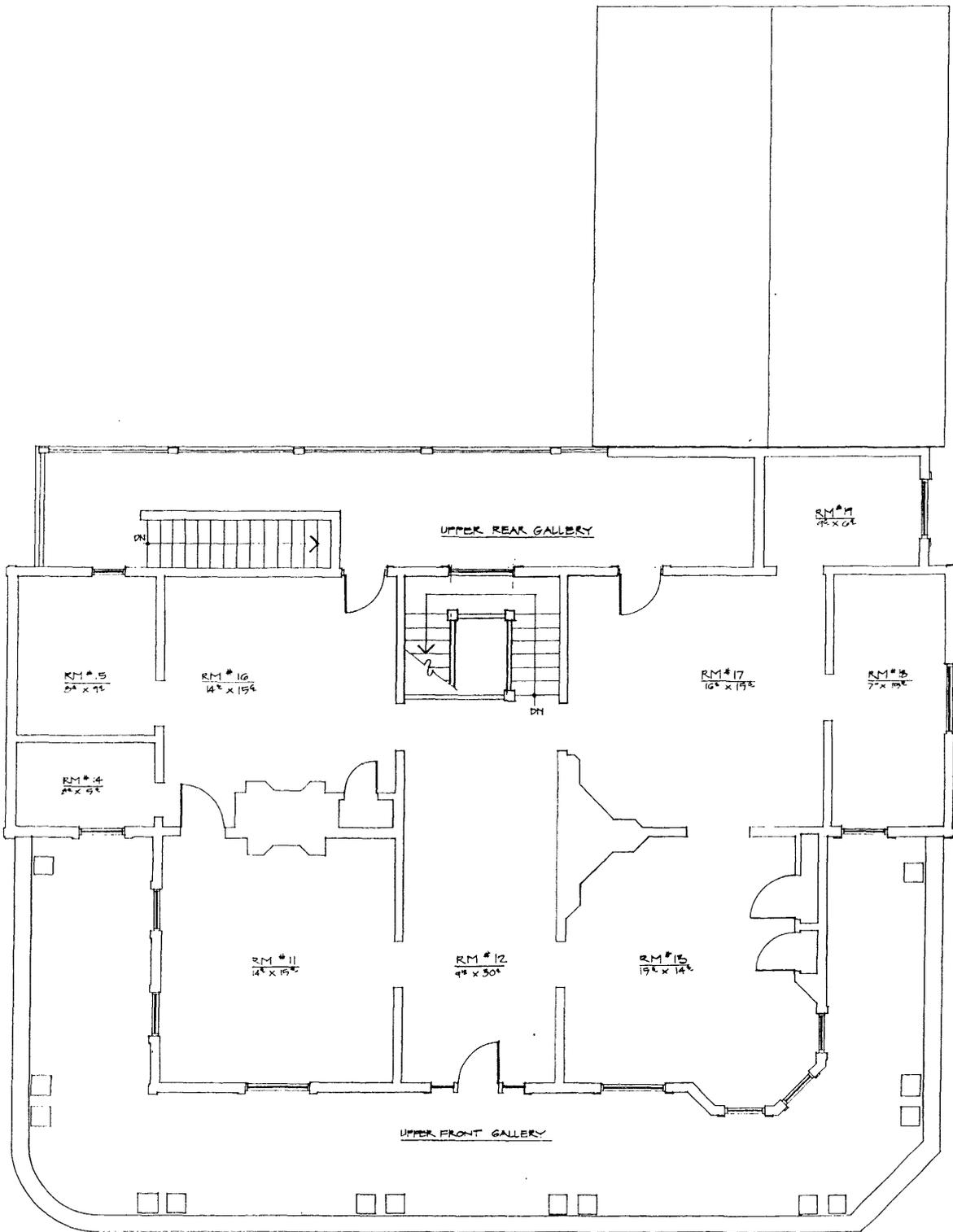


Oakes, Augustus J., House  
 Yazoo City, Yazoo Co., MS

— = 1911-1924 HOUSE  
 - - - - - LOCATION OF WALLS OF 1899-1920

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

1/2" = 1'-0"



Oakes, Augustus J., House  
 Yazoo City, Yazoo Co., MS

SECOND FLOOR PLAN  
 1/2" = 1'-0"