

# Factory Hill-Frog Bottom-Burns Bottom Historic District – Status Evaluation - 2018

Columbus, Lowndes County, Mississippi • 2018

## Survey Report

July 30, 2018

### General Information

Surveyor: David B. Schneider, Schneider Historic Preservation, LLC  
411 East 6th Street, Anniston, Alabama 36207

Dates: July 1 – 30, 2018

Geographic Area: Factory Hill-Frog Bottom-Burns Bottom Historic District

Sites Surveyed: 83 updated; 6 additional intensive

Prepared for: Columbus Redevelopment Authority

Previous Documentation National Register of Historic Places:  
• Factory Hill-Frog Bottom-Burns Bottom Historic District (1980)  
HABS/HAER: No Listings

### Location

Street See the attached maps

City Columbus

County: Lowndes County, Mississippi

U.S.G.S. Reference Columbus South Quadrangle

### Section 1: Survey Background and Methodology

Literature & Records Review

Project Origins

This project was initiated by the Columbus Redevelopment Authority to assess the surviving historic fabric within historic district as part of its ongoing redevelopment program.

Literature & Records Review

Background historical research was completed from by Schneider Historic Preservation, LLC. Appropriate archival sources were consulted, interviews were conducted and the collections of the National Register of Historic Places and HABS/HAER were reviewed.

## Field Inventory

Fieldwork for this project was completed by Schneider Historic Preservation, LLC in July 2018. An intensive historic sites inventory was conducted within the study area meeting the requirements of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for identification. All above-ground buildings, structures, and objects that were constructed in the survey area recorded. For each resource inventoried, a unique inventory number was assigned, a survey form was completed, one or more high resolution photographs were taken, and the site was indicated on an appropriate map based upon a digital Geographic Information System map available for Lowndes County.

## Report

This report summarizes the project's methodology, geographic coverage and survey results. The report describes the historic resources and related landscape features identified and assesses the potential eligibility of any of the identified resources for the National Register of Historic Places. A "fair and reasonable" approach was taken to determine the eligibility of resources for the National Register and all resources were evaluated utilizing appropriate National Register Bulletins.

## **Section 2: Historical Summary or Context**

### From the National Register Nomination

Factory Hill-Frog Bottom-Burns Bottom Historic District is comprised of three basically distinct neighborhoods which together represent a significant component of the historic and architectural development of Columbus. Primarily residential in character, the district is representative of the type neighborhoods inhabited by Columbus' early factory workers (an often-neglected part of local history) and is mainly composed of vernacular cottage dwelling dating from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Sanborn Insurance Maps for the years 1885, 1890, 1895, 1900, 1905, 1910, and 1926 show that many sections of the district have changed little since 1910, making the proposed district the best remaining and most complete example of a turn-of-the-century mill village in the Columbus area.

Owing to its proximity to downtown Columbus, the area contained within the district was among the earliest settled sections of the city, but because much of the area was prone to flood, most construction in the district was confined to the higher ground in the eastern portion of the district ("Keeler's Almanac Map of Columbus, Mississippi," Columbus Library, Columbus). In the 1870s and '80s, however, with construction of new industries along the western end of Second Avenue North, many new residences were built to house the factory workers. Notable among the business establishments were Columbus Woolen Mill, Union Cotton and Lumber Mill, Tombigbee Cotton Mill, Columbus Ice Company the city gas works, blacksmith and wheelwright shops, and a grist mill (Sanborn Insurance Maps of Columbus, Mississippi, Mississippi State University Library, Starkville).

The name Factory Hill generally refers to the community occupying the slopes of Pleasant Ridge (along the 100-400 blocks of Second Avenue North and the 100-400 blocks of Fourth Street North), although no definite boundaries exist. Burns Bottom occupies the central and

west-central section of the district, and Frog Bottom the northern section. Traditionally, Factory Hill and Burns Bottom were white neighborhoods, while Frog Bottom was a significant black community (Mrs. Cile Andrews, Mrs. C. W. Cain, Fant C. Fancher, Mrs. Georgia Hopkins, and Mrs. Russel Hudson, longtime residents of Columbus, interviewed by Kenneth P'Pool, architectural historian with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, December, 1979).

Most of the houses in the district are of one-story frame construction and follow one of three basic plans. The first is the shotgun-style dwelling, one room wide and three or more rooms deep. The popularity of this form persisted from the mid-1880s through the mid-1900s with all remaining examples having gable roofs. Although traditionally associated with blacks, the shotgun dwelling was a commonly used residential mode for whites as well. The second basic plan is that of a conventional gable-roof dwelling with central chimneys, full-width or nearly full-width porches across the facade, and additions (usually lean-to or shed-roof) across the rear. An interesting variation of this plan is the use of the "saltbox" shape, formed by extending the rear roof slope. Most saltbox houses within the district were not formed by later additions but were originally constructed in the configuration. While there are a few additional examples of this building type scattered elsewhere in Columbus, surveys indicate that the Factory Hill-Frog Bottom-Burns Bottom area has the least altered examples and the only significant concentration of them remaining. The third plan employs intersecting gable-roof sections of the house, with one gable extending forward from the facade to present a multi-gable appearance.

The fact that numerous houses have two front entrances substantiates that most of the buildings were constructed as duplex rental property, and the use of details such as gable returns, cornices, and the saltbox form indicates the influence of the Colonial Revival style on construction. The area's propensity for flooding also had its influence on the district's architecture. All of the older buildings are constructed on raised foundations, and many in the lower elevations have fully raised basements or very high foundation piers.

Although the preponderance of district structures date from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, there are eight residences which survive from the antebellum period, three of which are of primary importance. "Franklin Square" (ca. 1835; additions ca. 1870, 1918-20) is an excellent example of the vernacular tendency to combine a Federal-style building with Greek Revival porticoes; 401 Third Avenue North (ca. 1830s; additions 1880s, 1920s), with its heavy pilastered frontispiece entrance and two-tiered veranda, is typical of the mansion-sized raised cottages built in Columbus during the era; and 315 Second Avenue North (ca. 1830s; additions 1850s, 1880s) is significant to the black community in that its earliest section was constructed by Issac Williams, a free black and early settler in Columbus (Historic Columbus, Inc., "Star Homes Tour" [Columbus, Miss.: Columbus-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce, 1979]).

The "Hitch Lot," located in the 200 block of Second Avenue North, is an interesting open space within the district. In an effort to remove horse and wagon traffic from Main Street, the city designated this area as an official hitching place in 1936, and today it continues to be used by farmers as an informal marketplace during harvest months (City of Columbus, Miss., Minute Book IX, Mar. 6, 1936).

Relocation of Columbus' industrial community by the mid-1900s removed the factories from their close association with the area of the proposed Factory Hill-Frog Bottom-Burns Bottom Historic District. The district continues as a viable residential area today, however, and remains as a tangible link to an important part of the history of Columbus.

#### Description (from the National Register Nomination)

Situated along the western slopes and at the base of a geological formation known as Pleasant Ridge, Factory Hill-Frog Bottom-Burns Bottom Historic District lies primarily in the lowland area of west-central Columbus, Mississippi, along the Tombigbee River. The district comprises more than sixty architecturally and/or historically significant buildings dating from the mid-nineteenth through the early-twentieth centuries and is adjacent to the Columbus Central Commercial Historic District, nominated to the National Register in 1979.

Principally consisting of modest workers' cottages, the proposed district is the best preserved example of a turn-of-the-century mill village in Columbus and visually contributes much toward understanding lifestyles of the laboring classes of that period. The majority of the buildings are simple, one-story, frame dwellings of either the shotgun, saltbox, or multigable form (see Statement of Significance for more detailed description). Most are located on relatively narrow lots and situated close to the grid-plan streets. The Factory Hill areas along the east side of the district contain the heaviest concentration of buildings.

The mill village area stretches northward from the western-most-portion of Second Avenue North, along which many of Columbus' early industries were located, and was originally much larger than it is today. Most sections of the district's eastern and southern boundaries make a rather dramatic break in land use with the surrounding areas. The close proximity of Frog Bottom and Burns Bottom to the Tombigbee River and its tributary creeks subjects the area to flooding at times of unusually high water. A disastrous flood in 1973 severely damaged and destroyed several buildings adjoining the western half of the district leaving numerous vacant lots in that portion. Therefore, boundaries of the proposed Factory Hill-Frog Bottom-Burns Bottom Historic District have been delineated to include the greatest density of buildings relating to the character of the district while excluding those areas most susceptible to flooding.

Located in the south-central portion of the district is an open space known locally as the Hitching Lot. Set aside by the city for use by farmers as a hitching place for horses and market place for produce, the "Hitch Lot" has long been associated with this area of Columbus. Although predominately residential in character, the district contains as well two churches, six commercial structures, and one public building.

### **Section 3: Evaluation/Survey Findings**

The historic character and fabric of the district has been seriously eroded since it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. Since that time, 42 of the 83 resources listed (51%) have been either torn down or replaced with modern buildings. 18 of the remaining 41 resources (44%) are noncontributing to the district as it was listed. As a result, only 23 of the surviving resources (28%) continue to contribute to the district as nominated. The attrition of resources has resulted in the creation of small clusters of resources that are

interspersed with modern recreational development and vacant, often overgrown, lots. As a result, the visual relationship between these smaller clusters has largely been lost.

Of the surviving resources, many are now abandoned and in deteriorating condition.

The losses have been significant enough to seriously erode the integrity of the district.

#### **Section 4: Recommendations**

The integrity loss within the district adversely affects its eligibility for the National Register. While the SHPO would be the entity that would have to initiate a de-listing process, the condition of the surviving historic fabric warrants their evaluation of that potential action.

The most intact remaining sections of the district are shown hatched in red on the accompanying map. Of the contributing resources in the larger hatched area at the eastern side of the district, those numbered 65 through 68 are now vacant and deteriorating. The three resources at the southwest corner of the district (#s 1, 2, and 33) have effectively been “orphaned” by new construction that has occurred at the market (resource #84) and the new athletic fields to the north.

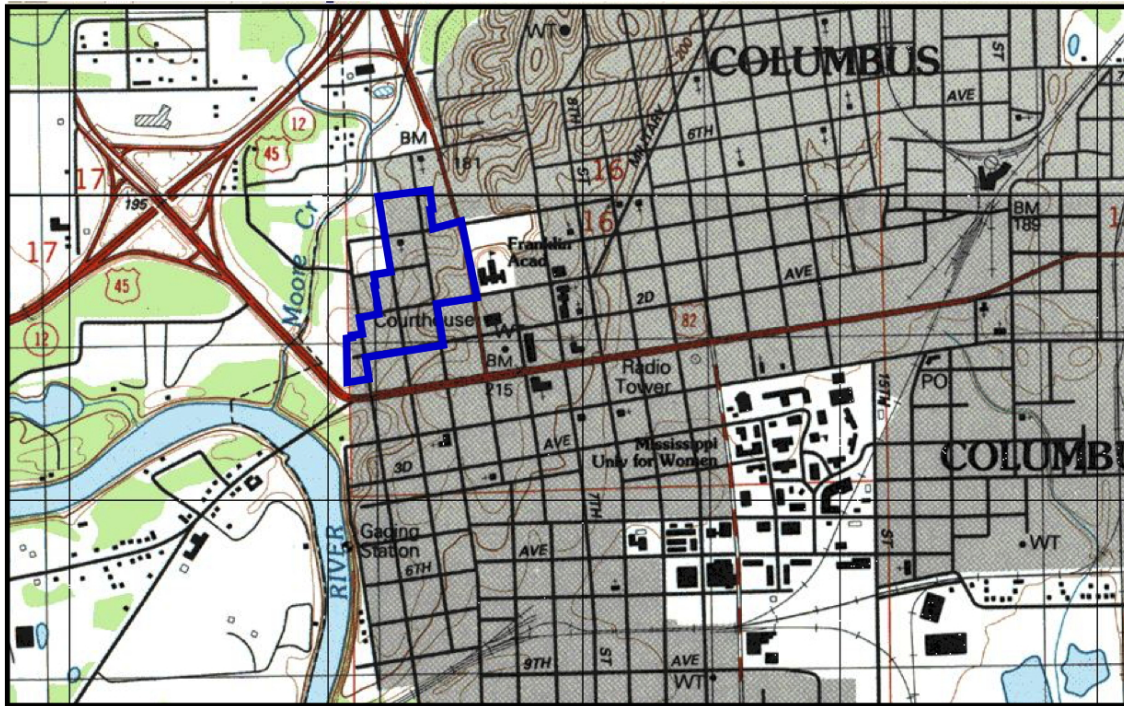
Of the other resources within the remainder of the district outside of the hatched areas, a number have been lost or extensively altered and most others are vacant and in deteriorating condition. Resource #85 was relocated to its present location after 1980 and is in deteriorated condition. Resource #40 is in deteriorated condition and has suffered a partial roof collapse. Resource #45 is relatively intact, but the adjacent resource #48 has had extensive material replacement. The Burns House (Resource #54) is located to the northwest of the boundary and is also in deteriorated condition, having suffered a fire and from extensive vandalism. The resources north of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue N are now visually separated from the remaining resources by vacant lots and a densely vegetated hillside.

#### **Section 5: Survey Products and Documentation**

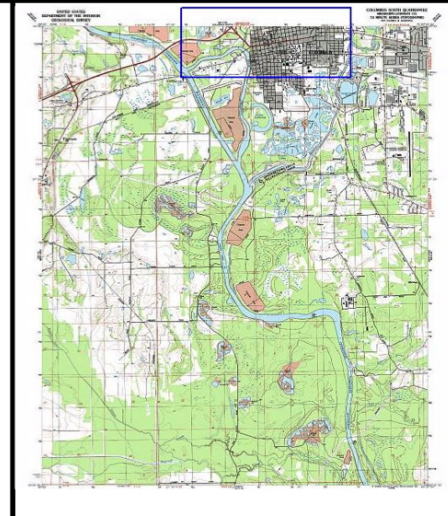
The following survey products have been created as part of this project:

- 1) Factory Hill-Frog Bottom-Burns Bottom Historic District - Status Evaluation - 2018 (this document)
- 2) 89 Mississippi Department of Archives and History survey forms
- 3) 212 high resolution digital photographs, including one or more images of each resource surveyed and representative streetscapes
- 4) Factory Hill-Frog Bottom-Burns Bottom Historic District Map A: The District as Listed
- 5) Factory Hill-Frog Bottom-Burns Bottom Historic District Map B: The District as Now Exists
- 6) Factory Hill-Frog Bottom-Burns Bottom Historic District Map C: Status Evaluation

Section 6: Location Map



U.S.G.S. Topographic Map  
Columbus South (top portion in Columbus North)



## Section 7: Annotated Inventory

1	GONE-Vacant Lot	117 2nd Ave. N		
2	Shiloh Baptist Church	110 2nd Ave. N	NC	
3	GONE-Vacant Lot	120 2nd Ave. N		
4	GONE-Vacant Lot	124 2nd Ave. N		
5	Boy Scouts of America, Troop #3 Meetinghouse	200 2nd Ave. N	NC	
6	Comer's Dixie Food Service	301 2nd Ave. N	NC	
7	Easley Refrigeration and Electric Service	307 2nd Ave. N	NC	
8	Williams, Isaac House/The Haven	315 2nd Ave. N	C	
9	House	306.5 3rd Ave. N	NC	Abandoned
10	House	318 3rd Ave. N	NC	
11	House	320 3rd Ave. N	NC	
12	House	321 3rd Ave. N	NC	
13	House	325 3rd Ave. N	NC	
14	House	401 3rd Ave. N	C	
15	Franklin Square	423 3rd Ave. N	C	
16	House	302 4th Ave. N	NC	
17	House	306 4th Ave. N	NC	
18	House	311 4th Ave. N	NC	Abandoned
19	House	317 4th Ave. N	NC	Abandoned
20	GONE-Vacant Lot	301 5th Ave. N		
21	GONE-Vacant Lot	305 5th Ave. N		
22	Charity Missionary Baptist Church	306 5th Ave. N		
23	GONE-Vacant Lot	310 5th Ave. N		
24	House	313 5th Ave. N	C	Deteriorated
25	House	314 5th Ave. N	NC	
26	GONE-Vacant Lot	318 5th Ave. N		
27	House	319 5th Ave. N	C	Altered, Deter.
28	GONE-Vacant Lot	324 5th Ave. N		
29	GONE-Vacant Lot	403 5th Ave. N		
30	GONE-Vacant Lot	403 5th Ave. N		
31	GONE-Vacant Lot	310 6th Ave. N		
32	GONE-Vacant Lot	312 6th Ave. N		
33	House	201 2nd St. N	C	
34	Trade Center	202 2nd St. N	C	
35	GONE-Vacant Lot	207 2nd St. N		
36	GONE-Vacant Lot	209 2nd St. N		
37	GONE-Vacant Lot	207 3rd St. N		
38	GONE-Vacant Lot	208 3rd St. N		
39	GONE-Vacant Lot	216 3rd St. N		
40	GONE-Vacant Lot	220 3rd St. N		
41	Burdine and Austin, Attorneys	224 3rd St. N	C	Abandoned Deteriorated
42	GONE-Vacant Lot	301 3rd St. N		
43	Apartments	302 3rd St. N	NC	

44	GONE-Vacant Lot	305 3rd St. N		
45	House	306 3rd St. N	C	
46	GONE-Vacant Lot	307 3rd St. N		
47	GONE-Vacant Lot	309 3rd St. N		
48	House	310 3rd St. N	C	Altered
49	GONE-Vacant Lot	313 3rd St. N		
50	GONE-Vacant Lot	317 3rd St. N		
51	GONE-Vacant Lot	317 3rd St. N		
52	GONE-Vacant Lot	320 3rd St. N		
53	GONE-Vacant Lot	321 3rd St. N		
54	Burns House	406 3rd St. N	C	Abandoned Deteriorated
55	GONE-Vacant Lot	410 3rd St. N		
56	GONE-Vacant Lot	414 3rd St. N		
57	GONE-Vacant Lot	416 3rd St. N		
58	GONE-Vacant Lot	510 3rd St. N		
59	GONE-Vacant Lot	518 3rd St. N		
60	GONE-Vacant Lot	520 3rd St. N		
61	GONE-Vacant Lot	207 4th St. N		
62	House	209 4th St. N	C	
63	House	215 4th St. N	C	
64	House	221 4th St. N	C	
65	House	225 4th St. N	C	Abandoned
66	House	311 4th St. N	C	Abandoned
67	House	313 4th St. N	C	Abandoned
68	House	321 4th St. N	C	Abandoned
69	House	325 4th St. N	NC	
70	GONE-Vacant Lot	402 4th St. N		
71	House	407 4th St. N	NC	Abandoned
72	House	503 4th St. N	NC	
73	House	508 4th St. N	C	Altered
74	House	509 4th St. N	C	
75	GONE-Vacant Lot	511 4th St. N		
76	GONE-Vacant Lot	512 4th St. N		
77	GONE-Vacant Lot	513 4th St. N		
78	GONE-Vacant Lot	515 4th St. N		
79	GONE-Vacant Lot	516 4th St. N		
80	House	517 4th St. N	C	
81	GONE-Vacant Lot	521 4th St. N		
82	House	524 4th St. N	C	Altered
83	House	526 4th St. N	C	
Resources not Included in the 1980 Nomination:				
84	Hitching Lot Farmer's Market	200 2nd Ave. N	NC	
85	House	315 3rd Ave. N	NC	Abandoned Deteriorated
86	House	601 4th St. N	NC	
87	House	602 4th St. N	NC	
88	House	605 4th St. N		NC



## COMPLIANCE WITH 36 CFR 61

David B. Schneider

Mr. Schneider meets the requirements of Professional Qualifications A, History, and C, Architectural History:

A: Master of Arts Degree, History, Middle Tennessee State University, 1981; 37 years of professional experience in research, writing, and interpretation of local and regional history, including: 37 years as a full and part time historical consultant; 1 year as Director of the Berkeley County Historical Society Museum, a local history museum; 5 years as the Executive Director of the Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County (PA); 4 years as Executive Director of the Historic Beaufort Foundation (SC); and 4 years as Executive Director/Senior Director for Preservation Services of the Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation (two county-wide and one statewide non-profit historic preservation organizations).

C: Master of Arts Degree, History (primary emphasis in Historic Preservation), Middle Tennessee State University, 1981; 37 years of professional experience in historic preservation planning and administration including extensive experience with historic district surveys, registration, ordinances, and design review. In addition, Mr. Schneider has been involved with the rehabilitation of more than three hundred historic structures, including extensive rehabilitation design.

