

HISTORY OF EXISTING STRUCTURES

3.2.8 THE PRESIDENT'S HOUSE

The President's House at Jefferson College is a two-story wood-frame house with Federal Style detailing. It is located on the south edge of the College property, facing southward onto North Street slightly west of the head of Court Street. The main body of the house is three bays in width with a side-gabled roof. It is believed to have originally had a one-story porch, occupying the center bay of the façade. In the 1880s this porch was removed and replaced with a double-tiered gallery extending the full width of the main façade. The gallery was removed in the 1970s, and a portico, believed to be similar in appearance to the original porch, was constructed in its place. A specific date for the construction of the house has not been documented. The architectural character and detailing of the building suggest a date of construction around 1830-35. Extending from the west side of the house is a one-story gable-roofed wing that has its own front entrance. It has been suggested that the wing was formerly a free-standing building that was attached to the house sometime after its construction, but at this time it is not known whether the wing is older than the house or contemporary with it.

Before being purchased by Jefferson College, the President's House was a private residence, the home of Dr. John C. Inge, who later served on the Board of Trustees.¹ Inge was a medical doctor who later worked as chief physician at the City Hospital in Natchez.² He married his first wife, Laura Jane A. King, on 2 October 1834.³ On 9 March 1835, Dr. Inge purchased the property in Washington that later became the President's House, which included a dwelling house and outbuildings, from Henry George Doyle and his wife Anna Maria Doyle. Doyle had purchased it on 15 May 1832 from Dr. John Branch and his wife Rebecca, soon after Dr. Branch had purchased "Propinquity," located nearby.⁴ Dr. and Mrs. Branch had acquired the lot in Washington from former Jefferson College Trustee Joseph Dunbar and his wife Olivia on 13 May 1828.⁵ It has been surmised that the house was probably built about 1830 for John Branch.⁶ It has been suggested that the wing that extends from the west side of the house might have

¹ Dr. John C. Inge was elected to the Board of Trustees on 8 March 1841. (Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Volume 4, p. 213, in the Jefferson College papers, Box 2.)

² *Jefferson College Newsletter*, 5:1 (April 1976), in the Historic Resources Inventory file for the President's House (001-WSH-0105-NRE-ML) in the files of the Historic Preservation Division, MDAH. This brief article does not indicate the span of years when Dr. Inge was associated with the City Hospital. He may have been in private practice before beginning his work there. It does not seem very plausible for him to have resided at Washington and "commuted" daily six miles or more to and from Natchez in the 1830s. The 1880 census lists John C. Inge as a 66-year old physician residing with his family at the City Hospital, so it seems likely that he took served in this position later in his career. It would be helpful to know whether Dr. Inge acquired a residence in Natchez, and, if so, when he purchased it.

³ Irene S. and Norman E. Gillis, *Adams County, Mississippi, Marriages 1802-1859* (privately published, 1976), p. 28. Laura King Inge died on 10 May 1844. On 31 December 1846, Dr. Inge married Margaret J. Dunbar. She was a daughter of Isaac Dunbar, who was elected to served as a Trustee of Jefferson College on 8 March 1841, the same day that John C. Inge was elected. (Information gleaned from family trees found on the ancestry.com web site in October 2011, and from *Adams County, Mississippi, Marriages 1802-1859*, p. 28.)

⁴ From a short research report about the President's House prepared by Ronald W. Miller on 5 March 1974.

⁵ Information compiled from deed research by Ron Miller in 1976, in the Historic Resources Inventory file for the President's House in the files of the Historic Preservation Division, MDAH.

⁶ *Jefferson College Newsletter*, 5:1 (April 1976)

served as a medical office for Dr. Branch, or for Dr. Inge, or both,⁷ but this has not been confirmed either by documentation or by archaeological examination. If there are any surviving personal papers of Dr. Inge, it might be beneficial to examine them to see if they could shed some light on the history of the house. A careful archaeological examination of the building would also provide beneficial information.

On 11 February 1837, Dr. Inge wrote a letter to the Board of Trustees of Jefferson College, saying that he would sell his house and lot to the College for \$5000.⁸ There is no indication why he was inclined to do this, since he had purchased the house less than two years previously, but he may have been aware that the College was considering either building or purchasing a residence for the President of the school. The Board had already, in 1836, begun to consider the possibility of building a residence for the President, and a proposed floor plan had been drawn by B.L.C. Wailes.⁹ That idea was abandoned, however, when the purchase of the Inge House became a viable option.

In 1837, the Board appointed a committee to negotiate the purchase of the Inge residence. The minutes of meeting of the Board on 10 October 1837 recorded that "The committee appointed to purchase the House and Lot of Doctr. John C. Inge report that they have succeeded in buying the same for four thousand dollars, viz: \$2000 on delivery and \$2000 on the 4th of March 1839 ..." ¹⁰ For some reason, however, the deal fell through, perhaps because the Board was focusing its attention at the time on the construction of the West Wing.

It took almost three years for arrangements to finally be worked out. By that time, Dr. Inge was willing to accept a substantially lesser amount. On 23 July 1842, the Board adopted a resolution stating "that the note of Mrs. May N. Walton held by the college amounting to \$1350 be assigned to Doct. John B. Inge without recourse as the consideration of the purchase of his house & lot adjoining the College grounds upon his conveying the same to the trustees." ¹¹ A deed was drawn up on 10 August 1842 conveying the house and lot to Jefferson College for the consideration of \$1350. (The deed was received by the Chancery Clerk's office on 15 December 1842, but the date of recordation and the deed book reference was not noted on the copy of the deed that is filed in the Jefferson College Papers.)¹²

Shortly after acquiring the Inge House, the Board of Trustees tasked a committee to examine the condition of the house and to make necessary repairs. At a meeting of the

⁷ In his short research report about the President's House prepared 5 March 1974, Ronald W. Miller speculated that Dr. Branch might have used the house or the wing as his office.

⁸ Letter, dated 11 February 1837, from J.C. Inge to the Board of Trustees, in the correspondence files of the Jefferson College Papers, Z/0059.000, Box 30, Folder 36.

⁹ Documents pertaining to a proposed brick house for the president, including a drawing of floor plans, in the Jefferson College Papers, Box 14, Folder 62. A typed transcription of a description of the proposed President's House and copy of the plan were included as Appendix 6 and Appendix 7 on pages 26-27 of the unpublished report, "The Buildings and Grounds of Jefferson College in the Nineteenth Century" that was compiled by Dawn Maddox in 1971. (The appendices were *not* included in the version of that report that was published in the *Journal of Mississippi History* in 1973.) Three photocopies of the floor plan of the proposed President's House are filed in Official Records Series 1332, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Historic Properties Division, Historic Jefferson College Files, 1970-1982, in Box 5105, Folder 3.

¹⁰ Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Volume 4, p. 52, in the Jefferson College Papers, Z/0059.000, Box 2.

¹¹ The draft of this resolution is filed in the Jefferson College Papers, Z/0059.000, Box 17, Folder 93.

¹² Deed for the purchase of the Inge property, dated 10 August 1842, in the Jefferson College Papers, Box 17, Folder 93.

Board on 10 April 1843, the committee reported that repairs had been made to the Primary School building [the Old Methodist Church] and the President's House:

... Also some small repairs on the Kitchen of the Inge House – and one pair of steps to the back door of the Inge House – the water [has been] conducted from the cellar, & the outside windows repaired and glazed to protect the inside from rain: new glass in this House 53 panes. The Inge House and premises have not yet been rented – the Committee have drawn on the Treasurer for \$159.37, the amount of Mr. Finney's bill for all of said repairs ...¹³

A report on the condition of the house was made to the Board on 4 March 1844.¹⁴ About September 1847 carpenter Charles Brewer made some repairs to the President's House, including fencing the garden, putting up and painting a fence and gates in front of the house, making four sets of steps, repairing the banister and hand rail on the porches, shingling the roof of the kitchen, and building a privy.¹⁵ On 10 February 1848, painter Robert McKee was paid for work at Jefferson College, including painting on the West Wing, the "brick school house," and the President's House.¹⁶

On 16 July 1851, James McFee was paid for making some miscellaneous repairs, apparently to the President's House,¹⁷ and Foster Jamison was paid on 28 January 1854, for painting and whitewashing on the President's House and Kitchen, and in professors' rooms in the college.¹⁸ The firm of Price & Polkinghorne received payment in February 1854 for building a cistern for the President's House.¹⁹ One of the last entries in the *Day Book, 1845-1854*, dated 6 February 1854, was a record of a payment of \$119.59 to A.W. Rowan, chairman of the Building Committee, as a reimbursement "for balance paid by him on repairs to President's House,"²⁰ probably including some of this work.

During the 1840s and 50s, the President's House was often used as used as a residence for the Superintendent of the College, but during such time as it was not used for that purpose, it was rented out as a private residence. This practice was continued after the Civil War. At a meeting of the Board on 13 March 1871, "the Committee on College

¹³ Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees on 10 April 1843, in the Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Volume 5 (filed as an unprocessed accretion to the Jefferson College Papers, Z/U/1994.0001), pp. 17-18. The work was done by Thomas C. Finney, the contractor who made repairs to the East Wing from January through June 1842, after the fire of October 1841.

¹⁴ Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees on 4 March 1844, in the Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Volume 5 (filed as an unprocessed accretion to the Jefferson College Papers, Z/U/1994.0001), p. 43.

¹⁵ Voucher for payment to Charles Brewer, dated September 1847 and paid on 7 October 1847, in the Jefferson College Papers, Box 18, Folder 107. This payment is recorded in the Day Book of 1845-1854 (in the Jefferson College Papers, Box 5)

¹⁶ An invoice and receipt from Robert McKee, paid on 10 February 1848, in the Jefferson College Papers, Box 18, Folder 108. This payment is recorded in the Day Book of 1845-1854 (in the Jefferson College Papers, Box 5) and also in the Treasurer's Report that was presented on 6 March 1848, which is recorded on page 127 of Volume 5 of the Minutes of the Board of Trustees (filed as an unprocessed accretion to the Jefferson College Papers, Z/U/1994.0001).

¹⁷ An invoice and receipt from James McFee, dated 1 June 1851 and paid on 16 July 1851, in the Jefferson College Papers, Box 18, Folder 113. This payment is recorded in the Day Book of 1845-1854 (in the Jefferson College Papers, Box 5) and also in the Treasurer's Report that was presented on 8 September 1851, which is recorded on page 172 of Volume 5 of the Minutes of the Board of Trustees (filed as an unprocessed accretion to the Jefferson College Papers, Z/U/1994.0001).

¹⁸ A voucher and receipt for payment to Foster Jamison, dated 28 January 1854, in the Jefferson College Papers, Box 18, Folder 119. This payment is recorded in the Day Book of 1845-1854 (in the Jefferson College Papers, Box 5).

¹⁹ A voucher and receipt for payment to Price & Polkinghorne, dated February 1854, in the Jefferson College Papers, Box 18, Folder 119.

²⁰ Day Book of 1845-1854, in the Jefferson College Papers, Box 5.

Buildings and Grounds was authorized to make such disposition of the President's house to a suitable tenant as they may gleem [sic] just." ²¹ In the spring of 1871, the President's house was unoccupied, and the Board sought to rent it out. By the latter part of 1872, however, J.S. Raymond had been hired as the new Superintendent, and he moved into the President's House, where he resided throughout his nearly 40-year tenure. He served a Superintendent from 1872 to 1911. ²² The house was often referred to in the late 19th century as "Prof. Raymond's House."

In April 1871, payment was authorized to be made to John Cooney for "putting up a double chimney in the kitchen and servant building of the President' house." ²³

From February to May 1883, carpenter James McCabe did substantial repair and renovation work on the President's House. ²⁴ Notations on an invoice for the purchase of lumber at that time indicate that the double-tiered gallery that was on the front of the President's House from the 1880s through the early 1970s was built at that time. ²⁵ In May 1883 the firm of G. & E. Kennedy, stove dealers and tinware manufacturers, installed a metal roof on "Prof. Raymond's gallery." ²⁶

In 1897 Professor Raymond submitted a report of some expenses he had incurred, including the purchase of lumber from E.A. Enochs for the construction of a "small stable & carriage house." Since there was already a stable at the College at that time, this was evidently a stable and carriage house for the President's House. ²⁷

At a meeting of the Board of Trustees on 11 August 1928, the chairman of the property committee (building committee) reported that "the old President's house was badly in need of a new roof." The Board authorized the property committee "to have the old shingle roof on said building removed and to replace the same with a new galvanized roof at a cost not exceeding \$150." ²⁸

On 14 December 1929, the Board of Trustees approved a contract with Mississippi Power and Light Co. for electric power service for the College. "Major Walser called attention to the fact that the old residence at the college occupied by him [the President's House?] had not been wired, that the Mississippi Power and Light Company had offered to furnish the wire at cost not exceeding \$25.00, and that he himself would do the work of wiring if the college would pay for the wire." The Board agreed to the proposal. ²⁹

²¹ Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Volume 6, p. 143, in the Jefferson College Papers, Z/0059.000, Box 4.

²² The dates of his tenure as superintendent are from a list of the Superintendents of Jefferson Military College filed in the MDAH Subject File folder, **Jefferson College, History of**.

²³ voucher for payment to John Cooney, dated April 1871, in the Jefferson College Papers, Box 19, Folder 154.

²⁴ Vouchers for payment to James McCabe, on multiple dates in February, March, April, and May 1883, in the Jefferson College Papers, Z/0059.000, Box 22, Folders 220, 221, and 222.

²⁵ Invoice from R.F. Learned, for the purchase of lumber in February, March, and April 1883, in the Jefferson College Papers, Z/0059.000, Box 22, Folder 222. This double-tiered gallery appears on photographs of the President's House from the early twentieth century to the early 1970s, including the HABS photographs that were made in 1936.

²⁶ Invoice from G. & E. Kennedy, stove dealers and tinware manufacturers, dated April 1884, in the Jefferson College Papers, Box 23, Folder 229.

²⁷ A financial report from J.S. Raymond itemizing various expenses, in the Jefferson College Papers, Box 25, Folder 293.

²⁸ Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Volume 9, p. 180, in Box 9 of an unprocessed accretion to the Jefferson Military College Papers filed as Z/U/1990.034.

²⁹ Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Volume 9, p. 185.

At a Board meeting on 18 April 1935, “Mr. Viener of the Property Committee reported the purchase of bathroom fixtures for the Superintendent’s house at Jefferson College at a very reasonable price, and also the purchase of a steel water tank of sufficient dimensions from which to supply water to the bathroom, and other work to be done. On motion, the Property Committee was authorized to have the work done ...”³⁰

Jefferson College closed in 1964, and not long afterward its buildings and grounds were conveyed to the State of Mississippi in exchange for paying off the institution’s debts.³¹ The property was initially placed under the management of the Mississippi State Building Commission, which, having no use for the property, simply boarded up the buildings and abandoned them. For a period of seven years the unattended building were subjected to extensive theft and vandalism.

In August 1971 the Jefferson College property was placed under the administration of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH). One of the first actions taken by MDAH regarding Jefferson College was to arrange for the older buildings to be examined by noted preservation architect Charles E. Peterson of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Peterson made a visit to Jefferson College on 15 December 1971 to assess the condition of its older buildings and make recommendations for their preservation. His recommendations were written in a report, dated 21 January 1972.³² Peterson remarked in his report, “The two old brick buildings behind the main “wings” are at least as interesting as any other units of the College – and so is the President’s House. Some emergency work is needed on all of them.”³³ Under Peterson’s direction, Natchez photographer Edwin H. Prince made some large-format photographs of the older buildings of the College.³⁴

In the fall of 1974, Ron Miller took extensive photographs (exterior and interior) of the President’s House. The negatives for these photos are filed in the photographic negative collection of the MDAH Historic Preservation Division as photo rolls 171 through 177.

The “Jefferson College Newsletter” of January 1981 reported that “... Architect Charles Holland of Natchez is currently drawing plans for the exterior restoration of the President’s House.”³⁵

About 1983 extensive exterior restoration work was done on the President’s House. As a part of this work, the double-tiered gallery that had been installed in 1883 was removed and replaced by a conjectural reconstruction of the original one-story pedimented portico. The reconstruction of the portico was completed by November

³⁰ Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Volume 9, p. 213.

³¹ Blain, *Education in the Old Southwest* (1976), p. 132.

³² This report is currently filed (inappropriately) in Official Records Series 125, the “Education in the Old South West”: Editors’ Files, 1972-1976, in a folder labeled “A memorandum on Jefferson College, Washington, MS, 1971-72.”

³³ Charles E. Peterson, report on his visit to Jefferson College, dated 21 January 1972, page 3.

³⁴ Prints of several of these photographs are included in Peterson’s report. Four of these images are in the HABS collection at the Library of Congress, and can be seen on the HABS web pages for Jefferson College, the kitchen at Jefferson College, and the President’s House.

³⁵ “Jefferson College Newsletter” 10:1 (January 1981) (published by the Friends of Jefferson College), in the Subject File, **Friends of Jefferson College**. The correct spelling of the name bestowed on the building in 1951 was Gray Hall (with an ‘a’ not an ‘e’).

1983.³⁶ The restoration work also included removing the metal roof and replacing it with a wood shingle roof, repair of the exterior siding, and replacement of several windows. (The plans and specifications for this project are located at Historic Jefferson College.)

In the Mississippi Landmark file for Jefferson College at the Historic Preservation Division, MDAH, is correspondence from April 1990 regarding Bureau of Buildings Project No. GS 501-041, replacement of roofing shingles on the President's House. The project architect was Charles Curtis Moroney of Natchez. The correspondence indicated that the then-existing roof had been installed in 1982. This project appears to have taken a very long time to be planned and carried out, for there is also a budget estimate for this project dated 14 October 1991, and a Mississippi Landmark permit for roof repairs on the President's House dated 26 October 1992.³⁷ This roof was installed about 1993 by the Dillon Construction Company.³⁸

In the summer of 2008, the front door of the west wing of the President's House was replaced.³⁹ A new heating and air conditioning system for the President's House was authorized in September 2008.⁴⁰ There was correspondence in November 2008 about the proposed replacement or repair of eight wooden windows on the President's House.⁴¹

A Mississippi Landmark permit was approved on 21 January 2011 for replacement of the wood shingle roof of the President's House, to replace the previous roof that was installed about 1992. Another Mississippi Landmark permit was issued on 22 July 2011 for repairs to the President's House, including repairs to the back porch.⁴²

The President's House is currently used as a residence for the Director of Historic Jefferson College.

³⁶ Ken P'Pool made photographs of the exterior of the President's House, showing the reconstructed portico, in November 1983 (photos 1443:1-9 in the photo negative collection of the Historic Preservation Division, MDAH).

³⁷ A Mississippi Landmark permit, authorized on 26 October 1992, and related correspondence in the Mississippi Landmark file for Jefferson College at the Historic Preservation Division, MDAH, regarding roof repairs on the President's House.

³⁸ Correspondence in the Historic Resources Inventory file for the President's House (001-WSH-0105-NRE-ML) in the files of the Historic Preservation Division, MDAH.

³⁹ Correspondence, dated July 2008, regarding the in-kind replacement of the exterior door and door hardware on the west wing of the President's House, in the Mississippi Landmark file for Jefferson College at the Historic Preservation Division, MDAH. (There did not appear to be a Mississippi Landmark permit for this in the file.)

⁴⁰ Correspondence in the Mississippi Landmark file for Jefferson College at the Historic Preservation Division, MDAH, dated July 2008, regarding new HVAC equipment in the President's House. (There did not appear to be a Mississippi Landmark permit for this in the file.)

⁴¹ Correspondence in the Mississippi Landmark file for Jefferson College at the Historic Preservation Division, MDAH, dated November 2008, regarding the proposed repair or replacement of eight windows in the President's House and two sashes on a dormer window of the East Wing. It was noted that several of these windows had been replaced during the restoration of the President's House in 1984. The letter addressing this matter added, "We also recommend that you contact Mr. Ron Miller with the Gulf Coast Field Office, who oversaw the restoration of the President's House in 1984. Mr. Miller should be able to locate the plans of the previous restoration at the Historic Natchez Foundation that may tell us how many sashes were replaced."

⁴² Correspondence in the Mississippi Landmark file for Jefferson College at the Historic Preservation Division, MDAH.