Creating a sense of place or simply a good parking space?: evolution of the historic town squares of Mississippi

Amanda Michelle Rogers

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CREATING A SENSE OF PLACE OR SIMPLY A GOOD PARKING SPACE?
EVOLUTION OF THE HISTORIC TOWN SQUARES OF MISSISSIPPI

By
Amanda Michelle Rogers

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of
Mississippi State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Landscape Architecture
in the Department of Landscape Architecture

Mississippi State, Mississippi
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CREATING A SENSE OF PLACE OR SIMPLY A GOOD PARKING SPACE?
EVOLUTION OF THE HISTORIC TOWN SQUARES OF MISSISSIPPI

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Mississippi has a surprising amount and variety of town squares. The square provides a central, pedestrian civic space in the towns in which they are located. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the evolution of town squares in Mississippi. The method employed was historical research of primary sources that included historic photographs and Sanborn Fire Insurance maps. The photographs were examined using the *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* investigating such elements as vegetation, site furnishings, and circulation patterns.

Canton, Holly Springs, and Lexington were chosen to be studied in more detail to give a clearer picture of how squares have changed over time. It was determined that there are approximately 69 towns with squares in Mississippi. The most numerous types of squares used are Shelbyville squares. The vitality of the square varies greatly from town to town.
Keywords: town squares, primary sources, historical research, Canton, Lexington, Holly Springs
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my husband, Kary, who has been extremely supportive, encouraging, and incredibly patient through this entire process. He even valiantly attempted to stay up as late as I did on the late nights that this project required. This research is also dedicated to my family, whose support has been invaluable. They are my parents, Thomas and Vicki Cockrell; my sister, Elizabeth; and my in-laws, David and Mary Sue Rogers; as well as the four-legged members, who have provided comfort and companionship. Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to my loyal friend, Renee Pender, who has been my enthusiastic ally for the 22 years that we have been friends.
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I would also like to thank and acknowledge the towns of Canton, Holly Springs, and Lexington. Specifically, I would like to thank Billie Jean McMullin and Jana Padgett at the Canton Convention and Visitors Bureau, Maureen Simpson at the Canton Redevelopment Authority, Jean Carson and Wanda McCulloch at the Lexington Chamber of Commerce, and Amy Heaton at the Holly Springs Chamber of Commerce.
These ladies were all very gracious and extremely helpful while I was conducting research in their towns. Local historians Lois Swanee of Holly Springs and Phil Cohen of Lexington were also very helpful and helped breathe life into the historical information that had been written about their towns. I would also like to thank the owners and shopkeepers of La-De-Da and The Market Gallery in Canton, Tyson Drug in Holly Springs, and Barrett Law Office in Lexington for allowing me access to the upper stories of buildings to re-create some of the historical photographs that permitted a comparison between the past and the present.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Though the United States is a relatively young nation, there have been great changes in the development and growth of towns in this country. Traditionally, towns developed with mixed uses being common as the major functions of the towns were located in close proximity to one another. From there came the Central Business District and after the Industrial Revolution the different uses of towns came to be separated from one another, especially industrial activities from residential ones. After World War II, the country saw a huge boom in the housing industry, leading to the conversion of farm lands to housing and sprawl. Also, beginning in the 1930s there was a plan to create what is now known as the Interstate System (U.S. Department of Transportation-Federal Highway Administration). Its goal was to connect the principal metropolitan areas, cities, and industrial centers by direct routes, as much as was practicable. This led to the creation of the highways and interstates with which we are now so familiar. New development in towns tended to occur near the highways. Now it is common in many towns to have a “strip” of development for commercial activities and have “big box stores” in place of “mom and pop” stores. These changes lead to isolation as people often spend time alone in their cars instead of interacting with one another (Duany,
Plater-Zyberk, and Speck 2000). Could we look back at our history to glean some lessons from how towns previously developed and functioned and incorporate that knowledge into our current town designs while also designing new spaces that function to bring people together and enrich their lives?

There is a yearning for a return to traditional town design which is evidenced by the movements of new urbanism, smart growth, and traditional neighborhood development (New Urbanism, and The Town Paper). This had been a movement led mostly by designers which began with architects and planners such as Andrés Duany and Peter Calthorpe (ibid). Many planners see the value of having a mixing of uses as this type of development has many benefits, according to proponents of these movements (ibid). For example, people are able to live where they work which reduces or eliminates commute times while reducing pollution from automobiles and the use of fossil fuels (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck 2000). People who live in these types of communities get more exercise by walking to where they work and shop (ibid). Relationships are built more easily through the interaction that comes from the mixing of uses since people are not isolated in their own houses as much (ibid). Businesses are “safer” because someone is there at night to “watch over them” and they are not abandoned as they are in many downtown areas (ibid).

Towns in Mississippi developed following many of the same patterns as towns in other states, although Mississippi does not have as many large urban centers as other states. What it does have is an array of charming small towns mixed with growing and developing larger towns and cities. Many of the towns share similar characteristics in their form and layout, including a propensity to have town squares, especially in the
county seats. Some of these squares are thriving, though most do not fulfill the same roles that they did in the past. Some are stagnating and many are declining. However, town squares continue to be relevant today. The town square provides a central, pedestrian civic space that seems to be missing from many contemporary towns.

The Urban Land Institute gives the following description of a town center, which is what many new urbanist developers strive to create:

A town center is an enduring, walkable, and integrated open-air, multiuse development that is organized around a clearly identifiable and energized public realm where citizens can gather and strengthen their community bonds. It is anchored by retail, dining, and leisure uses, as well as by vertical or horizontal residential uses. At least one other type of development is included in a town center, such as office, hospitality, civic, and cultural uses. Over time, a town center should evolve into the densest, most compact, and most diverse part of a community, with strong connections to its surroundings (Urban Land Institute).

Could this not be the definition of a town square in the early 1900s? That this is what people are striving to create demonstrates the relevance of studying about this historic form of town planning.

Sense of Place

In 1978 a group of scholars and public officials gathered for a two-day symposium to identify and discuss what is distinctive about Mississippi, its land, its people, and its culture. The aim was to explore what contributes to a “Sense of Place” in Mississippi. According to author Willie Morris, that which is the common denominator of “our curious distinctiveness” is the awareness of community or a “profound feeling for communal origins” (Prenshaw and McKee 1979, 4). If this is true, then that sense of
community should encourage people to preserve our cultural heritage sites, such as the
town squares, where many of the communities were born.

Additionally, legendary geographer Peirce Lewis says that in order to have a
sense of place, a community needs to be reminded of a sense of shared experience by the
presence of objects that remind them of where they are and who they are (Prenshaw and
McKee 1979). There should be vernacular things that are easily recognized as distinctive
to the place. These help give uniqueness to the place and help to tie its present to the
shared experience of a common past (ibid). Town squares certainly have the capability
of doing this and are the perfect places to display those objects that remind people of their
shared experiences and what they value as a community. Mr. Lewis went on to say that
intelligent, sensitive tourists could help add respect for the place as they come to towns to
learn about the special qualities of a place. He said that they should be able to find a
“well-written, well-illustrated, honest guide to the county, a handbook that might cost a
couple of dollars, and would guide him through the streets of the county seat and the
countryside around it, explaining what he is seeing” (Prenshaw and McKee 1979, 45).
This could be one way to stop the “great bland placeless world” from “elbowing” its way
into the South. He says that this can only be stopped:

> where intelligent, dedicated people are cudgeling their brains to
find ways to preserve and instill a sense of pride in local places,
a pride based on very specific knowledge of those places and
dedicated to telling the truth about those very specific places.
We don’t hear that kind of talk very often from planners and
policymakers, or from scholars either. But perhaps it is time we
did” (Prenshaw and McKee 1979, 46).

Though this was written in 1978, the advice still holds true thirty years later.
Looking back over the development that has occurred in the last thirty years the “great
bland placeless world” has indeed been intruding all across the state and is evident in the strips of commercial development where one can find the ubiquitous McDonald’s®, Wal-Mart®, and T.J. Maxx®. The only thing distinguishing one town from another in some cases is whether the McDonald’s® is next to the Hardee’s® or the Wendy’s®. How much better would it be to promote the unique store that is known for carrying that special item that is only made in a given town? It would also be better to incorporate the chain stores within the context of other local stores that share an architectural style distinctive of a certain area, as has been done in towns such as Carroll, Iowa (Knox 1991).

The Purpose of This Study

Very little research has been conducted regarding Mississippi town squares, yet other states, such as Texas, have been studied in more detail. For example, Robert Veselka (2000) conducted a study of courthouse squares in Texas in which he classified them and organized them by type. He then provided more explanation about each type of square by giving examples of towns with that square type. That study along with other previous studies served as a starting point for this project. The purpose of this study is to examine the evolution of historic town squares in Mississippi. It is hoped that this can add to the body of knowledge in landscape architecture by teaching us about the history of land planning in our state. One of the goals of this study is to bring awareness of the importance of the town squares of Mississippi, many of which have been neglected. Hopefully that awareness will lead to appreciation of them which could in turn lead to
efforts to revitalize them so that they can be preserved as important civic spaces for future uses as well.

Learning about how Mississippi town squares developed is important for several reasons. It is important to learn from past successes and failures in order to design well now and into the future. Learning how open space was valued and utilized in the past can teach us how best to use it now. Finally, these earlier forms can inform us of how to better create dynamic communities while reducing sprawl as squares are central areas where a variety of uses occur in a compact area. The examination of these squares teaches us about the history of our towns, how town squares were utilized in the past, and how these historic patterns can influence urban design for modern-day landscape architects.

**Objectives of the Study**

There were several objectives to this study. The first objective was to identify how many town squares are found in Mississippi. This led directly to the second objective which was to determine the location of the town squares in Mississippi. Thirdly, this study sought to identify the forms of the town squares of Mississippi and their usage. This involved determining what those forms were and then examining to see if there are patterns detected in the use of the forms, such as a particular form being found only in a certain area. The fourth objective was to examine one of each type of square in more detail to gain understanding about what characteristics were found on the squares and how they functioned as public space.
Outline of the Study

This study was conducted principally by examining primary sources. The sources used were Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of the town squares from 1887 through about 1950 and historic photographs of the town squares. The investigation of the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps helped to determine the different forms that squares have taken in Mississippi and how the evolved over time, particularly in terms of density. The historic photographs were useful in two ways. Firstly, they illustrate what the squares looked like in elevation view as the Sanborn maps only showed plan view. Secondly, the historic photographs proved to be useful in determining the essential character of each square as the distinctive characteristics of each town were revealed through studying them. These photographs were then compared with modern-day conditions to note the changes that have occurred over the years. Specifically considered were character-defining elements from The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes looking at such elements as spatial organization and land patterns; topography; vegetation; circulation; structures, furnishings and objects; fencing; and paving materials.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review examines the research conducted regarding town square development in the United States. The story of how town squares originated and proliferated is discussed, as well as research findings about the common elements of the squares, the function of the squares, and the meaning of the squares. Additionally, research conclusions about the vitality of the town square as a built form are discussed. Furthermore the implications that the reviewed literature holds for designers of public spaces are given.

The Origins of the Grid

Towns throughout history have not always been laid out as they are today. Before the Greeks came to power, the design of most towns tended to be of an organic nature, and streets were not rectilinear, nor did they meet one another at right angles. With the Greeks came the proliferation of towns laid out on a grid. Some of these towns also incorporated a public square, or multiple squares, when they were designed. Now it is uncommon to find towns with squares that are not laid out on a grid. Though the Greeks were the first people commonly associated with the spread of grid-pattern towns, they were not necessarily the creators of this design (Stanislawski 1946).
There are differing sources acknowledged in the emergence of grid-pattern towns and towns with squares. Dan Stanislawski (1946) states that to his knowledge there have been no books or articles devoted to the origin and spread of the grid pattern with straight streets and rectangular blocks. People have considered it and concluded that it spontaneously recommended itself to the town builder. He states that in relation to the history of the grid distribution the only places to use it are those areas directly associated with, or accessible to, regions of earlier use of the grid. He also states that only civilizations that had contact with India developed using the grid (Stanislawski 1946).

The earliest known case of a grid-pattern town is Mohenjo-Daro, in north-western India. The streets showed an orientation and the blocks were laid out in a rectangular pattern (Stanislawski 1946). This city flourished in the first half of the third millennium B.C. (2800-2500 B.C.), though the dates of its origin and end are not known (ibid). The people who settled this area likely had a long history of social organization and created Mohenjo-Daro as a planned city. The next known example of a grid city is found at Dur-Sarginu near the eastern Mediterranean in the eighth century B.C. The grid next appeared in Hippodamus’ redesign of Miletus’ redesign in 479 B.C (ibid), though there is some controversy over his involvement (Cahill 2002). He and his predecessors established the use of the grid in Greece and Greek lands in such a way that it was not again lost to the historical record.

According to Stanislawski (1946), although large periods of time existed between their uses, these previous occurrences of the grid are connected. He purports that the use of the grid continued in India after Mohenjo-Daro. Thus, the designers who later used it had witnessed it in India, possibly through trade routes, and brought it back to their
respective parts of the globe (Stanislawski 1946). Although it seems that the benefits of the grid pattern would be obvious, it appears that it was only used by those who had previous knowledge of the form or access to regions that were using it (ibid). The use of the grid was also perpetuated by Alexander and the Romans. The use of the grid-pattern town was not as common during medieval times and was not greatly perpetuated during this time. However, its use was re-established during the Renaissance, owing to lasting examples of it in Italy, Portugal, England, Spain, and Germany. During this time the grid was widely used in new towns in France and England (ibid). It was also during the Renaissance that public squares came to be used to create great civic open spaces, first in Italy and later throughout Europe (Reps 1965). Spain came to use the grid at a later date than other parts of Europe which resulted in the first Spanish settlements made in the “New World” not having a grid system (Stanislawski 1946). These elements of European planning came to influence the design of towns in the United States (Reps 1965). The Spanish, the French, and the English all employed grid systems with public open spaces, which were referred to as plazas, places, and squares (or commons), respectively (Reps 1965).

There is some disagreement amongst scholars as to the way that the grid town was perpetuated. Hans-Jürgen Nitz (2001) begins his study in the first half of the thirteenth century. He says that the grid street pattern with a central market place was limited to the principalities of east-central Europe and south-western France. He maintains that the grid model was first used around 1200 in east-central Europe, half a century earlier than in the West. He also says that there is no indication of contact between south-western France and east-central Europe. He thus concludes that the assumption must be made that there
were parallel and independent creations of the grid in the two European grid-plan areas (Nitz 2001). His study did focus more on towns with a central square. He traces their origin from northern Italy which had a grid system but no central square, to Austria, and then to Bohemia (ibid). It is difficult to do a direct comparison between Stanislawski’s findings and Nitz’s as they both mention the grid pattern, and there is overlap in the form of the mention of France, but Stanislawski focused solely on the grid and did not directly mention the beginning of the incorporation of a central square.

Though the use of the grid did come to the United States via Europe, some of the earlier towns developed in the United States, such as Boston, did not have a grid system. Many of the first New England villages were laid out on a grid in a compact geometric form, such as New Haven (Reps 1965). The first large city in North America to use a grid system was Philadelphia. It was designed on a rectilinear street grid in 1682. Its main designer, William Penn, a Londoner, saw the benefit of incorporating squares into the grid system and thus included five squares of dedicated parkland. He advertised this design as a safeguard against the overcrowding, fire and disease that had been problematic in European cities. From here it became widely used in the westward expansion of the United States territory (ibid).

**The Origins, Spread, and Types of Squares**

As previously mentioned, the grid system was commonly used in the United States by settlers from Spain, France and England (Reps 1965). There were two main influences on the proliferation of grid-pattern towns within the United States. One of the reasons for the spread of this pattern was that people simply copied existing plans from previous towns. Another event occurred to influence young America’s grid-pattern
development. This was the addition of the “national grid” by Thomas Jefferson. Before Jefferson, several modes of surveying were in use, but in his Land Ordinance of 1785, Jefferson suggested the use of a grid system based on the rectangle as a unifying surveying system. This grid divided the land into plots that were one mile square and each consisted of 640 acres. The first of its kind in America, the ordinance would continue to have an effect on urban, suburban, and farmland planning to the present day (Klausner 2004).

The incorporation of squares within a grid system developed as early in the United States as the grid system itself. One of the first towns to incorporate squares in its design was New Haven of Massachusetts. It is speculated to be the origin for other town squares in the United States, though there is no definitive proof for this theory (Reps 1965). Although plans for other towns did contain squares, it is the plan for Philadelphia that is given credit for the proliferation of grid-towns with squares in this country (ibid). From there, the incorporation of town squares spread with the use of the grid.

One of the premiere studies on town squares in the United States was conducted by Edward Price in 1968. There have been other studies conducted since then but few give the detailed history and background information that Price does. For this reason, this literature review relies heavily on Price’s square classification system and background information. His study focused mainly on courthouse squares, of which he gives the following definition:

a rectangular block surrounded by streets, with the courthouse, often the grandest and most ornate building in the county, standing alone in the middle of the square and the town’s leading business houses enclosing the square symmetrically on all four sides. (Price 1968, 29).
Though this description can apply to most courthouse squares, there are differences that occur in individual squares. Additionally, characteristics can be found repeatedly within the squares that allow them to be classified into various types.

According to Price (1968) the Philadelphia-type square was used in the early cities of southeastern Pennsylvania and occurs at least occasionally in almost all parts of the United States. The Philadelphia plan became expressed as a single open square in the center of the town as it was transplanted west (Reps 1965). The Philadelphia square mainly spread southward and westward (Price 1968). This is true also of the Lancaster square, which is a Philadelphia square with a central courthouse (ibid). The Shelbyville square plan spread from Shelbyville, Tennessee in virtually all directions with the majority being in a northwest direction from the original. The Harrisonburg square, which originated at Harrisonburg, Virginia, is found in areas scattered from Georgia to Indiana and Texas (ibid). Figure 2.1 has a graphic representation of each type of square, and each type is discussed in more detail below.

Philadelphia is the most influential town in terms of town square design within the United States. It is also from Pennsylvania that the central courthouse square likely got its start, as settlers carried it with them from southeastern Pennsylvania (Price 1968). These settlers may have been responsible for the spreading of the Philadelphia square, when a courthouse is absent, or the Lancaster square, when a courthouse is included. This type of square has rectangular corners and streets that run into the middle of each side of the square, rather than on the corners of the square.
A more common type of square is the Shelbyville square. It derives its name from its prototype in Shelbyville, Tennessee. It is called a block square when no courthouse is present. It is simpler in concept than the Lancaster square and is easier to design as it simply uses a block of the grid (Price 1968). Southern Middle Tennessee saw the first group of planned central squares of the block type, after an 1806 cession of Native American lands. Shelbyville, Fayetteville, Pulaski, and Winchester, which were all laid out between 1810 and 1812, are as great examples of central courthouse squares (ibid). It is likely that local officials in these towns were exchanging ideas. This type of square quickly became the most frequent county-seat plan for new counties in most states. The Shelbyville square was often used in Texas and the lower Middle West. Its
popularity eventually waned, but some county seats were laid out using a Shelbyville pattern up to at least 1900 (ibid).

Another type of square is the Harrisonburg square. Historically it precedes any planned block square, as the example at Harrisonburg, Virginia may have been laid out in 1780. As such, it may be a variant of the Lancaster square. Geometrically it lies halfway between the Lancaster and Shelbyville types of squares. It has roads coming in both at the corners of the square and centrally on two sides of the square.

Price says that “perhaps the most lavish of the squares” is the four-block square (Price 1968, 51). This type of square was formed by combining features of both the block square and the Philadelphia square types. Many of these appeared in the 1830’s in county seats from Georgia to Indiana and Texas, and according to Price, it is possible that one town planner may have been involved in the distribution of all of them (Price 1968).

Town squares not only differ from each other by type, but they also differed in how they treated the placement of the courthouse within them. The central square was often given special deference since the lots in the four bordering blocks would face it. When those lots facing the square were originally put up for sale they were tagged with the highest prices and were usually the first to sell (Price 1968). The courthouse was not always centrally placed, as some towns would place it in a corner location at the town’s principal intersection or in a position that blocks the view along the principal street. Additionally, central courthouse squares tended not to be the norm in towns that grew up around railroads (Price 1968).

Central courthouse squares are most often found in Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri. Their concentration is also high in Georgia and Texas. In
other areas of the country, from Michigan west and south to Kansas, the courthouse is usually found in the center of a block outside the central business district. It is uncommon to find central courthouse squares in a wide band across the northern portion of the United States (Price 1968).

**Common Elements of the Squares**

Town squares vary somewhat in the elements that they contain. Some are simply green spaces, which are often called commons; some contain civic buildings such as courthouses; and some contain churches (Price 1968). Contributing to these differences are the differing models for civic open space in the United States including European towns with town squares, the Spanish colonial town plaza, and the New England town green. These differing models vary in what they include. European town squares often contain civic and municipal buildings. The Spanish plazas typically showcased the church as the principal building, which did not reside in the center of the plaza, but rather faced the plaza. The New England town greens were seldom surrounded by businesses and were generally not symmetrical (Price 1968). Of these models, the courthouse square most closely corresponds with European town square models. The following section will discuss the main elements contained within typical courthouse squares.

According to Price (1968) how the square was originally platted did not determine how it was later landscaped, though there was a typical pattern to the evolution of the squares. Many of the earlier squares retained the existing trees for decades. Some squares that had the trees removed remained unpaved for many years, lacking curbs or indicators of the edges of traffic ways. Courthouses were later surrounded by fences and
trees were re-planted in one of two ways—either park-like in the courthouse yard or formally in rows along the sides of the street. It was common for wars to be commemorated by stone soldiers on pedestals. The streets and sidewalks were paved and edged with stone or concrete curbs, giving the square a clearer geometry (Price 1968).

In general, the squares followed a similar process of evolution. The buildings around the square were made originally of wood and were small and separated. They gradually crowded together to enclose the square with a unifying façade (Price 1968). The representative buildings surrounding the square are late-nineteenth-century, two-story, flat-roofed structures made of brick, and distinguished by a repeating Victorian trim in the windows and cornices. These are solemn reflections of the stateliness of the courthouse opposite them (ibid). According to Price, many of these historic buildings could act as an accurate witness of their time, demonstrating what the towns looked like at a given time in history. Hindering this is the common practice of including inharmonious commercial signs that do not correspond to the architecture of the historic structures (ibid). Courthouses themselves have shown more variety and complexity in their architecture. These were usually designed by a professional city architect, and some underwent major changes over the years. The symmetry of the central square is often reflected in the courthouse architecture by facades and entrances placed on two opposite sides or impartially on all four sides (ibid).

**Function of the Square**

The original buildings around the square consisted of taverns, stores, workshops, dwellings, and churches which were located on the lots facing the log courthouse of the
pioneer county seat (Price 1968). Informal marketing was also frequent on the square, such as farmers selling their produce; horses and mules being traded; and itinerant salesmen setting up their own stands. In the 1960s when the article by Price was written, the businesses were almost entirely in the hands of permanent establishments. Larger towns have more specialized businesses on the square, but a square rarely survives as the center of a town that grows beyond twenty-five thousand residents (ibid). Businesses that have frequently left the squares in the last century include groceries, which moved to sites with more parking, and banks, which moved in order to have more spacious drive-in locations.

The function of the squares in terms of traffic has changed over time. The earlier squares were the termini of roads coming in from the county and were used as parking spaces for horse-drawn vehicles. With the automobile came increased traffic through the square. This led to congestion on the square and planners saw a need to address this issue. They did so by creating bypass routes that separate through traffic from county traffic. This leaves the open space of the square to often be used for parking (Price 1968).

The automobile may also be responsible for another change in the function of the square as well: the square as a social center. Originally, the square brought together the people who worked there, came there to do business, or came merely to pass time. The courthouse was once the only meetinghouse for the town and events such as the county fair and Fourth of July celebration were held on its grounds (Price 1968). With the automobile, came greater freedom for people to travel further distances which often
meant that the town squares came to be abandoned for other destinations such as newer shopping centers.

**Meaning of the Square**

Price (1968) says that the place of the courthouse square in American consciousness still awaits its interpreter. Though it has been mentioned in popular literature, it is often portrayed simply as a place where things happen (Price 1968). Three writers in particular gave more detail of occurrences on the square, and they are William Faulkner, Ross Lockridge, and Conrad Arensberg. These writers agree about the courthouse holding primary importance in the ensemble of the square, but they attribute to it different meanings. They also attribute different, but complementary meanings to the square itself. The genius of the square is variety, in how form, meaning, and function are interwoven (ibid). The square is used in an almost synergetic fashion with the economic, political, esthetic, and social aspects combining to give greater meaning to the square as a whole. Price states, “The central courthouse square may give priority to location-sensitive, high-return activities” (Price 1968, 59).

Price refers to Edward T. Hall who suggested that Americans prefer one thing at a time rather than mixing several activities (Price 1968 referring to *The Hidden Dimension* [New York, 1966], p. 163). For this reason, it should come as no surprise that the squares are not properly utilized and are not defended if they interfere with traffic or trade (Price 1968). Price goes on to say that the geometry of the square is not merely symbolic but governs the access to the various stores and offices around it. Their placement guides the
steps of those seeking their goods. The person wishing to reach the square must follow the course of its streets to reach it.

Various authors have discussed the meanings associated with town squares. Price (1968) says that the central courthouse squares were expressions of pioneer pride on the frontier of a developing civilization. The courthouse and its square were often the focal point of the community (Veselka 2000), and the functions associated with the squares include commercial, legal, social, economic, and political roles (Veselka 200 and Robinson 1972).

**Other Square Studies**

Though there have not been any studies conducted about town squares in Mississippi, several have been performed in other parts of the country and the world. For example, one study conducted by David T. Stephens and Alexander T. Bobersky (1987) sought to determine the lasting power of the square as an element in the fabric of settlement and to evaluate any changes that might have occurred in their function over the 100 years of urbanization and progress, from the 1870s to the 1980s. This was accomplished by investigating the health and welfare of town squares in 95 communities in the Western Reserve that were founded prior to 1826 and had some type of central public space. The Western Reserve refers to land claimed by Connecticut in the Northwest Territory in what is now northeastern Ohio (Reps 1965). One finding of the study was that sixteen of the communities no longer possessed identifiable centralized public spaces, and these occurred in the least urbanized areas of the Reserve (Stephens and Bobersky 1987).
A theme throughout the study which drew on a previous study in 1986 that the two researchers had conducted was a comparison of the squares of the Reserve towns with New England greens and commons. In one aspect the Reserve towns came to resemble the New England public spaces over time. This was in the finding of buildings on the square. Only about 20 percent of the Reserve’s squares had any type of building in the 1870s, but in the 1980s nearly 70 percent had some type of structure. Similar to New England greens and commons there is a combining of public administration and religious functions in that both types of buildings were found on the squares in the 1980s. Bandstands are now found on the squares, which were added in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The authors conclude that the squares of the 1980s contain a greater variety and number of public buildings when compared with the squares of the 19th century, suggesting an expanding, changing role in the community (Stephens and Bobersky 1987). Five broad themes were identified that summarize the elements of the squares that provide insight into the current roles of the square (or the roles in the 1980s). They include public information, military commemoration, patriotism, memorializing, and water features. Another change in the squares over time is that most current squares have been infringed upon by automobile-related functions. An additional change is noted in the “improvement” of the squares by adding residential landscaping to many suburban squares (Stephens and Bobersky 1987). In concluding the study the authors sum up their findings. The squares that did not persevere were associated with failing rural settlements, and central city and suburban squares fared better. There is a continued association with church and state, and new added functions are noted by the appearance of bandstands and picnic shelters. Squares today are places for patriotic displays, water
features, sources of public information, sites for the recognition of service to the nation and the community. The authors conclude by stating, “the town square persists as an element in the settlement fabric of the Western Reserve, and it still plays an important role in some aspects of community life” (Stephens and Bobersky 1987, 57).

Texas has been treated in several studies about town squares in both articles and books. The reasons may be due to its size, the number of squares that it contains, the variety of squares that it contains, and the fact that it is the only state that employed all major survey and land tenure systems found in the United States (Veselka 2000).

One study by Daniel D. Arreola (1992) focused on the plaza towns of south Texas. He says that although most towns in south Texas were founded after Texas had become a part of the United States, plazas as traditional Spanish-American features were often included in the layouts of the town. This resulted from both a strong Hispanic identity among ethnic Mexicans in the communities and from the recognition of the form’s symbolic role by influential Anglo-Americans. As a result, plaza towns are more numerous in south Texas than in the remaining Hispanic-American borderlands (Arreola 1992). The plaza is common in settlements throughout Hispanic America as a physical form and a social space, and it varies in type, form, and landscape characteristics. In part because of the interactions of Hispanic and Anglo-American traditions, the differences in plaza types are more pronounced in the lands making up the border shared by Mexico and the United States (Arreola 1992).

The author compares plazas found in Spain with those found in the New World. Three types of Spanish plazas have been identified. These are market plazas, which are unplanned with little relationship to the street grid; organic plazas, which are planned...
with a functional relationship to the street grid; and monumental plazas, which are often asymmetrically positioned inside an old city wall or immediately outside the old city. In contrast the plazas of Hispanic America are larger, more open, ringed with municipal and ecclesiastical buildings, and more integrated within the grid of the city (Arreola 1992).

In most towns in south Texas containing plazas, they are peripheral to the center of each community. Two of the towns studied had market plazas initially. Common elements of the south Texas plazas include bandstands, lawns, trees, walkways and benches. The use of these plazas has changed somewhat over time. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they functioned as traditional social nodes where promenades, harvest fairs, and Mexican patriotic celebrations took place. At the time of the study the traditional paseo, a practice in which males strolled around a plaza in one direction while females circulated around it in the opposite direction, had disappeared from the plazas, and only two of fourteen towns studied used plazas for annual celebrations (Arreola 1992).

Towns with plazas are more numerous in south Texas than in other Hispanic-American borderland states such as California, Arizona, and New Mexico. The author says that this suggests that town founding was prominent in the Texas-Mexican sub-region of the Hispanic-American borderlands, in contrast with other nodes of the region that were settled by Hispanics (Arreola 1992). The creation and use of plazas reinforced a resilient cultural identity that was influenced by proximity to Mexico and a heritage of immigration and exchange with the homeland. In south Texas the use of plazas survives as an emblem of Mexican identity as witnessed by the revitalization and historic preservation of those traditional spaces.
In a study conducted by Willard Robinson (1972) the author discusses how the form of the square determined the form of the courthouse in Texas. He mainly refers to squares formed after Texas independence when the form of the public square was Anglo-American. The most commonly used square type was the Shelbyville (see Figure 2.1). Commercial property would face all sides, giving equal prominence to all business sites. The tensions between the buildings and their surroundings gave form to the courthouses. There was a demand to orient each block around the square to the front of the courthouse, creating a need for entry and similar facades on all four sides. Also, the need for the courthouse to be a dominant landmark led to the use of tall towers, which were tended to be centrally located (Robinson 1972).

Another study conducted in Texas was by Sandra Chipley (1985). She conducted an analysis of the design evolution of the courthouse square in Texas and its urban context. There were several historical periods that are reflected by the squares in Texas. Plazas were built during the Spanish colonial and Mexican periods of Texas’ history. Many of the areas of West Texas were surveyed on the national grid following Jefferson’s Land Ordinance of 1785. Once railroads came to town, there was a change from the commercial center being at the square to having an association with the railroad depot. From 1880 to 1920 the “County Seat Wars” of Texas occurred in which many towns died after losing their position as county seat. Around this time larger and more spectacular courthouses began to be built. From 1900 to 1930, many cities in Texas participated in the City Beautiful movement and made improvements to their cities’ landscape. Courthouse design changed from the tower of the nineteenth century to the classical dome of the twentieth century and finally to the vertical skyscraper. Modern
conveniences, such as air conditioning, were installed, and the public square began to lose its function as well as its attraction to the public. Ms. Chipley chose courthouse squares from all of the time periods in Texas’ history and conducted case studies on each of them thus tracking the evolution of the courthouse square throughout the history of Texas (Chipley 1985).

The study that was the most influential on this study is another project conducted in Texas by Robert Veselka (2000). This dissertation deals with how “town planning, land use, social activity, and architectural symbolism are interwoven at the square in ways matched by few other elements of American urban design” (Veselka 2000, 1).

Veselka studied American town planning traditions and their relationships with the social meaning of civic space. In particular he documents the differences between the Anglo-American squares and the squares derived from Spanish precedents and other planning traditions. Anglo-American squares tend to have the basic forms that were discussed by Price (1965). These include Philadelphia and Lancaster squares, Shelbyville and block squares, Harrisonburg squares, and four-block squares. Squares derived from Spanish precedents tend to be plaza squares where the courthouse is not centrally located but faces the public plaza. Other planning traditions include railroad influenced squares, irregular blocks, half-blocks, and quarter-blocks. Veselka also discusses the function and role of the courthouse squares. He states that these squares exert a centripetal force that attracts activities associated with commerce to the square. He classified each of the courthouse squares that he studied as predominant, co-dominant, or subordinate. Predominate squares often dominate the townscapes in which they are located and retain a central focus in their community. Co-dominant squares share portions of their
community role with one or more sites within the town’s location. The roles of subordinate squares in the activities of the community are very limited (Veselka 2000).

The research methods that Veselka used to reach his conclusions included archival research and site visits to 139 of the 254 county seats in Texas. He used these methods to collect data about town plans and to gather information on courthouse architecture and on social activities, monuments, and memorials located at the square. A major source of primary documents was the collection of Sanborn Insurance Company Maps at the Center for American History at the University of Texas in Austin (Veselka 2000). His research led him to give the following description of courthouse squares in Texas:

The traditional image of the courthouse square portrays an imposing, multistoried masonry structure set amid a tree-shaded lawn punctuated by bronze figures, granite markers, a comfortable gazebo, and a flagpole or two. This nostalgic vision is a reality in many county seats and traces its immediate roots to the nineteenth century (Veselka 2000, 199).

Veselka (2000) also came to several other conclusions about courthouse squares in Texas. For example, he states that to the casual observer of the courthouse squares, consistencies of plan and the town’s central focus on the square become apparent. The courthouse square as a built form has shown remarkable endurance and has exhibited its influence on the surrounding urban landscape. These squares were shown to shape both land use and symbolic features. In referring to how the squares were planned, Veselka states that although they were planned based on Anglo-American traditions as well as Spanish Precedents and other planning traditions, such as railroad-influenced squares, and nontraditional squares, the most common forms found were based on the block patterns preferred by many Anglo-Americans. He determined that some courthouse
squares were more influential than others, which has been mentioned through his classification of squares as being predominant, co-dominate, or subordinate. Of this conclusion, he states that there was not one single factor that accounted for a square playing a central role in its town but rather that combinations of urban features either reinforce or reduce the square’s centripetal influence (Veselka 2000). These factors may include the population of the town, the role of the city hall, and the proliferation of government services and agencies clustered around the square. Additionally, the role of the courthouse square was determined by land policies and county formation resulting from settlement and independence patterns in Texas. Veselka also concludes the following:

Another set of indicators of the courthouse square’s centripetal influence and social meaning reveals intimate relationships between social activities and symbols at the square. Particularly relevant are the design of the courthouse itself and the placement of monuments and memorials (Veselka 2000, 203).

Though courthouse squares have played a vital role in the development of Texas’ county seats, several factors that have threatened their continued influence include a transition over the last century to suburbia over the central city core and the advent of “edge” cities” (Veselka 2000, 204). Veselka says that the lesson to be learned from town squares is their ability to create civic spaces that have the potential for focusing the dominant values of the community and that the courthouse square was designed to inspire and to reinforce traditions reflecting a common bond. He concludes his assessment by stating that, “there is very good reason to examine previously successful and familiar urban forms in light of present challenges and to apply their virtues for the benefit of future urban landscapes capable of renewing community” (Veselka 2000, 205).
Conclusion

The research that has been conducted over the years gives insight into the ways that towns have changed and how their squares have played a part or been effected by the changes within the towns. Though the development of town squares in general has been documented, town square research in Mississippi has previously been insubstantial or nonexistent. Additionally, though we know the origins of town squares in the United States, the reason for their use in many towns is not known. As Price (1968) explained, information is often unavailable about who drew up the plans for new towns, what models they chose to use, or the discussions that might have ensued about what the advantages and disadvantages were for different proposals of the plans. What we are left to examine is the physical evidence of what is currently located at the town square and the historical documentation of what has been located there in the past.

Various conclusions can be drawn from the literature found on town squares. For example, town squares have followed similar patterns of evolution over time. Though various patterns exist in the way that town squares have been planned, there are a limited number of types of squares. This is partially due to the fact that people developed town squares based on patterns that they had previously witnessed. Also, squares are made up of the same types of elements, though how these elements are arranged partially accounts for the differences in the types of squares. Squares also vary in the functions that are contained within in as, for example, some squares have churches while others do not. Town squares reflect the values of the communities in which they reside. They have often been the “heart of the town” and are the location where commercial, legal, social, economic, and political functions have come together. Various factors such as the size of
the town, the circulation patterns, and the inclusion of attractions for members of the community have lead to the continued strength of some town squares and the degeneration of others.

Through a search of the relevant literature about town square development throughout the United States, it became apparent that there was little information about town squares in Mississippi in particular. It was important to discover if the squares in Mississippi followed the same patterns of evolution as other squares across the country. Similarly, it was necessary to ascertain if the types of squares found elsewhere are found in Mississippi. Also of interest was discovering if the same elements that make up the squares in other states are found in the squares here. While attempting to answer these questions, this study has taken a more holistic approach than other studies. As there was so little information to be found from one source about town squares in Mississippi, it was necessary to gather together information from disparate sources to form a more complete picture of the town squares of Mississippi. This study treated the squares as cultural landscapes and studied their history, evolution, and character-defining features.
CHAPTER III
METHODS

Introduction

This chapter will provide information about the research methods utilized in this thesis. The main method used to collect data for this study was historical analysis. This analysis was conducted using primary sources gathered about towns with squares in Mississippi. This was an appropriate method for the current study because of its ability to provide information about the varying levels of meaning that occur through the evolution of a landscape and the relevance of the available sources.

Historical research analyzing primary sources is usually a type of qualitative research. Qualitative research is an examination and interpretation of observations that is non-numerical whose purpose is to discover underlying meanings and patterns of relationships (Babbie 2004). It is most typical of field research and historical research. Data for a qualitative method such as historical research may come from a variety of sources (ibid). It could be in the form of documents, sound recordings, photographs, or films, to name a few.

Because historical research is usually qualitative, there are no readily available steps to follow in analyzing historical data (Babbie 2004). Partly because of this, there can be a tendency among scholars to view qualitative research as not being as “real” or useful as quantitative research, that easily yields calculable results and graphs. However,
historical analysis can be employed to teach the researcher a great deal about his topic of interest. This method of research can give detailed information over a broad span of time, resulting in an accurate depiction of the form and function of a given place over a range of time.

**Strengths of the Method**

This is an unobtrusive method. The researcher is viewing documents that have already been created and seldom has any effect on the subject being studied (Babbie 2004). This is not true in other methods, such as interviewing where the interviewer may exert some influence over the people being interviewed and can affect the outcome of the results through the manner in which the questions are written or asked. Likewise, historical analysis does not involve human subjects. A caveat of this method is that although the researcher does not influence the data, the interpretation of that data is up to the discretion of the researcher.

Another advantage of this method is that it is less expensive to conduct than other research methods (Babbie 2004). It can usually be carried out by one researcher so that a team of researchers is not needed, nor is expensive equipment necessary. There are no costs of printing and mailing surveys, or the like. Additionally, there is generally a large availability of data to interpret since such a wide range of sources may be consulted (ibid).

An additional strength of historical research is its ability to cover a larger scale than other methods. By conducting this type of research, it is possible to generalize by comparing differing size groups, even as large as societies, or to note changes over vast
spans of time (Babbie 2004). This is true for town square research. By examining the primary source documents, it is possible to witness the evolution of the squares throughout their development. The use of the primary sources which consist of historic photographs and Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps allows a unique opportunity for witnessing the evolution of the landscape over time. For it is these changes throughout a historic landscape’s past that contributes to what is viewed in the current-day context. These changes influence whether the space is a “success” or a “failure”, which incidentally, may change over time. Being able to witness the evolution of the space makes it more likely for one to appreciate the layers of meaning that make up historic landscapes.

**Weaknesses of the Method**

One weakness of historical research is that the data must be examined critically. The data to be studied were created for someone else’s purpose and may be biased, distorted, or invalid when used for other purposes (Babbie 2004). The sources that were created reflect the biases of the people who created them and as such, may not be accurate reflections of the truth of the situation being examined. This is true of the photographs examined in this study, as the people who captured the images chose particular locations and scenes to record. These photographs may have been recorded on an exceptional day and not give a true picture of the everyday life of the squares. One means to overcome the possibilities of bias or inaccurate observations is through replication, such as attempting to replicate prior studies in new situations (ibid, 337). Additionally, by viewing data from more than one source, it is more likely that an accurate assessment of the area studied can be obtained. By using both historical
photographs and the Sanborn Maps, a more accurate view of the Mississippi squares should be achieved. In addition, the Sanborn Maps are much less likely to show a bias than other sources. They reflect simply what was located in towns at a given time, were created by a variety of workers, and were repeated over time.

A disadvantage of this method may perhaps be found in the availability of data. This could result from either the researcher not having access to the data or data not being readily available in the topic in which the researcher is interested (Babbie 2004).

Additionally, if a certain piece of information is unavailable, there is no way of re-creating it. In this way the researcher is at the mercy of the availability of materials and must take them as they are. This may lead to some questions being unanswerable. Similarly, there may be gaps in the accessibility of material in the archives examined. Owing to this, there may be differences in what the researcher hopes to find from the data and what the data can actually offer.

Archival Research in the Current Study

This project was begun by starting with a list of known towns with squares in Mississippi through commonly gathered knowledge and an informal phone survey of county seats to determine if their towns have squares. The Secretary for the Interior’s Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Landscapes was consulted as a guide for analyzing the towns under consideration. Two major categories that the guidelines mention as important are character defining features of the landscape and organizational structure. The two main primary sources that were utilized for this study give information about both the character defining features and the organization structure of
the towns considered. These two sources include the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Mississippi and historic photographs from the towns studied in detail.

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps were produced from 1867 to 1970, though coverage for most towns in Mississippi continues through no later than the 1940s. These maps are a valuable tool as they give detailed information about block patterns, land uses, and buildings for many communities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Veselka 2000). As these maps were periodically updated by Sanborn’s agents, they enable researchers to chart changes in a community on both a building-by-building level and a block-by-block level. The elaborate recordkeeping by the Sanborn Company provides “data on the urban morphology” of squares as well as the “evolution and transformation of specific squares” (Veselka 2000, 221). Although these maps provide great detailed information about communities in Mississippi, they do have their drawbacks also. For example, records were not kept for every community in Mississippi so that some towns that are known to have squares do not have maps available for them. Also, these maps only provide two-dimensional representations of their communities. Additionally, coverage ended for most communities in the 1940s and the later revisions were not recorded with the same detail as in the earlier versions (Veselka 2000).

The list of town squares was then verified by consulting the maps to determine that those towns did in fact have squares. Upon inspection of the list, it became clear that most of these towns were the county seats of their counties. A list was then obtained of Mississippi’s county seats and compared with the Sanborn Maps to determine if the remaining county seats had squares.
This information was used to make a chart of which towns contained squares, which is summarized in Table 3.1 below. Any town that had either an obvious square or a courthouse was added to the chart. A note was made as to whether the maps were labeled with the word “square” or not. Many did appear to have squares but were not labeled as such.

Table 3.1 Town Squares of Mississippi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Date Incorporated</th>
<th>Type of Square</th>
<th>Info. from Sanborn Maps</th>
<th>County Seat?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Aberdeen</td>
<td>Monroe</td>
<td>May 12, 1837</td>
<td>Modified Shelbyville</td>
<td>Courthouse square (on index map)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Batesville</td>
<td>Panola</td>
<td>August 10, 1860</td>
<td>Railroad Influenced</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes (and Sardis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bay Saint Louis</td>
<td>Hancock</td>
<td>February 22, 1882</td>
<td>Less than Full Block</td>
<td>Labeled as “Courthouse Square”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Bay Springs</td>
<td>Jasper</td>
<td>March 10, 1904 (Settled in 1880s)</td>
<td>Irregular Block</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes (and Paulding-no square)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Belzoni</td>
<td>Humphreys</td>
<td>March 12, 1895</td>
<td>Irregular Block</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Booneville</td>
<td>Prentiss</td>
<td>December 12, 1861</td>
<td>Modified Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Brookhaven</td>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>November 15, 1858</td>
<td>Modified Harrisonburg</td>
<td>Labeled as “Courthouse Park”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Canton</td>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>February 27, 1836</td>
<td>Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Carrollton</td>
<td>Carroll</td>
<td>February 27, 1836</td>
<td>Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes (and Vaiden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Charleston</td>
<td>Tallahatchie</td>
<td>February 28, 1848</td>
<td>Harrisonburg</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes (and Sumner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Clarksdale</td>
<td>Coahoma</td>
<td>February 25, 1882</td>
<td>Modified Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Cleveland</td>
<td>Bolivar</td>
<td>March 25, 1886</td>
<td>Modified Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes (and Rosedale)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Collins</td>
<td>Covington</td>
<td>November 27, 1906</td>
<td>Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Columbia</td>
<td>Marion</td>
<td>December 16, 1812</td>
<td>Two or Four-Block</td>
<td>Courthouse square (on index map)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Columbus</td>
<td>Lowndes</td>
<td>February 1822</td>
<td>Less than Full Block</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Corinth</td>
<td>Alcorn</td>
<td>March 12, 1856</td>
<td>Modified Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Date Incorporated</th>
<th>Type of Square</th>
<th>Info. from Sanborn Maps</th>
<th>County Seat?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. Edwards</td>
<td>Hinds</td>
<td>June 21, 1871</td>
<td>Railroad Influenced (no courthouse)</td>
<td>No courthouse; labeled as “Public Square”</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Ellisville</td>
<td>Jones</td>
<td>March 11, 1884</td>
<td>Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes (and Laurel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Fayette</td>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>February 12, 1830</td>
<td>Plaza Style</td>
<td>Labeled as “Public Square”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Forest</td>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>November 21, 1865</td>
<td>Modified Shelbyville</td>
<td>Labeled as &quot;Public Sq.&quot;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Friars Point</td>
<td>Coahoma</td>
<td>October 31, 1865</td>
<td>Less than Full Block</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Fulton</td>
<td>Itawamba</td>
<td>May 11, 1837</td>
<td>Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Greenville</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>June 24, 1870</td>
<td>Modified Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Greenwood</td>
<td>Leflore</td>
<td>February 16, 1844</td>
<td>Irregular Block</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Grenada</td>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>February 27, 1836</td>
<td>Plaza Style</td>
<td>Labeled as “Public Square” in front of courthouse</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Gulfport</td>
<td>Harrison</td>
<td>July 28, 1898</td>
<td>Less than Full Block</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes (and Biloxi-no square)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Hattiesburg</td>
<td>Forrest</td>
<td>March 11, 1884</td>
<td>Less than Full Block</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square-doesn’t look like a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Hazlehurst</td>
<td>Copiah</td>
<td>September 21, 1859</td>
<td>Irregular Block</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square; also have railroad park</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Hernando</td>
<td>DeSoto</td>
<td>May 13, 1837</td>
<td>&quot;12 Street Plan&quot;</td>
<td>Labeled as “Public Square”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Holly Springs</td>
<td>Marshall</td>
<td>May 12, 1837</td>
<td>Modified Harrisonburg</td>
<td>Labeled as “Public Square”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Houston</td>
<td>Chickasaw</td>
<td>May 9, 1837</td>
<td>Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes (and Okolona-no square)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Indianola</td>
<td>Sunflower</td>
<td>January 7, 1886</td>
<td>Irregular Block</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Jackson</td>
<td>State Capitol</td>
<td></td>
<td>Two or Four-Block</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Jackson</td>
<td>Hinds, (Madison and Rankin)</td>
<td>February 22, 1840</td>
<td>Less than Full Block</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square; “Court Sq. 1.5”</td>
<td>Yes (and Raymond)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Kosciusko</td>
<td>Attala</td>
<td>February 27, 1836</td>
<td>Shelbyville</td>
<td>Labeled as “Courthouse Park”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Laurel</td>
<td>Jones</td>
<td>March 11, 1886</td>
<td>Less than Full Block</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes (and Ellisville)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.1. Town Squares of Mississippi continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Date Incorporated</th>
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<th>Info. from Sanborn Maps</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37. Lexington</td>
<td>Holmes</td>
<td>February 25, 1836</td>
<td>&quot;12 Street Plan&quot;</td>
<td>Labeled as “Public Square” around courthouse</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Macon</td>
<td>Noxubee</td>
<td>February 14, 1836</td>
<td>Modified Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Magnolia</td>
<td>Pike</td>
<td>April 26, 1859</td>
<td>Less than Full Block</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Marks</td>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>January 1, 1907</td>
<td>Modified Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Mendenhall</td>
<td>Simpson</td>
<td>January 30, 1905</td>
<td>Modified Harrisonburg</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Meridian</td>
<td>Lauderdale</td>
<td>February 10, 1860</td>
<td>Modified Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Natchez</td>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>March 10, 1803</td>
<td>Less than Full Block</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. New Albany</td>
<td>Union</td>
<td>March 4, 1850</td>
<td>Modified Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. Oxford</td>
<td>Lafayette</td>
<td>May 11, 1837</td>
<td>Harrisonburg</td>
<td>Labeled as “Public Square” around courthouse</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. Pascagoula</td>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>February 9, 1838</td>
<td>Less than Full Block</td>
<td>On corner of block; doesn’t look like square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. Philadelphi a</td>
<td>Neshoba</td>
<td>February 15, 1838</td>
<td>Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. Pontotoc</td>
<td>Pontotoc</td>
<td>May 3, 1837</td>
<td>Modified Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. Poplarville</td>
<td>Pearl River</td>
<td>March 15, 1884</td>
<td>Modified Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. Port Gibson</td>
<td>Claiborne</td>
<td>March 12, 1803</td>
<td>Modified Lancaster</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. Quitman</td>
<td>Clarke</td>
<td>February 14, 1839</td>
<td>Less than Full Block</td>
<td>On corner of (large)block; doesn’t look like square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. Raymond</td>
<td>Hinds</td>
<td>December 15, 1830</td>
<td>Irregular Block</td>
<td>Courthouse on corner of block; “Public square” near</td>
<td>Yes (and Jackson)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. Ripley</td>
<td>Tippah</td>
<td>May 9, 1837</td>
<td>Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. Rolling Fork</td>
<td>Sharkey</td>
<td>March 5, 1880</td>
<td>Railroad Influenced</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. Rosedale</td>
<td>Bolivar</td>
<td>February 2, 1882</td>
<td>Modified Lancaster</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes (and Cleveland)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. Ruleville</td>
<td>Sunflower</td>
<td>September 23, 1899</td>
<td>Railroad Influenced (no courthouse)</td>
<td>Empty square on map</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.1. Town Squares of Mississippi continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Date Incorporated</th>
<th>Type of Square</th>
<th>Info. from Sanborn Maps</th>
<th>County Seat?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>57. Sardis</td>
<td>Panola</td>
<td>October 22, 1866</td>
<td>Railroad Influenced</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes (and Batesville)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58. Senatobia</td>
<td>Tate</td>
<td>February 10, 1860</td>
<td>Less than Full Block</td>
<td>Courthouse on corner of block</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. Sumner</td>
<td>Tallahatchie</td>
<td>February 26, 1900</td>
<td>Railroad Influenced</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes (and Charleston)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60. Tunica</td>
<td>Tunica</td>
<td>March 3, 1888</td>
<td>Modified Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61. Tupelo</td>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>July 20, 1870</td>
<td>Modified Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62. Vaiden</td>
<td>Carroll</td>
<td>February 10, 1860</td>
<td>Railroad Influenced</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes (and Carrollton)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63. Vaiden</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td></td>
<td>Less than Full Block</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. Vicksburg</td>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>February 15, 1839</td>
<td>Shelbyville</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65. West Point</td>
<td>Clay</td>
<td>November 20, 1858</td>
<td>Less than Full Block</td>
<td>Courthouse on corner of block</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66. Wiggins</td>
<td>Stone</td>
<td>March 26, 1904</td>
<td>Less than Full Block</td>
<td>Not labeled as a square; doesn’t look like square</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67. Winona</td>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>May 2, 1861</td>
<td>Less than Full Block</td>
<td>Doesn’t look like square; One part of developed block</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68. Woodville</td>
<td>Wilkinson</td>
<td>December 9, 1811</td>
<td>Plaza Style</td>
<td>Labeled as “Public square” across from “County Court House Park”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69. Yazoo City</td>
<td>Yazoo</td>
<td>March 15, 1884</td>
<td>Less than Full Block</td>
<td>Courthouse on corner of block</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The towns chosen were limited to those with coverage by the Sanborn Maps (see Figure 3.1 for an example of a Sanborn Map). For example, Calhoun City is a town with a town square, but as there were no Sanborn Maps available for it, it was not included in this study.

The squares were then classified according to their type using Veselka’s (2000) categorization. This involved examining the layout of the streets in relation to the square. They were first categorized into two main categories: traditional and non-traditional. The
traditional squares, were then further classified into their four prototypes which include Shelbyville, Lancaster, Harrisonburg, and four-block squares. These were further broken down into whether they fit the category exactly or had some type of modification. The non-traditional types of squares were also further classified into the categories of “less than a full block, plaza style, railroad influenced, public squares, and irregular blocks.” Upon examination, a new type of “traditional square” was discovered that did not properly fit into the previously-mentioned categories. This one was then categorized as “12-Street Plan.” County seats whose courthouses did not fit the standard definition of a square were rejected. For example, Starkville, the town in which Mississippi State University is located, was thus excluded from this study as it has a courthouse that is not located within a square.
Also, during this time maps were constructed detailing where the squares are located in Mississippi to determine if there are any patterns in terms of development. The first map shows simply where the squares are located, and another map shows which type of square is located in which area (Figure 3.2). A comparison was made of when the towns were incorporated with which type of square the town has.
Figure 3.2   Maps showing town square location in Mississippi and town square type by location

The Sanborn Maps were then consulted in more detail to ensure that all of the possible squares had been identified. Since the results yielded 68 squares in Mississippi, it would be far beyond the scope of one study to include detailed information about all of them. The field needed to be narrowed. Thus, a square from the most common types was chosen to represent its group. Some squares needed to be chosen that would be absolutely characteristic of the majority of squares in Mississippi. Others that were more unique or worthy of study for some other attribute also needed to be included. Oxford and Canton are probably the most well-known towns with a square in Mississippi. Thus, both of them did not need to be covered in one study. Canton was chosen for the study as an example of a Shelbyville square. Some lesser-known squares were also worthy of consideration. Lexington was chosen as an example of a 12-street Spanish square plan.
and Holly Springs as an example of a Harrisonburg square. These three towns are all forms of traditional courthouse squares and are a good representation of towns with squares in Mississippi.

From here, each of the town’s libraries was consulted to gather historical information from secondary sources about the towns and their squares. Each library was also searched for possibly primary sources. Canton had the only library with pertinent primary documents in the form of historic photographs. Each town’s square was photographed to show existing conditions of the squares today. The Mississippi Department of Archives and History was consulted and contained the largest source of primary documents for the towns being studied. Several trips were made there sorting through their collection of historical photographs to locate ones showing the town squares. Holly Springs by far had the most photographs available. Copies were made of all of the pertinent photographs, compared, and then several photographs from each collection were chosen to study in more detail. Digital scans were made of those photographs and were used to discover more about each of the towns being studied.

Next, the photographs of each town were analyzed, determining what information they could provide about each town. It is thus possible to see a chronology of sorts in some of the towns. The Sanborn Maps were also analyzed. One method of analysis that was conducted was to make figure-ground drawings of the squares for each time period from each town. Figure-ground drawings are used in maps so that a viewer can easily distinguish between the pertinent information and the background information (Figure 3.3). The figure is the object of attention and the ground recedes in importance (Dent 1972). For this study, the figures were the buildings that make up the blocks, which are
shown as solid masses, and the ground was the streets and the spaces between the buildings. Traditionally, these drawings are created in black and white. However, for this study, colors were used to differentiate between types of uses including commercial (yellow), civic (pink), religious (green), and residential (blue). These drawings were then compared to note changes in density over time and changes in use.

Figure 3.3  An example of a Figure Ground Study based on “Lexington, Mississippi. 1925-41. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi”

Summary

Historical analysis of primary sources provides a reliable method for analyzing the information available about town squares in Mississippi. The analysis of the Sanborn Maps and historical documents together provide information about the character defining
and organizational features of the town squares throughout their evolution. Analyzing these sources provides a way of uncovering the varying layers of meaning found in a given landscape and determining the patterns that exist from landscape to landscape.

Historical analysis of primary sources overall can be a powerful tool in teaching us about our built environments. As the researcher finds sources, analyzes them for their content and biases, corroborates them with other evidence, he then develops an interpretation of past events that provides important insight for present and future use (Diana Hacker). The examination of the historical photographs and Sanborn Maps for the towns of Canton, Holly Springs, and Lexington can teach us about the evolution of town squares in Mississippi, what the forms of the squares were, and how the squares functioned. This information can be used both to give a more accurate picture of the history of the squares of Mississippi and to inform our designs in the future, leading to the creation of spaces that provide value to the citizens of their communities through symbiotic form and function.
CHAPTER IV
CONTEXT OF THE CREATION OF THE SQUARES

Introduction

In order to understand the role that town square development has played in Mississippi’s history, it is important to know the history that brought the state of Mississippi as we know it into existence. This section will trace the European settlement of Mississippi through the 1830s, when the majority of the towns in Mississippi were founded. The time periods after that will be discussed in the history of the individual towns studied in more detail.

Mississippi Settlement History

Before 1817 “Mississippi” did not exist. That is the year when the state as such came into existence (Weems 1953). Before that time, various world powers controlled the land that is now Mississippi, some at the same time. Around 1798 two political divisions began to stand out. One was along the river and closely tied to the old French colony of Louisiana. The other consisted of “the central and eastern portions of the state, which began to develop in the tradition of the American backwoodsman” (Weems 1953, 1).
France, England, and Spain at different points in time maintained colonial headquarters at points which were not far from the mouth of the Mississippi River which all three viewed as important. It had a unifying influence over the area that was to become Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama and that was evident throughout the dominion period. Additionally, interior places took on a “fundamental European character” as they were occupied (Weems 1953, 1).

Natchez is an interior settlement that was under French, British, and then Spanish control at various points in its history. It got its start as Fort Rosalie in 1716, and its location on the Mississippi river gave it an economic advantage (Weems 1953 and Claiborne 1964). Settlers in Natchez saw little need to help develop the interior portions of the state. The river was the main source of transportation at this time. Nevertheless, two roads were built linking Natchez to the northern and eastern United States: the Natchez Trace, which led to Nashville and the Three Chopped Way, which led to Georgia (Weems 1953).

The central and eastern sections of Mississippi, which Weems refers to as the backwoods, began to develop after 1798, when the Mississippi Territory was created (Weems 1953). Before this occurrence, four periods of “foreign control in the Southwest may be recognized: Spain 1541-1673; France, 1673-1763; England, 1763-1781; and Spain, 1781-1798” (Weems 1953, 5).

Spanish

The first Spanish period in Mississippi’s history was one of exploration. Hernando de Soto is the first known European to set foot in the land that is currently Mississippi. He
spent the winter of 1540 in the town of Chicaca in what is now Pontotoc County and in the spring of 1541 discovered the Mississippi River (Rowland 1925).

French

The period of French exploration began in 1673 with Marquette, a Jesuit missionary and Joliet, a businessman (Rowland 1925). They began their journey in the Illinois country, and then descended the Mississippi River, which they named the Colbert, to the mouth of the Arkansas River (Rowland 1925 and Weems 1953). Because of news of enemies in the form of Native Americans and other Europeans, they decided to go no further and turned back (Rowland 1925). Later exploration was conducted by Robert Cavalier de LaSalle. In 1682 he navigated the Mississippi River to its mouth and claimed all lands drained by the river for France (Rowland 1925). The establishment of French military control occurred in 1699 when Pierre LeMoyne, known as Sieur D’Iberville, and his brother Jean Baptiste, know as Sieur D’Bienville, built Fort Maurepas on the eastern shore of the Bay of Biloxi, near current Ocean Springs. This was the first settlement in what later became known as Mississippi (Rowland 1925). This was the first successful attempt of the French to colonize Louisiana (Weems 1953). The French colony’s capital was later established at New Orleans and major settlements were located in that city, along the Gulf Coast, and in Mobile. Several skirmishes with the Native Americans eventually left France almost destitute so that in 1763 the French possessions east of the Mississippi River were transferred to the British and New Orleans was transferred to the Spanish (Weems 1953).
**British**

Rapid development commenced during the period of British rule. The British had diplomatic relations with the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes. With diplomacy and caution they proceeded to acquire from those tribes the rights to the lands they were about to occupy. This task was made easier as the Native Americans were “coming to appreciate the advantages of trade with the European nations” (Weems 1953, 8). The British were ceded lands that were south of a line extending from the Mississippi River at a point about forty miles north of Natchez to the Tombigbee River at a point about seventy miles north of Mobile. They began to settle the area as a permanent colony focusing on agricultural pursuits and trade. Centered in Natchez, from there they expanded their colony rapidly (ibid).

**Spanish**

Spanish rule officially began in the land now known as Mississippi at the end of the Revolutionary War, when England ceded its lands east of the Mississippi River to the United States government. West Florida, which included the southern half of Mississippi, came under control of the Spanish in 1779 (Rowland 1925). This land, comprised primarily of people of British origin, was subject to the Spanish government of Louisiana, whose headquarters were established at New Orleans from 1779 through 1798 (ibid). The Spaniards were very cooperative with both the former citizens of Great Britain and with immigrants who came from the eastern seaboard states, even recognizing the property rights of the former British subjects (Weems 1953).
The Legal System

The legal system of Mississippi was based on the British legal system, which was introduced into the West Florida provinces in 1763. The British were familiar with the workings of common law and were cognizant of the importance of commercial endeavors, especially in conjunction with trade. This factor must have been instrumental in the extension and permanent implantation of their legal system. Additionally, the British often used treaties in their interactions with the Native Americans and their success with this method likely contributed to the confidence of both trade partners in British legal institutions (Weems 1953).

United States Rule

The period of rule by the United States began in 1798, after the Spanish were evicted from the Natchez country. The establishment of the Mississippi Territory occurred on April 7 of that year, and Natchez was chosen as the first territorial capital. The territorial limits did not include the northern halves of Mississippi and Alabama, which were still possessed by the Native Americans, or the Gulf Coast country south of 31° latitude, which included Bay St. Louis, Biloxi, and Mobile, all of which were still in possession of the Spanish. The new territory, with the exception of the Natchez country, had very little economic value until 1813. (Weems 1953).

Natchez and its neighboring districts were the most populated and economically advanced parts of the new Mississippi Territory. In 1802 the territorial capital was moved to Washington (Rowland 1925). Despite this move, Natchez continued to occupy the principal position in the Mississippi Territory. In 1804 the size of the territory was
increased to include the entire area of the present states of Mississippi and Alabama above 31°, but the new portions of the territory grew very slowly during this time period (Weems 1953). In 1807, the first road opened from the western to the eastern part of the territory. It connected Natchez and Fort Stoddert, which was near current-day Mobile (Rowland 1925). In 1813 the Spanish were removed from the Gulf Coast and the territory came to include practically the entire area of the present states of Mississippi and Alabama. The population was still concentrated about Natchez, and the territorial capital remained at Washington (Weems 1953).

When the Mississippi Territory was divided, the state of Mississippi was created on March 1, 1817, becoming the twentieth state in the Union. The Alabama Territory was created from the eastern section of the Mississippi Territory. The population in the Alabama Territory increased rapidly and spread uniformly, but in Mississippi this did not occur as rapidly as “the most important lands” held by the Native Americans of the north were not offered for sale until the 1830s (Weems 1953, p. 11). Until 1821, the Natchez country continued to hold its position as the most important economic and political section. In that year a substantial number of new settlers moved to the central and eastern sections of the state which resulted in the capital being permanently moved to Jackson (Weems 1953). It was originally planned to have a checkerboard pattern of open squares (Reps 1965).

Three treaties made with the Native Americans brought about the Mississippi that we know today and were of tremendous economic and political significance. They were the Treaties of Doak’s Stand and Dancing Rabbit Creek, which was made with the Choctaws in 1820 and 1830, respectively, and the Treaty of Pontotoc, which was made
with the Chickasaws in 1832. These two tribes agreed to move west of the Mississippi River when making these treaties, and the entire area of Mississippi was then open to settlement by European Americans. The state could then exist as a cohesive political unit (Rowland 1925 and Weems 1953).

The amount and placement of town squares in Mississippi is related to the formation of counties in Mississippi. The counties can be grouped according to the historical order in which they were formed. The first to form were those of the Natchez District, followed by the early Choctaw cessions, then the District of Mobile, and lastly the later cessions from the Choctaws and Chickasaws (Rowland 1925- Vol. 2). The entire portion of the territory of Mississippi was not organized into counties until the last Native American cession was divided by the legislature in 1836. In general, the first counties to form were those along the Mississippi River in the southwestern portion of the state, and the last areas to be settled and organized into counties were in the northern portion of the state. Counties still formed after 1836, and the last originally established county appears to be Calhoun which was established in 1852 (ibid). The counties that formed after this time were generally made form the larger counties being “sub-divided.” This was especially true during reconstruction in the 1870s (ibid). The county seats were often chosen to be near the geographical center of the county.

Almost all of the towns in Mississippi that have squares are the county seat of their county. The majority of towns with squares were incorporated during the 1830s (Figure 4.1). Indeed, all three of the towns that are examined in the following chapter were founded during this decade. During this time, after the Native American lands were opened for settlement, there was a large influx on settlers into these areas of the
state, many of whom were of European descent (Weems 1953). Perhaps one of the reasons that there are so many towns with squares in Mississippi is that these settlers copied forms that they were familiar with, especially those forms that they had seen in the other parts of the country from which they came.

Figure 4.1   Number of Mississippi towns with squares by decade of incorporation. The 1830s was an important decade for the incorporation of towns with squares.
CHAPTER V

TOWN SQUARES OF MISSISSIPPI

Summary of Findings

There are approximately 69 verified towns with town squares in the state of Mississippi and about 24 unverified town squares. This is approximate because some are not as clear-cut as others to identify. Some fit the pattern completely, while others differ in some aspect. In order to identify what type of square a town has, it is necessary to have a definition for what constitutes a square. A starting point was the definition for the central courthouse square:

A rectangular block surrounded by streets, with the courthouse, often the grandest and most ornate building in the county, standing alone in the middle of the square and the town’s leading business houses enclosing the square symmetrically on all four sides (Price 1968, 29).

Out of 82 counties, 58 counties have squares or have had a square in the past (see Figure 5.1). 24 counties do not have squares, or there were no Sanborn maps for them. Only three towns with squares were not the county seat of their county. All of the other towns with squares were the county seat for their county. There are ten counties that have two county seats. Only three of the towns sharing a county seat with another town did not have squares. There were six counties that had two county seats and both of the towns had squares. Yalobusha county was the only county with two county seats in
which neither of them had a square. Some of the county seats with courthouses did not fit the pattern of having squares. For example, in the town where this thesis was written, Starkville, the Oktibbeha County Courthouse is not part of a square. This occurrence accounts for the 24 counties whose county seats do not have a square. For purposes of this study, the list of squares is confined to only those towns in which Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps existed. For example, Calhoun City is known to have a square, but as there are no Sanborn Maps for the town, it was not included in the list. In this way, the list is not exhaustive of the towns with squares in Mississippi, but the majority of those towns are included.
Figure 5.1 Mississippi counties showing which counties lack a square, which counties have a square, and which counties have more than one square.
Once the list of towns with squares was generated, the next step was to classify them by type. There were several overall types which were then further broken down further. The two main categories of square classification are traditional courthouse squares and non-traditional courthouse squares. The manner in which the streets enter the square determines the type of square. The traditional courthouse squares are broken into the following four types: Shelbyville, Lancaster, Harrisonburg, and four-block squares. The non-traditional courthouse squares are also broken into multiple types that include those that are less than a full block, railroad-influenced squares, irregular block squares, and plaza-style squares (Figure 5.2). Robert Veselka included half-block squares and quarter-block squares in his study, but for the purpose of this study they were combined into the “less than a block” style. An additional type of square that does not fit into either of the categories of courthouse squares was found in Mississippi. There are two towns that fall into this category which is a traditional central-courthouse square with a different pattern from the ones previously mentioned. It has been dubbed a “12 Street” plan as there are twelve entrances into the square. Within these categories, some towns fit the pattern perfectly. Other towns fit into the categories but had some deviation from the standard forms. These have been termed Modified Shelbyville, Modified Lancaster, and Modified Harrisonburg squares.
Further Explanations of Types

The Shelbyville square is named after an early version of this style that was found in Shelbyville, Tennessee. In this style of square, the courthouse is centrally located, the streets intersect at each corner, and the lot lines of the blocks that face the square are usually oriented to the courthouse (Figure 5.3) (Veselka 2000). It is the most common type of square found in the United States. This could be attributable to the factors that it
was familiar to settlers and easy to plat, it did not cause a disruption of the grid pattern or adjacent patterns of land use, and it provided a central focus for the community (ibid).

The Lancaster square type is named for its presumed predecessor in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. It is characterized by streets that converge on the midpoints of the square, typically on an axis with a courthouse located in the center of the grid (Figure 5.3). The orientation of the lot lines is varied because of the difficulty of platting lots with blocks containing both inside and outside corners (Veselka 2000).

The Harrisonburg square combines certain elements of both the Shelbyville and Lancaster squares. It is defined by two streets meeting at the midpoint of the square and two streets converging on the corners (Figure 5.4). It is most typically formed by altering the regular block arrangement of the grid. The lot lines front the square (Veselka 2000). The four-block square places the courthouse in the center of what would otherwise be four city blocks (Figure 5.4) (Veselka 2000).
The largest number of traditional courthouse squares in Mississippi is either the Shelbyville or Modified Shelbyville pattern (Figure 5.5). 10 towns fit the Shelbyville pattern, and 15 are Modified Shelbyville squares. This by far is the most popular pattern for courthouse squares in Mississippi, as well as in the United States. The next most common traditional courthouse square pattern is the Harrisonburg and Modified Harrisonburg pattern, with three towns each. There are no towns with the Lancaster pattern and only two with the Modified Lancaster pattern. Of the non-traditional patterns, the leader by far is those towns whose squares take up less than a full block (Figure 5.6). In fact, this is the largest overall single category, which consists of 17 towns. The other patterns include between two and seven towns each.
Figure 5.5  Traditional Town Squares of Mississippi (36 total). Prototypical squares fit the standard definition for a square, whereas modified squares have some deviation from the standard pattern.

Figure 5.6  Non-Traditional Town Squares of Mississippi (33 total). Two of the railroad-influenced squares do not have a courthouse.
One of the goals of this study was to determine where the squares are located and if there are any patterns found in the location of the squares. By locating them on a map, it is evident that are located all over the state of Mississippi and are not grouped only in certain areas (Figure 5.7). It was also apparent that there were no over-riding patterns to be found in where each type of square is located (Figure 5.8). For instance, Shelbyville squares are not only found near the coast, but instead are found distributed rather evenly across the state (Figure 5.9). Figures 5.10 through 5.16 show locations of the other types of squares.
Figure 5.7   Towns with squares in Mississippi

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Figure 5.8  Towns with squares in Mississippi by square type
Figure 5.9  Shelbyville and Modified Shelbyville square locations in Mississippi
Figure 5.10  Less than full block square locations in Mississippi
Figure 5.11  Harrisonburg and Modified Harrisonburg square locations in Mississippi
Figure 5.12   Two or Four Block square locations in Mississippi
Figure 5.13   Plaza style square locations in Mississippi

68
Figure 5.14  Railroad Influenced and Irregular Block square locations in Mississippi
Figure 5.15  Modified Lancaster square locations in Mississippi
Figure 5.16  “12 Street Plan” square locations in Mississippi
A comparison of the types of squares in Texas versus those in Mississippi, as seen in Table 5.1, shows that the same types of squares do not dominate both states. There are some similarities. For instance, in Texas, the most frequently found pattern is the Shelbyville square or Modified Shelbyville square, which account for 62 percent of the squares in Texas. This is also true in Mississippi with Shelbyville type squares accounting for 36 percent of the squares. However, beyond that differences occur. The next most frequent type of squares in Texas are plaza patterns, with 33 squares having that pattern, making up 13 percent of the state’s town squares. Railroad patterns are the next most prevalent, with 7 percent of the town squares being of this type. In Mississippi the 2nd and 3rd most prevalent square types are less than a full block, and railroad-influenced, respectively which account for 25 percent and 10 percent of the squares, correspondingly.

Table 5.1  Number of Town Squares in Mississippi compared with number of Town Squares in Texas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Square Type</th>
<th>Mississippi</th>
<th>Texas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelbyville and variants</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less-than-full block</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrisonburg and variants</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregular Block</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four-block or Two-block</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaza</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railroad influenced</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancaster and variants</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Street Plan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals:</strong></td>
<td><strong>69</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After categorizing the squares (see Table 5.2), three individual towns were studied in more detail. These include a modified Harrisonburg pattern, found in Holly Springs; a 12 Street pattern, in Lexington; and a Shelbyville pattern, found in Canton (Figures 5.17, 5.18). These towns were chosen for a variety of reasons. First of all, the towns were found in different parts of the state but are all within driving distance in a reasonable amount of time from Starkville, Mississippi. Another consideration was there being sufficient historical information available for each town. This was especially true in helping to chose Holly Springs as an example town as there was plentiful historic information and photographs available for this town. Lexington was chosen as an example of a form that has hither-to-fore been unidentified and which occurs in only two towns in Mississippi.
Figure 5.17 Counties of the towns studied in more detail. Canton in Madison County, Lexington in Holmes County, and Holly Springs in Marshall County
Figure 5.18  Canton, Lexington, and Holly Springs Context Maps
Table 5.2  Towns with Squares categorized by Type of Square

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shelbyville</th>
<th>Modified Shelbyville</th>
<th>Harrisonburg</th>
<th>Modified Harrisonburg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canton</td>
<td>Aberdeen</td>
<td>Charleston</td>
<td>Brookhaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrollton</td>
<td>Booneville</td>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td>Holly Springs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collins</td>
<td>Clarksdale</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mendenhall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellisville</td>
<td>Cleveland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulton</td>
<td>Corinth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>Forest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosciusko</td>
<td>Greenville</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>Macon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ripley</td>
<td>Marks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicksburg</td>
<td>Meridian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Albany</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pontotoc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poplarville</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tunica</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tupelo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals:</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lancaster</th>
<th>Modified Lancaster</th>
<th>Two or Four-Block</th>
<th>Plaza Style</th>
<th>Irregular Block</th>
<th>Railroad Influenced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>none</td>
<td>Port Gibson</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>Fayette</td>
<td>Bay Springs</td>
<td>Batesville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosedale</td>
<td>Jackson (capitol)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>Belzoni</td>
<td>Edwards*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Greenwood</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ruleville*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rolling Fork</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hazlehurst</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Indianola</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Raymond</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sumner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vaiden (1st)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*no courthouse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals:</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 5.2  Towns with Squares categorized by Type of Square Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than Full Block</th>
<th>&quot;12 Street Plan&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bay St. Louis</td>
<td>Hernando</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus</td>
<td>Lexington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friars Point</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulfport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hattiesburg*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnolia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natchez</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pascagoula</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senatobia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaiden (2nd)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Point</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiggins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winona</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yazoo City</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Irregular Also

Grand Total:

| Totals: | 17 | 2 | 69 |
CHAPTER VI

STUDIES OF INDIVIDUAL SQUARES

Introduction

This section will include information about the three towns with squares that were studied in detail. It will include a history of each town, focusing on the evolution of each square. Two of the most common types of squares in Mississippi are the Shelbyville and the Harrisonburg squares. Canton, one of the best known squares in Mississippi was chosen as a representative of the Shelbyville square, and Holly Springs was chosen to represent Harrisonburg squares. Upon investigation, another type of square was discovered in Mississippi which we are calling simply a “12 Street Plan.” Only two towns in Mississippi, Lexington and Hernando, exhibit this type of square. Lexington has been chosen to be studied in more detail to provide insight into this distinctive square pattern. The towns that were chosen to be studied in more detail are located in different regions of Mississippi but are within about a two-and-a-half hour driving time from Starkville. Additionally, they were chosen because there is sufficient documentation on each of the towns for a proper investigation to be possible, including both information about the history of each town and historic photographs available for each town.
Shelbyville Squares: Canton, Mississippi

Historical Narrative

Canton is located in Madison County. Mississippi was granted statehood on December 10, 1817, and Madison County was founded in 1828, becoming the 23rd county in Mississippi to organize. After the cession of Choctaw lands in the Treaty of Doak’s Stand in 1820 (Canton Convention and Visitors Bureau), Madison County began to see an influx of Caucasian residents. However, the selection of a county seat for the county was not a simple, straight-forward matter. When Madison became a county, Yazoo County courthouse was used until Madison County had chosen its own county seat. The first seat proposed was to be called Madisonville. Before it could be properly established, Livingston was chosen to be the location of the new county seat and its courthouse, jail and clerk’s office remained in use until 1858. However, in 1833 the Board of Police ordered that the geographic center of Madison County be located and that a new courthouse should be built there. Through the surveyor John B. Peyton, it was determined that the center of the county was located in Canton. In 1836 legislation was passed that made Canton the permanent seat of government for Madison County (Mead 1987). At that time, it had a population of 400 residents (Canton Convention and Visitors Bureau).

Canton was described in 1842 in the following manner:

All who visit it are apt to remark upon its beauty of location and arrangement. The grove that surrounds the Court House, situated in its centre, would form a decoration to many places, having the advantage of age and the embellishing hand of long care and protection (Mead 1987, from Mississippi Creole of April 16, 1842).
The land from which Canton was formed was purchased from Killis and Margaret Walton who were given $100, two town lots, and the assurance that the seat of justice would be built there. They deeded the land to Madison County in 1834. This land was subdivided into square parcels and lots and the plot nearest the center was reserved as the public square. The square was platted as a Shelbyville square (Figures 6.1, 6.2). This type of square has the courthouse square at the center of the grid with streets intersecting at each corner. The lot lines of blocks that face the square are normally oriented to the courthouse. It is the most common central courthouse square in the United States, and it is the easiest to plat (Veselka 2000). This type of square also provides a longer, uninterrupted row of businesses than the other types of squares do. Canton has certainly fared better in the retention of businesses at the square than other towns have. One reason for this could be the expansion of the square down Peace Street.

Figure 6.1  Shelbyville Square Prototype from Robert Veselka’s *The Courthouse Square in Texas* (Veselka 2000, 19). Courtesy of the University of Texas Press

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Canton’s first courthouse and jail were built by George W. Cowan in 1834 at a cost of $5,000 (Mead 1987). The first courthouse was described as being a small unpretentious place, on the plan of a theater. The second courthouse was built by George Cowan and Samuel Thornhill in 1837 on the site where the present courthouse is located. It was only used until 1850 when it was deemed unsafe. In that year, it was ordered that bids be taken to build another courthouse. The contract was awarded to Patrick and Willis for $26,428.58. The cornerstone, which was laid by members of the local Masonic Order in July of 1855, forms the northeast corner of the current courthouse (Mead 1987 and Canton Chamber of Commerce).

By 1838, the town of Canton included two banks, two hotels, ten dry-goods stores, a drugstore, three groceries, a bakery, a tin shop, a livery stable, three tailor shops, and two watchmakers. The public buildings included the courthouse, a jail, a church and a female academy (Canton Chamber of Commerce). As the earliest Sanborn map is from
1887, some of the businesses had changed between 1838 and then. However, this map still helps to paint a picture of what the town was like in the nineteenth century.

The following map (Figure 6.3) shows that dry-goods stores still made up the majority of the businesses and that there was often a combination of dry-goods stores and groceries. Perhaps this is a change that occurred between 1838 and 1887. Eventually, these businesses would move off the square to places where larger parking lots were available. Over its history, as evidenced by the Sanborn maps, the development around the square became denser, and extended down Peace Street (Figure 6.4).

Figure 6.3   Room was left for development to extend down Peace Street. Canton, Mississippi. 1887. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi
The courthouse, built in the Greek Revival style, was first used in July of 1857, though it was not completed and formally received until January of 1858. It was in this same year that the wrought iron fence that encloses the Square was erected (Mead 1987) at a cost of $5,250 (Canton Chamber of Commerce). It was manufactured by T.T. Baker of Cincinnati (Ostby 1980). The dome of the courthouse was to be removed in 1857 for security reasons, but due to protests by ladies of the town, it remained (Mead 1987). The Madison County Courthouse is one of only seven pre-Civil War courthouses in Mississippi in an unaltered condition (Canton Convention and Visitors Bureau), and it is the visual focal point of the square.
As the town of Canton grew, so did its focal point, the Courthouse Square (Figure 6.5). Life on the square was discussed by a Canton resident, Van Smith, Sr., in an article in the *Madison County Herald*. On recollecting the nature of the Square from 1900 through about 1907, he wrote:

There were dirt streets everywhere, and cinders were hauled in from the Roundhouse of the railroad to use on the streets. Wagons were everywhere in those days, pulled by mules, and when the streets were wet the hooves of the mules slung mud everywhere (Mead 1987).
One of the reasons that there would be horses and mules “everywhere” was the transportation of cotton (Figure 6.6) which was still an important part of Mississippi’s economy in the early part of the 20th century. This commodity was transported by horse and carriage, or by mule and carriage, and the square was the site where business was conducted.

Van Smith tells of some of the activities that occurred on the square in the early 1900s:

Under the big oak tree between the Courthouse and the walkways we played marbles for keeps. I could shoot a marble like a rifle then…The old fire bell, which today may be seen behind City Hall, then stood [on the west side of Liberty Street just south of the Square]. When the bell rang, signaling a fire, the volunteers gathered there and hauled the hose wagon to the fire. On a quiet night the bell could be heard five or six miles from town, as it was one winter night when Mr. Smith as a young boy rang it, when the northwest corner of the Square was
burning. When a fire occurred, everyone turned out to fight the blaze and to help rescue the contents of the burning building (Mead, 1987).

Fires were a frequent occurrence in the early life of the square as told in another Herald story, this one from 1977:

In the mid-1850s, when the Square was taking shape, a wood frame hotel and boarding house stood on that corner (Liberty and Center streets), and its advertisement praised both the hotel meals, and their facilities at the adjacent livery stable. Room and board for a man at that time was 25 cents a week, [sic] but he had to pay twice that amount for his horse. During the last half of the nineteenth century the wooden buildings on the Canton Square burned several times, resulting in laws prohibiting anything other than brick construction in the downtown area (Mead 1987) (Figure 6.7).

Figure 6.7   Looking North on Liberty Street. 19-.  Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History

In March of 1976, a tornado struck downtown Canton doing substantial damage to the trees around the Square, but the courthouse only received damage to the dome and had some broken windows (Figure 6.8). The Madison County Courthouse was chosen to
be listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980 (Mead 1987). It was officially entered into the Register in 1982, and was declared to be one of the three best examples of Greek Revival architecture in the state of Mississippi. Specifically cited was the beauty of its diverse cornices, facades, and pediments of the original buildings with their neoclassical and Italianate architecture (Canton Chamber of Commerce).

![Figure 6.8 Canton Courthouse Square after a tornado. March 29, 1976. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History](image)

In April of 1987, the Redevelopment Authority opened, and out of it was born the Main Street program, focusing on the downtown area. Canton joined the national Main Street movement in 1990, a few years before Mississippi adopted the program, and in 1991 the Canton Chamber of Commerce/Main Street Association was formed (Canton Chamber of Commerce). Between 1994 and 1995 Canton built a new Courthouse one
block north of the Square and the historic Courthouse underwent a $2,000,000 renovation in which the 1855 cornerstone was opened and re-laid by the Masonic Order. Currently, the first floor houses the Madison County Economic Development Authority, and the old second floor courtroom is no longer in use (Canton Convention and Visitor’s Bureau). In addition to the Redevelopment Authority and the Chamber of Commerce/Main Street Association, Canton maintains a Welcome Center as part of the Canton Convention and Visitor’s Center (Figure 6.9).

Figure 6.9  Canton Welcome Center - 147 North Union Street on the square

The Courthouse Square is still the main focus of the town and is the location of the twice yearly Canton Flea Market Arts and Crafts Show which attracts up to 100,000 visitors annually. Continued investments, of an estimated $20,000,000 in public and private funding to build and renovate the new and old Courthouses, help to keep the Canton Square District a thriving locale. An important point about Canton’s growth is that it appears to have been clear where future growth would go through the expansion of the square down Peace Street. Due to the preservation efforts, beauty, and uniqueness of
the Courthouse Square and Historic District, five major films have been made in Canton
(Canton Convention and Visitor’s Bureau). These include “A Time to Kill”; “My Dog
Skip”; “The Rising Place,” an independent film by Tom Rice of Jackson, Mississippi; “O
Brother, Where Art Thou?”; and Eudora Welty’s “A Ponder Heart” for PBS Masterpiece
Theatre (Canton Convention and Visitor’s Bureau). In addition to the publicity that these
movies have brought to Canton, the near-by Nissan auto plant has also breathed new
economic life into the town. Protecting its historic heritage and planning for a prosperous
future, Canton and its square continue to be worthy of study.

Landscape Elements and Character-Defining Features of Canton’s Square

Spatial Organization and Land Patterns

_The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties_
with _Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes_ says, “Spatial Organizations
and Land Patterns refers to three-dimensional organization and patterns of spaces in a
landscape, like the arrangement of rooms in a house. Spatial organization is created by
the landscape’s cultural and natural features”(15). When discussing town squares, this
refers to the manner in which the buildings have been placed and the relationships they
form with one another. This placement of buildings and the spaces between them (the
roads), form the different types of squares. In the case of Canton, the courthouse was
centrally placed with the buildings all oriented towards it. This gave the courthouse
prominence. Since the square was placed as one block in the framework of the town and
the roads intersect at the corners of the block that make up the courthouse square, this is a
Shelbyville square.
According to Robert Gibbs, a current-day landscape architect and retail specialist, merchants flock to a “main-main” intersection, which is the place where the two most heavily traveled roads in an area meet. He says that historically towns grew up around main-mains (Lagerfeld 2002). This pattern occurs in Canton as two major roads help define its square. Highway 22 forms running east to west defines the southern portion of the square, and highway 51 running north to south defines the eastern portion of the square. Once inside the city limits, these highways are referred to as Peace Street and Liberty Street, respectively. The two remaining sides of the square are defined by Centre Street on the north side and Union Street on the west side.

The buildings in this square are formed of long rows of connecting structures that make up each block. There are no breaks in each line on three sides of the square. On the west side of the square, there is a break where a large magnolia grows. The courthouse is given the place of prominence also because it is set apart from the other buildings and stands alone. The other buildings are all placed together so that there is not one that has a better placement over the other and none other than the courthouse are given dominance. The strongest concentration of buildings occurs in the block that makes up the courthouse square. In the blocks away from the courthouse, the density dropped somewhat. As the town grew, the density of those blocks away from the courthouse also grew. The density of the courthouse square block itself stayed relatively the same over time.
Sanborn Map Comparisons

It is clear from the Sanborn maps that the majority of buildings on the square are of commercial use. This can be seen from the earliest map on (Figure 6.10). Dwellings make up the second largest category of buildings and are found away from the square. Commercial properties are represented by yellow, residences by blue, civic buildings by pink, and religious buildings by green.

Figure 6.10 Figure Ground Study based on “Canton, Mississippi. 1887. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi.” The largest land use is commercial buildings, which are clustered around the square
Between 1887 and 1905, the overall density grew at the square (Figures 6.10, 6.11). While the commercial density had a slight increase, the residential density grew at a greater rate. In addition, the overall population of the town grew from 3500 in 1887 to 4500 in 1905 (Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps). The population grew to 7000 by 1950 and was recorded at 12,578 in the 2000 Census.

Figure 6.11  Figure Ground Study based on “Canton, Mississippi. 1905. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi.” Overall density increase from Figure 6.10, with greater rate of residential growth
Between 1905 and 1950, the density continued to grow around the square (Figures 6.11, 6.12). The commercial density right at the square did not undergo any major changes, but there was a growth of commercial properties down Peace Street. There was also an increase in the number of residences found near the square.

Figure 6.12  Figure Ground Study based on “Canton, Mississippi. 1925-1950. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi.” Continued growth in density from Figures 6.10 and 6.11, with significant increase in commercial growth down Peace Street.
Topography

Topography does not play as much of a role in Mississippi as it may in other parts of the country. In the case of the square at Canton, there is a difference in elevation between the courthouse and the surrounding buildings. The land that the courthouse sits on is higher than the surrounding landscape. This is another device that further emphasizes the courthouse’s prominence. It is the tallest building in the town square and it is placed on the highest ground. What is unknown is whether this rise in elevation was natural to the area or if it was built up in order to give further deference to the courthouse. In one of the photographs from the early 1900s a retaining wall is visible on two sides of the square (Figure 6.13). It is not known if this continued on the other two sides as well.

Figure 6.13 Retaining walls marked with arrows. Canton, Mississippi. 19--. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
Vegetation

Though the vegetation is not addressed in the Sanborn maps, from the oldest photographs available, there appears to have been a concentration of vegetation around the courthouse, with very little appearing elsewhere. The vegetation was so dense in the courthouse lawn that the courthouse itself is barely visible through the trees. The placement of the trees looks very naturalistic, as if the courthouse were placed among the trees and only the needed trees were removed to build the courthouse. From the earliest photograph, the trees appear to look mature. The courthouse lawn was likely quite a shaded area.

Circulation

When the square was designed, the roads were unpaved. The area around the inner courthouse square was generally undefined. There were no lanes for traffic and no designated “parking” areas, other than hitching posts for tying up animals. As the largest and fastest “vehicles” were horse-or mule-drawn wagons, there was no need to strictly control the movements of the vehicles around the square. As evidenced in the photographs, the circulation was often chaotic. However, when there was a large crowd, people successfully organized the vehicles so that they were congregated in a rather orderly fashion.

Structures, Furnishings and Objects

Aside from the various cisterns that were labeled on the 1887 Sanborn map, little is known about what types of structures, furnishings, and objects were originally found on the square. Signs announcing the names of businesses and retractable awnings are
visible in some of the historic photographs. By the 1905 Sanborn map a bandstand and county clerk’s office had been added to the interior square, near the courthouse. By the 1925-1950 map, the band stand had been removed, though it was visible on the 1925 map. Also on though it remained the same size from the 1905 through the 1925 maps, the county clerk’s office had been expanded by the 1925-1950 map. There was a building still visible on the courthouse lawn in the 1976 photograph showing the damage done by a tornado. According to the Canton Redevelopment Authority, this particular building was removed in the spring of 2006. Its removal allows for viewing of the courthouse from all four sides. Indeed, it is often from the northeast corner, where this building was formerly located, that the courthouse if often photographed today as there are no trees in that area to block the view of the courthouse.

Van Smith described some of the amenities that the Square included, many of which are discernible in the photograph that follows (Figure 6.14):

The iron fence around the Courthouse was there, of course, but then wooden posts, with chains through the fence, were all around the Square, hitching posts for wagons and horses. Iron water troughs for the horses and mules stood at the southwest and northeast corners, and one is still there today (Mead 1987).
Fencing

An iron fence surrounds the courthouse lawn and separates it from the surrounding landscape. Gates on all four sides allow access to the interior portion of the square. This fence was added in 1858, the year that the courthouse was completed. In the 1950s photograph a second fence is visible along the curb where cars are parked alongside the courthouse.

Paving Materials

Little is known about the original paving materials around the square. The streets were described by Van Smith, Sr. as consisting of dirt with cinders thrown on them from 1900 to 1907. The streets were paved during that decade. The concrete sidewalks were originally laid in 1911 (Ostby 1980).
Existing Conditions and Character-Defining Features

Spatial Organization and Land Patterns Today

This feature has stayed roughly the same over the existence of the square. When comparing the Sanborn map of 1925-1950 with what the square looks like today, there has been little change in terms of how the space is organized and what the land patterns are (Figure 6.15).

Figure 6.15   Looking north on Liberty Street. The density of the commercial buildings today is similar to the density from the 1925-1950 Sanborn map

Topography Today

Today there is about a two to two and one half foot difference in elevation from the street level to the courthouse lawn level on most sides. Although this difference in elevation exists, there is not a great slope on the courthouse lawn itself. It stays relatively flat up until the level of the fence, then it slopes down to street level on three sides. On the fourth side, there is a brick retaining wall. On this side, handicapped access is
available in the middle of the inner square where the smallest change in elevation occurs, about six inches, which is dealt with in the form of a sloping sidewalk (Figure 6.16). On the other three sides, there are stairs to give access from the street level to the courthouse.

![Figure 6.16](image1.png)  Changes in elevation around the courthouse—Peace Street and Centre Street, respectively

*Vegetation Today*

There is a continued concentration of vegetation around the courthouse itself (Figure 6.17), with very little vegetation occurring in the remainder of the block that makes up the square. However, there has been a change in the look of the vegetation over time. As previously mentioned, in the earliest photographs, the courthouse is barely visible behind the trees. Mainly because of damage from storms, especially the tornado of 1976, there are not as many trees around the courthouse today. It can be seen much more easily from a distance.

The placement of the trees today appears to have been planned as the trees nearest the courthouse are magnolias and crape myrtles and the trees that form the perimeter of the interior courthouse square are oaks. These are placed together in a straight line near
some portions of the fence (Figure 6.18). Near the courthouse itself, plantings of evergreen shrubs and daylilies flank the entrances to the courthouse on all sides (Figure 6.19). Crape myrtles are also located in the corners of three sides of the interior square. The northeast corner does not have a placement of crape myrtles and it allows the clearest view of the courthouse. Many of the current photographs of the courthouse are taken from this viewpoint (at least the ones found on flickr.com). Near the businesses, most of the vegetation can be found in planters placed outside individual businesses (Figure 6.20). Few trees are found near the businesses, with the exception being two trees found on the west side of the square. Evergreen shrubs are also placed near some of the crosswalks. The vegetation today has a manicured look in general (Figure 6.21).

Figure 6.17   Vegetation and signage on the courthouse lawn
Figure 6.18   Oak trees in a line inside fence around courthouse square-Centre Street

Figure 6.19   Plantings around courthouse entrance
Figure 6.20  Seasonal flower display and Magnolia tree on Union Street

Figure 6.21  Vegetation on the courthouse lawn-looking out from the courthouse
Circulation Today

Today circulation is much more strictly controlled (Figures 6.22, 6.23). This is done through the use of lanes of traffic and clearly labeled parking areas. There is a clear segregation of people places and vehicular spaces. The area for people to use is indicated by the placement of sidewalks and lines painted that indicate where crossing the street is permitted. The area for vehicles to use is indicated by the placement of asphalt. Today, there is clearly more space designated for the auto than the human.

Two-way traffic allows vehicles to travel around the square in either direction. Parking occurs on the interior portion of the square (right beside the interior, courthouse square) and on the exterior portion right in front of the businesses. On both sides, the parking spaces are angled so that one can only safely park in the direction of the flow of traffic. Parking spaces and handicapped spaces are clearly marked around much of the square, though the lines have faded in some areas.

Figure 6.22 Roadway division on the square. West Peace Street
Figure 6.23   Circulation patterns at the intersection of Peace Street and Liberty Street

Structures, Furnishings and Objects Today

The only major structures, other than the courthouse and the commercial buildings that surround it, are two gazebos on the courthouse lawn (Figure 6.24). They are on opposite sides of the lawn. One appears to be intended for the use of people and the other is used as storage for electrical equipment. Also found all around the squares are benches that are of similar styles (Figure 6.25). The most common are of black metal, though some wooden ones that have been painted black are also found. Trash receptacles that echo the style of the majority of the benches are found around the square as well. Two flag poles are located on the square. One is found near the courthouse
(Figure 6.26) and the other on the corner of one of the commercial blocks. The light-poles are also of the same style of black metal as other square amenities (Figure 6.27).

Figure 6.24  Gazebos on the southeast and northwest corners of the courthouse lawn

Figure 6.25  Bench and trash receptacle
Figure 6.26  View of courthouse showing the flag pole

Figure 6.27  Lights along Peace Street
One thing that is not found around the Canton square that is sometimes found in other town squares is a Confederate memorial. There is a “Daughters of the American Revolution” marker (Figure 6.28) as well as a marker to L.A. Penn, Jr. for his contribution to the Madison Soil and Water Conservation District. Planters are found outside some of the businesses (Figure 6.29). These are of differing styles, though concrete planters make up the majority of them. Some contain plants or flowers and others do not.

Figure 6.28 Marker stating, “In Memory-Daughters of the American Revolution-Doak’s Treaty Chapter-1997” on the courthouse lawn
One rather unique feature is a metal trough that is located between the sidewalk and the iron fence at the southwest corner of the square (Figure 6.30). It has been alluded to in a quotation by Van Smith. He stated that the trough was iron, yet it appears to be copper. It is not marked by a sign, though that would be a good addition to the square along with the date that it was placed there. It would give people a greater appreciation of its historical nature, as most passersby would not realize its history.
Seasonal displays are often found around the courthouse. Lights are placed at Christmas, “horses” made of hay attached to a wagon were there during the fall of 2006, and the wagon was still there but with benches around it in February of 2008. Another feature that is not common to town squares is found in Canton’s interior square, and that is a birdhouse. Clocks are placed around the square in various places and are usually associated with particular businesses. Various types of signs are found that advertise what the business is, as well as traffic signs. In addition, there is a sign with information about the former courthouse. Murals are found on the side of the end business on some blocks (Figure 6.31). Temporary signs are often placed on the fence of the courthouse interior square (Figure 6.32). These demonstrate that the square today is still used as a gathering place for community events and as a method of dispersing information to the community at large. An additional feature that makes for a pleasant visit to the Canton square is the inclusion of a sound system that plays American standards.
Figure 6.31  Mural painted on building on corner of Liberty Street and Center Street

Figure 6.32  Temporary signs on the courthouse lawn
Fencing Today

The iron fence that surrounds the courthouse lawn today was erected in 1858. Though one section on Centre Street is missing, the fence is in remarkable shape overall (Figure 6.33).

Paving Materials Today

Currently, the main paving materials are concrete used for sidewalks and asphalt used for roadways. The roads were paved in the early 1900s. Brick paving is found near crosswalks both in the middle and at the end of the blocks (Figure 6.34). In addition, the sidewalk on part of the southern side of Peace Street is made of brick.
Figure 6.34  Bricks near pedestrian crosswalk in front of Welcome Center on Union Street
Views of Canton Then and Now

19-- to 2006

Figure 6.35  Canton, Mississippi.  1905. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi.  Shows location of Figures 6.36 and 6.37

Figure 6.36  Court House Square.  Canton, Mississippi.  19--.  Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
From the above photo (Figure 6.36; see Figure 6.35 for position from which photograph was taken), it is evident that Canton’s square once had a denser landscaping look than it does today (Figure 6.37). This early photograph shows that it was still common to see horses and wagons around the square, but they were usually excluded from entering the courthouse’s grounds by the use of a fence. It appears that there was some type of event going on inside the courthouse lawn as many people are gathered, and some horses are visible inside the fence. The dome of the courthouse is seen above the trees, demonstrating its dominance on the landscape. Wooden squares protect small trees in the forefront of the picture, though if the trees did not survive, the tree wells were used to hold horses. It appears that more decorative tree wells are located inside the fence. At this time, there were no power lines to mar the view on this part of the square. Today power lines are found here, as well as asphalt paving.

Public Square with horse and wagon traffic, some wagons loaded with cotton bales. 1903. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
In 1903 the square was still the main place in town to conduct business (Figure 6.39; see Figure 6.38 for position from which photograph was taken). All of the vehicles in the older photograph were wagons or carts drawn by horses. Cotton was an important crop which people gathered on the square. The buildings today still retain the same architectural style with some changes to the architectural details and awnings (Figure 6.40). One of the buildings had a gallery in the older photograph which has been removed in the later photograph. Also, although the earlier photograph was not in color, it is obvious that the building in the foreground was once painted a lighter color than it currently is painted. Additionally, instead of horse-drawn wagons, the automobile is found today.
19-- to 2008

Figure 6.41 Canton, Mississippi. 1905. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi. Shows location of Figures 6.42 and 6.43

Figure 6.42 Street Scene. Canton, Mississippi. 19--. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
In addition to the clear view of the iron fence that surrounds the courthouse yard, this photograph also shows the elevation change that separates the turf from the road (Figure 6.42; see Figure 6.41 for position from which photograph was taken). Hitching posts for the horses are visible, and at this time, power lines have been added around the square. The courthouse itself is mostly obscured from view by the dense canopy of trees surrounding it. At this time the courthouse yard is also distinguished from the surrounding area by its closely cropped lawn. The following picture shows the same view today (Figure 6.43). The fence is still visible, and there is still a closely-cropped lawn. The courthouse is more visible now, partly because the trees are dormant in the more recent photograph but also because there are not as many trees in general. A gazebo has been added, and the streets have been paved. Additionally, the main mode of transportation has changed dramatically as well.

Figure 6.43 Looking west on Peace Street. February 2008
Figure 6.44  Canton, Mississippi.  1905. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi.  Shows location of Figure 6.45 and 6.46

Figure 6.45  South Side of the City Square.  Integrated group of spectators gathered around several males in a horse-drawn buggy.  1909.  Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
This photograph demonstrates how activity on the square attracted people (Figure 6.45; see Figure 6.44 for position from which photograph was taken). Events occurred on the square and people “dressed” for coming to the square. This photograph shows an integrated group of spectators. The women are grouped furthest from the crowd and are found mostly inside the fenced portion of the yard. This appears to be a political advertisement for someone named, “Galvani.” The view today is quite different (Figure 6.46). There are fewer trees, for one thing. Also, instead of seeing people gathered, we see cars parked. The fence remains the same in both photographs, as do the power lines.

Figure 6.46   Looking down on Peace Street. February 2008
Figure 6.47  Canton, Mississippi.  1905. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi.  Shows location of Figure 6.48 and 6.49

Looking North on Liberty Street, Canton, Miss.

Figure 6.48  Looking North on Liberty Street.  19-.  Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
A view of the square in the earlier part of the 20th century is seen in the above photograph (Figure 6.48; see Figure 6.47 for position from which photograph was taken). Today, the overall density is the same, but changes have of course occurred (Figure 6.49). The street lamps are no longer there and the decorative trims and the colors of the buildings have changed. In addition, instead of the galleries that were found in the postcard, today awnings are used. Whereas, the galleries helped to shade the shoppers and pedestrians, the awnings only shade the building. One of the starkest changes is that instead of horse-drawn carriages parked in front of the businesses, automobiles are found.

Figure 6.49  Looking North on Liberty Street. February 2008
190- to 2008

Figure 6.50  Canton, Mississippi.  1905. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi.  Shows location of Figure 6.51 and 6.52

Figure 6.51  Paving the Streets. Looking north on Union street.  190-. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
This photograph partially tells the story of how the streets went from being dusty and muddy to being paved (Figure 6.51; see Figure 6.50 for position from which photograph was taken). In the early part of the 20th century, most of the process involved manual labor without the use of advanced equipment that is common today (Figure 6.52 shows the end results of the modern equipment).

Figure 6.52 Looking north on Union Street. February 2008
1940 to 2008

Figure 6.53  Canton, Mississippi.  1905. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi. Shows location of Figures 6.54 and 6.55

Figure 6.54  Madison County Courthouse.  1940. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
By 1940, many changes are visible (Figure 6.54; see Figure 6.53 for position from which photograph was taken). “Horse-less” carriages have replaced horses as the main mode of transportation around the square (Figure 6.55). People are absent in this particular photograph. The vegetation has been cleared giving a much clearer view of the courthouse from a distance. This scene has not changed dramatically from the 1940s. The main differences are the style of automobile found parked in front of the square and the addition of a gazebo.

Figure 6.55   Former Madison County Courthouse. February 2008
Figure 6.56  Canton, Mississippi.  1905. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi.  Shows location of Figures 6.57 and 6.58

Figure 6.57  Perlinsky’s Diamond Anniversary.  March 3, 1942. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
This photograph shows a past business on the square (Figure 6.57; see Figure 6.56 for position from which photograph was taken). As is evidenced by the photograph, this business was established in 1867. This photo shows a view of the storefront, the neon sign, the tiled entrance with the store name visible, the display cases, and the streetlamp on the sidewalk. The business has changed hands and is now an antiques store called “The Cheshire Cat” (Figure 6.58). The tiled entrance to the store remains the same and still says, “Perlinsky’s,” and the glass display cases are essentially the same. The street lamp on the sidewalk is no longer there, nor is the neon sign.

Figure 6.58  The Cheshire Cat on Union Street (formerly Perlinsky’s). February 2008
1950 to 2008

Figure 6.59  Canton, Mississippi.  1905. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi.  Shows location of Figures 6.60 and 6.61

Figure 6.60  Madison County Courthouse.  1950.  Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
The view of the corner of the courthouse has not changed very dramatically since the 1950s (Figures 6.60, 6.61; see Figure 6.59 for position from which photographs were taken). There has been the addition of a gazebo. Also, the sign that is in the earlier photograph has been removed by the later photograph.

![Former Madison County Courthouse. February 2008](image)

Not many changes have been made to the exterior of the courthouse (Figure 6.62), though considerable changes have occurred to the interior. For example, the area which was once used as a balcony was converted to a records storage room (Figure 6.63), additional rooms have been partitioned off, and modern conveniences such as restrooms and an elevator have been installed. Figure 6.64 shows an aerial view of the modern courthouse square.
Figure 6.62   Former Madison County Courthouse.  Canton, MS.  Courtesy of Jordan McAlister

Figure 6.63   Old Madison County Courthouse.  2nd floor records room showing former courtroom balcony
Summary of Changes

The Canton square is an example of a square that has by and large successfully evolved over time, and it remains an economically viable element to the town of Canton. This is enhanced by the fact that only two properties are currently vacant on the square,
according to the Chamber of Commerce, though the number of vacancies can change frequently. Some features of the square have changed very little since the origins of the square, such as the topography of the square. In addition, though there was a growth in the density of the buildings on the square between 1887 and 1950, the density has stayed relatively constant since then. Furthermore, treasured features such as the fence around the courtyard lawn have been preserved.

Other features demonstrate a much greater degree of change over time. One of these is the types of stores that are found on the square. The earliest Sanborn maps shows stores such as several dry goods stores, groceries, general stores, hardwood stores, banks, drug stores, among other. Today some of the businesses on the square include a corner market, a bakery, a Subway® restaurant, museums, gift shops, and antique shops (Figure 6.65). The most common types of store on the square in 2008 are gift shops and antiques stores. The wares for sale on the square in 1887 and the services offered almost all functioned to meet the essential daily needs of the citizens of Canton. While many of those needs can still be met on the square today, this is not the entire focus of the square now. Today, tourism is an important component and attractant of the square, which likely was not the case in 1887.

Along the same lines, in the past it was common for store owners to live above the shops that they owned. This occurred in Canton as well. For example, the Sulm building that is now owned by the Canton Redevelopment Authority is named for the Sulm family, who ran a general store in this building and lived above the business. There is a trend to try to restore residences on the square. There are currently three apartments above businesses on the square. One challenge to adding additional apartments is that
not all of the buildings have access to the upper stories on the street, as some of the upper stories are accessed within a first-story business.

Another aspect that has shown some degree of change is the vegetation. In the past, it appeared to be much denser and more naturalistic. Today, it is not as dense, though this does seem to be changing if the photograph from 1976 and the aerial photograph are compared, and it appears to be more planned and formal. The furnishings found around the square are another attribute that have changed over time, as have the paving materials. Perhaps, the characteristic that has been the most dramatic in terms of change has to do with circulation and types of vehicles found on the square. In the beginning, there was no need to control the circulation of people and vehicles around the square as it just “took care of itself.” This is not the case today as automobile traffic has replaced wagon traffic and must be much more strictly controlled to ensure the safety of the visitors, both in vehicles and on foot, to the square.
Figure 6.65  Map with names of current businesses on the square. Current through early 2007
Assessment of Landscape Integrity and Significance

Integrity

Landscape integrity refers to how well a landscape communicates the essential character of a site (Turner 2006). It includes how authentic a site is in terms of preserving its original appearance and materials. It also has to do with how well a landscape communicates what it is and as to whether the meaning has been compromised or confused by changes not keeping with the essential character of the place (ibid). In looking at the squares, the term “landscape” is used not only to refer to the vegetation of a site but also to the buildings that are there and their relationship to one another. When dealing with a cultural entity such as a town square which has evolved over time, there are various layers of history at play at once so that several different time periods may be reflected at the same time. It is important for the town to decide which time period it wishes to reflect so that the landscape can be read as a cohesive unit. This is precisely what the square in Canton did. According to Maureen Simpson of the Canton Redevelopment Authority, Nancy Grogan, the former Head of the Preservation Committee suggested that the time period should be the 1930s as most of the buildings on the square had been built at that time and were in their prime. Whenever the Redevelopment Authority acquires a property to renovate and restore, it investigates what the property looked like in the 1930s and restores it so that the exterior reflects this as closely as possible. When restoring the Sulm property on the North Side of the square (Figure 6.66), Maureen Simpson of the Redevelopment Authority even went so far as to get out a magnifying glass to count the number of spindles that were found on the
balcony in a historic photograph. When this property was restored, it was made to look as exactly like the photograph as possible. According to the National Register of Historic Places Nomination form, most of the buildings that comprise the courthouse square district retain their original architectural integrity and are characterized by eclectic cornices, pediments, and window caps of galvanized metal.

![Image of Sulm building on Centre Street restored by the Canton Redevelopment Authority]

Figure 6.66  Sulm building on Centre Street. Restored by the Canton Redevelopment Authority

Overall, the Canton square has historical integrity in its current condition. Renovating buildings to reflect the selected time period helps to add to the integrity of the square. Additionally, the square reads as a unified landscape. Attention to details such as having the same style of trash receptacle and matching benches around the square further add to the integrity of the square. The town’s dedication to historic preservation helps the square maintain its historical integrity. The town of Canton conducted a “Historic
Resources Survey” in 1988, sponsored “Preservation Week” in 1998, and published the “Canton Design Guidelines” following the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation* (Canton Redevelopment Authority).

**Significance**

The Canton square was deemed by the State Historic Preservation Officer to be significant on the local level (Ostby 1980). This is confirmed by the square’s placement on the National Register. The Canton Courthouse Square District was placed on the Register in 1982, which includes 44 buildings and is bounded by Center, Liberty, Peace and Union Streets. In 1989, this Historic District was increased to include 31 buildings down West Peace Street. According to the Canton Convention and Visitor’s Bureau, the Canton Courthouse Square District was declared to be one of the three best examples of Courthouse Squares in the State of Mississippi, the other two being Oxford and Holly Springs. Its historic significance includes events that would have occurred here, and the architecture/engineering found on the square. The architectural style is listed as Late Victorian and “Other.” Its area of significance includes architecture and commerce. Its periods of significance include 1850-1874, 1875-1899, 1900-1924, and 1925-1949. Both its historic function and current function include commerce/trade and government functions (National Register of Historic Places). The information for the boundary increase is slightly different. Its historic significance is events that occurred there. Its areas of significance include transportation and commerce, as the Railroad Depot is included in this area. The periods of significance are 1875-1899, 1900-1924, and 1925-1949. Its historic function is commerce/trade, and its current functions are
commerce/trade and vacant/ not in use (ibid). Additionally, it holds further significance as a successful example of a Shelbyville square in Mississippi. See Figures 6.67 and 6.68 for maps showing the boundaries of the historic districts.

Figure 6.67   Historic districts from the National Register report. 1989
Figure 6.68   Map with most recent Historic Districts. May 2001. Courtesy of Canton Redevelopment Authority
Twelve Street Squares: Lexington, Mississippi

Historical Narrative

Lexington is located in Holmes County, in the west central part of Mississippi. Holmes County was created by an act of legislature that was approved on February 19, 1832. It was carved from part of Yazoo County, which was originally a part of a larger area known as Hinds County which had been ceded to the United States in the Treaty of Doak’s Stand on October 18, 1820 and the Dancing Rabbit Treaty in 1830 (Phillips 2006).

Lexington, which was named in honor of Lexington, Massachusetts, was viewed only as a trading post in the 1820s and was incorporated on February 26, 1836 (Phillips 2006). It was the second town in Holmes County to be incorporated, and this incorporation took place just two days after the first town, Pickens, was incorporated (Holmes County Herald 1976). It was founded to serve as the county seat of the newly formed Holmes County. The first Caucasian settlers to come to the area were the family of Thomas Land, who moved there about 1826 upon buying land from the Native Americans. The nucleus of the town was formed by sixty acres of land donated by Otha Beall and Samuel Long and was carefully planned with parallel streets emanating from a central square (Phillips 2006).

Lexington has had three courthouses. The first was a crude log structure built in the center of the square “upon which the new town was planned” (Hill 1986, 1B), and the second was a brick structure designed by William Nichols, the architect of the Old State Capitol and the Governor’s Mansion (Hill 1986). This second courthouse burned on
November 3 of 1893 (Moore 1976). The third courthouse, a Georgian style, was designed by W. Chamberlain and Company out of Knoxville, Tennessee (Phillips 2006). It was built in 1894 in seven months at a cost of $22,000 (Lexington Main Street). It is a two story brick building with corner towns and pyramid shaped roofs (Figure 6.69). It also includes a clock tower with a dome and spires. In 1976 this courthouse was undergoing renovations to the tune of approximately $400,000 (Moore 1976).

Figure 6.69  Holmes County Courthouse circa 1907. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History

The following description was given of Lexington’s growth:

From 1830 to 1860, Lexington grew up from a little village of a few small cash stores to a town with the whole square blocked with large mercantile houses and a large population. Up to that time there were few brick houses on the square… Lexington presents a decided metropolitan appearance, with large two-story brick structures on every side and corner; the second stories are occupied by lawyers, doctors and other professional men. Four banks are doing business in the finest brick buildings in the state. There are
two fine cotton gins, one cotton seed oil mill, one cotton 
compress and one railroad with four trains each day 
(Holmes County Herald 1976, 16).

An 1838 report states that the first public buildings were the courthouse and the 
Presbyterian Church. Lexington also contained eight stores, four groceries, and one 
apothecary’s shop. In 1833, a post office was established. By 1838, a newspaper office, 
several lawyer’s offices, two doctors’ offices, a bank, and the office of a stage line had 
been added to the town (Hill 1986).

From an early time, the citizens saw a need to beautify and enhance their square. 
A description of it in August of 1838 stated, “The public square of Lexington is as bald 
as a rock, is as hot as a stone, and is shockingly out of taste. To remedy it and improve 
its appearance, the planting of shade trees is proposed” (Holmes County Herald 1986, 
2B). Evidently this advice was not immediately heeded as a postcard from 1907 shows 
that the courthouse lawn did not include any trees at that point.

Lexington escaped the Civil War virtually unscathed (Phillips 2006). In 1906, 
Lexington achieved city status (Holmes County Herald 1976) and on December 2, 1908 
the Confederate Monument was unveiled on the courthouse lawn (Phillips 2006). By 
1909 it was reported that there were nine cars in Lexington (Holmes County Herald 
1976), and in 1915 Lexington received electricity (Holmes County Herald 1986).

According to Otha Wright, who was 104 years old in 2000 he, “remembered when the 
square in Lexington was just black dirt. The city used a waterer on two wheels on the 
square to help keep the dust down” (Holmes County Herald 2000). Paving began in 
1927, and “the streets to be paved include Spring, Boulevard, Tchula, Carrollton, Depot 
and Yazoo, all work to extend one block from the public square” (Holmes County Herald

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In this same year all of the telephone poles were removed from the public square “thereby giving our business section all of the appearance of a city as a result” (ibid). In the 1930s “improvements were made to benefit the town as well as the people. The court square was inlaid with bricks. It was four acres square and the sidewalks were added later” (Upchurch 1948, 10B). The following pictures (Figures 6.70, 6.71, 6.72) give a glimpse into what life was like for residents of Lexington in 1939 and 1940.

Figure 6.70  Selling fish on Saturday afternoon. Lexington, Mississippi. 1939. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
Figure 6.71  In front of the Holmes County Courthouse on Saturday. 1939. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Figure 6.72  Holmes County Courthouse. 1940. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
All of the streets within the city limits were set to be paved in 1966 (Holmes County Herald 1986) (Figure 6.73). A roadway report from around this time stated that the street system was a modified grid pattern, and that the original regularity was found only in the area directly adjacent to the square (Baker 1964).

Figure 6.73 Holmes County Courthouse. 195-. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History

By 1838 the population of Lexington was 414 residents, and by 1905 it had grown to 2,134 (Phillips 2006). According to the 1980 census, the population was 2,680 at that time. Lexington has three “claims to fame.” A Lexington native, Edmund Favor Noel, became governor. Also, in 1907 a Lexington man, William Hall Smith, formed the Corn Club, which later became the 4-H Club. Thirdly, the Church of God in Christ church began in an abandoned cotton gin in Lexington in March of 1897 and now has a nationwide following (Phillips 2006).
The courthouse square continues to be an important representation to the town as witnessed in the sesquicentennial edition of the paper that used a drawing of the courthouse throughout the paper as a symbol. The town’s slogan is “where the hills meet the delta” (Holmes County Herald 1976).

**Landscape Elements and Character-Defining Features of Lexington’s Square**

**Spatial Organization and Land Patterns**

Lexington presents an almost unique pattern of spatial organization. The courthouse is centrally placed and the buildings are oriented towards it. This it holds in common with other traditional courthouse square blocks. What makes it different is the manner in which the roads are located around the square. Instead of having four roads that lead into the square as is common in the Shelbyville square, or even six as occurs with the four-block square, there are 12 roads that form the square. Or rather, 12 entrances into the square (Figure 6.74). This pattern is almost unique in Mississippi. The original form is also found in Hernando, Mississippi. Two major roads lead into the square at Lexington. These include Highways 17 and 12, which become Carrollton Street and Depot Street, respectively. From the north-central portion of the square going around it in a clockwise direction, the streets that make up the square are Carrollton, North Vine, Oak, Depot, East China, South Vine, Yazoo, Wall, West China, Spring, Boulevard, and Tchula.
The way that the roads enter the square breaks each of the blocks up into half blocks all around it. The businesses are oriented toward the courthouse from the earliest Sanborn map of 1886 on through the last one covering 1925-1941. The buildings are rather densely located covering most of the interior portions of the lots facing the courthouse. There are gaps and empty spaces between some of the buildings. Most of those have disappeared by the latest map so that each half-block is mostly covered by buildings. The exception to this is the half-block that contains the filling station.
Sanborn Map Comparisons

Between 1886 and 1902, the square saw an overall growth in density (Figures 6.75, 6.76). This occurred mainly with the commercial properties, with some growth also in the number of residential buildings. In addition, the courthouse changed during this time.

Figure 6.75   Figure Ground Study based on “Lexington, Mississippi. 1886. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi”
There was a continued growth in density between the 1902 and 1925-1941 maps (Figures 6.76, 6.77). There was an increase in the overall density and amount of commercial buildings between these two maps. This was partially the cause of the decline in residential properties as some of the previous residential properties changed to have commercial functions in the later map. Also, some of the residences were simply removed during that time period.

Figure 6.76 Figure Ground Study based on “Lexington, Mississippi. 1902. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi.” The courthouse changed and there was a growth in overall density from Figure 6.75
Figure 6.77 Figure Ground Study based on “Lexington, Mississippi. 1925-41. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi.” There was a continued growth in density from Figure 6.76, especially in commercial properties.

**Topography**

Though Holmes county is considered to be in the Delta, Lexington itself is not. Evidence of this is the varying elevation in the town. The area that the courthouse is located on is at a higher elevation than other parts of the town (Figure 6.78). The square itself does not vary greatly in elevation.
Lexington’s square is a bit different from the others studied in that it originally had a rather “bare” look to its landscape. This made viewing the courthouse a simple task. There were no foundational plantings in the earliest photographs, only a closely clipped lawn. By the photograph from 1940, some trees and foundational plantings had been added, which softens the look of the courthouse somewhat.

Circulation

As was the case with Canton, the circulation in Lexington’s square has undergone changes over the years. Originally, the circulation patterns were left undefined and the visitors to the square were not clearly instructed as to how to navigate around the square.

Figure 6.78   View looking towards courthouse on Hwy 12/Depot street
Structures, Furnishings and Objects

It is not known what site furnishing were used on the square originally. In the earliest map, there was only the courthouse and a well on the grounds of the “inner” square. On the 1902 map, a small one story building had been added. It is labeled as a “W.C.” on the 1907, 1914, and 1925 maps. On the 1925-1941 map, a record room has been added, which was built in 1930. It is a brick structure. The water closet structure has been removed by this map. Awnings or galleries were located on some of the buildings. The majority of buildings did not have any in the map from 1886. By the 125-1941 map, the majority of buildings did contain awnings or galleries.

Fencing

There was a wooden fence placed around the square that is visible in a photograph from 1907. It is not known when it was removed, but it was not seen in the later photographs.

Paving Materials

According to shop-owner and local historian Phil Cohen, the roads were originally dirt and gravel and the sidewalks were originally wooden. He reported that in 1922 the roads were paved with bricks. He said that this led to some controversy as residents were concerned that this would be painful to the horses’ hooves. According to an article in the Holmes County Herald the brick paving was added in the 1930s (Upchurch 1948).
Existing Conditions and Character-Defining Features

Spatial Organization and Land Patterns Today

The buildings are roughly the same in location today as they were in the 1925-1941 Sanborn map. There is a lack of uniformity among the buildings (Figures 6.79, 6.80). They vary from one story buildings to three story buildings. Sometimes they vary in height within the same half block. Mostly the buildings are of a similar style within each half block. Those buildings found on the outside “corners” of the square vary greatly in style from the buildings found on the half blocks. The pattern that is formed by the roads breaking up the blocks into half blocks makes a slightly more perilous journey for the pedestrian who must cross more streets to navigate walking around the square.

Figure 6.79   Looking south on Vine Street. Shows differing heights to the buildings
Figure 6.80   Corner of North Vine Street and Oak Street. Shows how the style of the bank differs from the other buildings on the square

Vegetation Today

The vegetation on the square today is found almost exclusively around the courthouse (Figure 6.81) with the only exception being some planters that are found around the square. The vegetation around the courthouse consists mostly of magnolias, live oaks, and crape myrtles (Figure 6.82). Additionally, there are foundational plantings of evergreen shrubs (Figure 6.83), small shrubs in planters under the live oaks, and plantings that flank the “back” entrance on the eastern side of the courthouse.
The change in the vegetation around the courthouse over time has been dramatic. In the earliest photograph, the vegetation consists of only lawn around the courthouse, but today a variety of vegetation is present. Some of the trees and shrubs were planted between the photographs of 1907 and 1940. According to Phil Cohen, in 1950, the magnolias were added around the courthouse lawn as part of a project by the FFA, of which he took part. Today the trees “soften” the hard edges of the courthouse and provide needed shade to the courthouse lawn (Figure 6.84).
Figure 6.82  Magnolia and live oak on the courthouse lawn

Figure 6.83  West entrance to courthouse showing evergreen plantings
Today, this is much more structured with signs instructing cars which direction to travel around the square. There are two “circles” in which vehicles may travel which include an inner circle that goes around the courthouse itself and an outer circle that services the businesses. Both of these lanes are one-way traffic only. There are corresponding parking areas with each circle. On the inner circle, one “lane” of angled parking is provided on all sides of the square nearest to courthouse except for the north side. On the outer circle, angled parking is available on both sides of the lane. Additionally, pedestrian areas are clearly marked with white stripes showing pedestrians where to cross the street (Figure 6.85). These are not available at every intersection.
On the inner square today stands the courthouse in the center and the records room on the northeast corner (Figure 6.86). On the south side of the inner square, a temporary sign is located that has information about the courthouse renovation as well as a permanent sign with information about Lexington (Figure 6.87). This is the side which contains the plant barriers also. On the east side of the square, benches and plastic trash receptacles may be found (Figure 6.88). The north side contains a handicapped-accessible entrance as well as a walkway near the road. A decorative mulch has been added at the base of each of the crape myrtles (Figure 6.89). The main entrance to the courthouse is located on the west side of the inner square (Figure 6.90). This side of the square also has a sign that has information about Holmes County, a flag pole, and a
Confederate monument. A clock is located on the top of the courthouse tower. Lights are found on all sides of the inner square. On the outer square, lights may also be found as well as signs that inform us that this is the “Lexington Historic District” (Figure 6.91). Around the square near the intersections, brick planters are located containing various types of plants and flowers (Figure 6.92). A plaque with information about who the bricks were donated in memory of is found on most of them. Additional planters are located in front of some of the businesses (Figure 6.93). Trash receptacles are found throughout the square. Road signs are the only types of signs found on the rest of the square, excepting signs for the businesses. Some buildings have signs or murals painted on their sides (Figure 6.94). Awnings shade the buildings on most of the businesses. These vary from being located perpendicular to the buildings on some half blocks to being angled on others. A unique feature found on this square is the addition of a time capsule (Figure 6.95). It was put in place as part of the Bicentennial celebration of the American Revolution on July 4, 1976. It is to be opened on July 4, 2076.

Figure 6.86   The records room is the only building other than the courthouse on the inner square
Figure 6.87  Signs found around courthouse lawn
Figure 6.88  Benches on the east side of the courthouse lawn

Figure 6.89  Crape myrtles, walkway, records room, and light on the northeast portion of the courthouse lawn
Figure 6.90   West side of the courthouse showing the main entrance

Figure 6.91   Sign on light pole on China Street
Figure 6.92  Brick planter on the corner of West China Street and Wall Street

Figure 6.93  Display in front of Thurmond’s Hardware Store on west side of square
Figure 6.94  Mural on the side of a building on the corner of Yazoo Street and China Street

Figure 6.95  Time capsule on the west side of the courthouse lawn near the Confederate memorial
Fencing Today

There currently is no fence around the courthouse. There are some barriers used near some of the sidewalks that block access to the plants near the courthouse (Figure 6.96).

Figure 6.96   Plants and barrier near the southern entrance to the courthouse

Paving Materials Today

The main paving materials are concrete for the sidewalks and asphalt for the roadways (Figure 6.97). In some parts of the square, there were two different types of concrete interspersed in bands used for the sidewalks. One is a smooth concrete and one has some exposed aggregate material. Additionally, roads leading out of the square are paved with brick for a portion of them. The original paving bricks were simply covered with asphalt when it was added (Figure 6.98). Phil Cohen says that work from an $184,000 grant that has been given to the city to replace the medians is set to begin soon.
Figure 6.97  Sidewalk on Tchula Street

Figure 6.98  Paving materials at the intersection of Oak Street and Tchula Street
Views of Lexington Then and Now

Lexington truly has some nice historic photographs that help to show what life was like on the square during certain time periods. They not only document what the buildings look like, but showcase people using the square also. This section documents what the square looked like in the historic photographs while giving a contrasting view of the square in 2008. A Sanborn map showing the location of where the photograph was taken is provided with each set of photographs.

1909-2008

Figure 6.99  Lexington, Mississippi. 1907. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi. Shows location of Figures 6.100 and 6.101
This postcard was mailed in 1907 so it is evident that the photograph is at least that old (Figure 6.100; see Figure 6.99 for position from which photograph was taken). At that point, the only landscaping apparent is the closely-cropped lawn and some small trees on the perimeter of the lawn. There is one window on the first floor that has been bricked in. Also apparent are the many horses and wagons that provided transportation for the members of the community. A flagpole is visible, as is a wooden fence that was used as a barrier between the courthouse lawn and the road. Tall poles that must have been telegraph poles are also visible, as Lexington did not receive electricity until 1915 (Holmes County Herald 1986).

![Holmes County Courthouse circa 1907. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History](image)

The scene looks quite a bit different a little over one hundred years later (Figure 6.101). The courthouse itself is less visible as more mature trees are located on the courthouse lawn now. Another addition is the Confederate monument that was added in
1908. The telegraph poles are no longer visible but light poles are. The road has been paved and automobiles are seen parked near the courthouse instead of horses and wagons.

Figure 6.101  View of the courthouse from the Masonic Lodge building on the corner of West China Street and Wall Street
Figure 6.102  Lexington, Mississippi.  1925-1941. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi.  Shows location of Figures 6.103 and 6.104

Figure 6.103  In front of the Holmes County Courthouse on Saturday.  1939.  Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
The photograph on the previous page helps to tell the story of how the courthouse was used as a gathering place for people (Figure 6.103; see Figure 6.102 for position from which photograph was taken). Here we see a group of men gathered around a wagon near the main entrance to the courthouse. The brick paving is visible in the photograph also as well as a barrier on either side of the sidewalk. Also in evidence are some evergreen shrubs planted as foundational plantings. It is difficult to replicate the photo today as the magnolia tree that was planted in 1950 obscures the view (Figure 6.104). There are no longer any barriers flanking the sidewalk. Evergreen shrubs are still used as foundational plantings, but they are different from the ones in the 1939 photograph.

Figure 6.104  View of the front of the courthouse in 2008

Figure 6.106  Selling fish on Saturday afternoon.  Lexington, Mississippi.  1939.  Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
The preceding is another photograph that helps to tell the tale of how life was in Lexington in the past (Figure 6.106; see Figure 6.105 for position from which photograph was taken). The square was not only used as a place for people to gather socially but also as a place to conduct business. Here we also have evidence of interaction between members of different races before the Civil Rights Movement. The customers are dressed up a bit more than the seller who has his sleeves rolled up and is wearing a more casual hat than the other men. All of the men are wearing hats.

Figure 6.107   South side of the courthouse lawn

Instead of men and wagons gathered on the perimeter of the courthouse lawn today we find automobiles (Figure 6.107). One of the stores, Cohen’s is still in the location in both the historic photograph and the modern photograph. This area is still used as a gathering place as evidenced in the photograph on the next page which is taken from a different angle (Figure 6.108). It appears that these people are gathered waiting
for some business inside the courthouse itself, rather than purchasing any goods. Only one person is wearing a hat in the modern photograph.

Figure 6.108 People gathered at the south entrance of the courthouse

Figure 6.110  Holmes County Courthouse. 1940. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
This is one of the rare photographs that captures both automobiles and a horse-drawn wagon on the square at the same time (Figure 6.110; see Figure 6.109 for position from which photograph was taken). From this photograph, we can see that though the streets were paved, the area around the courthouse was still relatively “open” as there were no lines painted on the streets depicting lanes or signs apparent that were directing traffic. Also, some of the cars are facing different directions. It would appear that the automobiles use the more exterior portion of the roadway and leave the inner area for the horse-drawn traffic. This picture was probably taken in the winter since the deciduous trees are dormant. Somewhere between 1907 and 1940 foundational plantings were added around the courthouse, as evidenced in this photograph. The trees that were barely visible in the 1907 photograph are much more apparent in this photograph. Today, the vehicles operate in a more orderly fashion as all of the traffic is one-way around the square (Figure 6.111). Magnolia trees were added between these two photographs which makes the courthouse much less visible in this later picture.
Figure 6.111 Southeast view of courthouse

1950-2008

Figure 6.112 Lexington, Mississippi. 1925-1941. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi. Shows location of Figures 6.113 and 6.114
The photograph on the preceding page shows what the courthouse was like in the 1950s (Figure 6.113; see Figure 6.112 for position from which photograph was taken). The Confederate monument and flagpole are visible, as are some decorative lights. The courthouse is easily viewed as the trees planted around it are relatively small. Overhead power lines mar the view of the courthouse. No horse-drawn vehicles are visible at this point. Some of the windows have awnings over them and one of the window screens looks in danger of falling. The cars reflect the styles that were popular at that time and there seems to be order in where the cars are located. Those parked in front of the courthouse are facing the same direction as are the ones parked along Spring Street. Also visible is the barrier separating the roadway from the courthouse lawn.

The view in 2008 is a little different (Figure 6.114). The two biggest noticeable differences are the size of the vegetation and the style of the automobiles. The flagpole
has also been moved. There are still power lines, but they have been lowered and are much less visible today. The decorative lights have been removed. The direction in which the automobiles are parked is different from the earlier photograph. There are no longer any awnings over any of the windows which gives them a more uniform look. They are in much better shape in the later photograph than in the earlier one.

The photographs that follow the photograph of the courthouse were taken from the top of the courthouse looking out to all four cardinal directions (Figures 6.115, 6.116, 6.117, 6.118). They help to give an overall view of the square. They also help to show how this pattern of development gives the square a slightly disjointed look with the lines of businesses being divided by lanes of traffic.

Figure 6.114  Western side of the courthouse
Figure 6.115   View from courthouse to the north

Figure 6.116   View from courthouse to the west
Figure 6.117   View from courthouse to the south

Figure 6.118   View from courthouse to the east
Summary of Changes

The overall pattern of spatial organization and land patterns has stayed relatively static over the years. There has been an increase in the overall density of properties.
around the square from its inception until now. The land use has stayed relatively consistent as well, with the buildings flanking the courthouse being commercial properties. Originally, there were some residences within the blocks around the courthouse, but that does not seem to be the case today. The biggest changes that have occurred are related to the types of businesses found on the square as well as the type of traffic found there (Figure 6.119). Originally, the businesses included dry goods stores, banks, the post office, drug stores, general stores, barbers, groceries, bakeries, hotels, and law offices, among others. Basically, everything that a community member might need for daily life could be procured on the square, and was likely within walking distance from his residence. Today, there is a much more limited range of goods available on the square. The businesses consist of banks, law offices, an insurance company, a hardware store, shops that sell decorative items and gifts, clothing stores, a Subway® restaurant, a furniture store, a newspaper office, and a grocery store. This last store is a bit surprising to find on the square, as most groceries have moved off the square in other towns. Not all of the needs of community members can now be met on the square, nor do many of the citizens live within walking distance from the square, either. One issue facing the square today is probably both a blessing and a curse. Two highways run through the square which brings quite a bit of traffic through the square. Some of the traffic likely helps the businesses on the square. However, many trucks also pass through the square, which certainly do not add to the visual appeal of the area, nor make it easier for pedestrians to navigate the square (Figure 6.120). Another major difference from the origins of the square to the square today is the addition of vegetation that helps to soften the hard edges of the courthouse, provides needed shade, and provides visual interest to the courthouse
square. Figure 6.121 shows an aerial view of modern Lexington, centered on the courthouse square.

Figure 6.120  Truck traffic on the square
Figure 6.121  Aerial view of Lexington. From Virtual Earth
Assessment of Landscape Integrity and Significance

Integrity

The Lexington square has been altered over time, mostly with the addition and subtraction of buildings and vegetation. The addition of buildings such as the more “modern” banks has reduced the ability of the square to tell the story of a unified landscape. Also, the loss of such buildings as the Baker Hotel contributes to the loss of the integrity of the landscape. Of course, with a cultural entity such as a town square, the question has to be asked, “Which time period should be reflected on the square?” For example, the site of the former Baker Hotel is now occupied by a defunct filling station. If the time period to be reflected is the 1890s, then the filling station would be out of place, but if the 1940s were to be preserved, then the filling station accurately reflects what life was like during that time period and should be preserved.

Overall, the Lexington square lacks historical integrity in its current condition. The addition of buildings that are not of the same period as the majority of the buildings on the square has contributed to the loss of integrity. Renovating them so that they are of a similar style as the older buildings on the square would help to restore some of the integrity of the landscape. Additionally, adopting a style of trash receptacle and lighting that more accurately reflects the historic importance of the square could contribute to restoring the integrity of the square.

Significance

The Lexington square is significant on the regional and national levels. This is confirmed by the square’s placement on the National Register. Both the courthouse
complex and the entire square are listed on the Register. The Courthouse complex was added to the Register in 1994. The styles of the courthouse and records room are Queen Anne, Romanesque, and Art Deco. Its areas of significance include social history, politics and government, and architecture. The periods of significance include 1875-1899, 1900-1924, and 1925-1949. Both its historic function and current function include government, recreation and culture (National Register of Historic Places). The Lexington Historic District which covers basically the entire square and includes 225 buildings was added to the Register in 2001. The architectural styles for the historic district are listed as Italianate and Greek Revival. The areas of significance include community planning and development, architecture, and commerce. The periods of significance span a broad range of years which include, 1825-1849, 1850-1874, 1875-1899, 1900-1924, 1925-1949, and 1950-1974. Both its historic and current functions included commerce/trade, domestic, education, government, recreation and culture, religion, and social (ibid). In addition, it holds further significance as being only one of two towns in Mississippi to have a “12 Street” square plan. Because of its distinctive pattern of town development in Mississippi in the 1800s, its ability to offer a glimpse of how a small town near the Mississippi Delta functioned in the past, and that it continues to play a role in the lives of the members of the community today, this town deserves to be studied and remembered.
Harrisonburg Squares: Holly Springs, Mississippi

Historical Narrative

Marshall County was organized in 1836 (Pruitt 1950). On April 19, the Board of Police met at McAlexander’s tavern overlooking the springs to determine the location of the county seat (McAlexander 2000). The land around the springs was chosen to be used as a Commons (McAlexander 2000). Owners of the land made a donation of 50 acres to the city, the sale of which earned enough money to build a courthouse and jail (Pruitt 1950). The holly springs lay at the southern end of the 50-acre donation, and an early settler described the springs as being thirty feet wide and deep enough to ‘swim a horse,’ (McAlexander 2000, 13). In May of 1836 the sale of town lots occurred, and at that time only a few log cabins existed (Winter 1997). The town currently known as Holly Springs was incorporated on May 12, 1837. It has undergone several name changes. Early names of the town included “Clarendon” and “Paris.” The name “Holly Springs” comes from an early settler to the area in 1834, Alexander C. McEwan, who arrived in the area and had some goods shipped to himself at “the holly springs” (Pruitt 1950). Holly Springs played an important role in the early history of the state of Mississippi and was one of the most important settlements during the 1830s to 1860s.

The proprietors of the land staked out a large square lined with business houses about a hundred yards south of the springs (McAlexander 2000). This public square was planned and laid out one block west of Spring Street by 1836, a year before the town’s incorporation. Spring Street was the first street laid out (Hamilton 1984), and was the site of the earliest commercial activity during the settlement period of the town, which
was between 1830 and 1835 (Gold 1979). Another of the important roads was the Hernando Road, running west off the north side of the square (McAlexander 2000). The major streets at the time were laid out to be broad thoroughfares (McAlexander 2000). The square was used as a public meeting place both for the town and the county after the courthouse was constructed in 1837 followed by the commercial row buildings that surrounded it (Gold 1979). The south side of the square was constructed first, and the oldest business buildings are those south of the courthouse (Pruitt 1950). The businesses around the square faced a large park where the seat of government was to be located. Small residential lots were located radiating outward from the square. As one traveled away from the center of the town, the lots became increasingly larger (McAlexander 2000). Within two years of the town’s founding there were two large hotels and eighteen stores in the process of erection. Two academies were in operation and a university building was being erected (Winter 1997).

Figure 6.122 Simplot’s Etching of square from Harper’s Weekly. Holly Springs, Mississippi. January 10, 1863. Image courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
The first courthouse was a ‘temporary courthouse’ which was a rough log building near the springs that cost $150. On July 6 of 1836, the Board of Police had its first meeting there (McAlexander 2000). This was a 2-storied frame structure surrounded by a wooden fence and hitching posts (Pruitt 1988). All structures in the county were built of logs until grist and saw mills became operable (McAlexander 2000). The plan for the new courthouse was more elaborate (Figure 6.122). It was to be a two-story brick building, forty-two by fifty-four feet. The foundation was to be made of native rock faced with a layer of high-quality cut stone (McAlexander 2000). The top of the building was to have a domed octagonal cupola containing a clock. The north and south façades were to be “surmounted by pediments supported by Doric pilasters, and the double mahogany entrance doors crowned with fanlights. In the interior, drawing upon both Tuscan and Ionic orders, a turning stair led to a large paneled second floor courtroom” (McAlexander 2000, 15). Although this plan was approved in July of 1836 what was built was a clapboard structure twice the original size with wings to the east and west for offices (McAlexander 2000). An economic depression in 1837 coupled with the speculating “mania” of the previous two years kept the courthouse busy. In March of 1838 there was a docket of over 1,200 cases for Circuit Court (McAlexander 2000). By 1838, the population of the town was estimated to be four thousand (Winter 1997). Figure 6.123 is one of the oldest photographs of the square itself, and it shows some of the commercial activities in which the members of the town engaged.
Figure 6.123  Street Scene In Holly Springs. Holly Springs, Mississippi. 18--. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Cultural activities played a role early in the history of the town. During the summer of 1839 a theatrical troupe, Chapman and Hamilton, had a successful run. In addition, the tracks of Holly Springs and Chulahoma held racing seasons (McAlexander 2000). The courthouse also played a part in non-legal affairs (see Figure 6.124). When General Sam Houston came to town, he addressed a large crowd at the courthouse following a dinner held in his honor at the Union House, a large frame structure on the east side of the square with a two-story double gallery across the front (McAlexander 2000). Important events occurred on the courthouse lawn. One of the first important meetings held there was on May 9, 1846 when a group of citizens met to send a volunteer company, later known as the Marshall Guard, to the war with Mexico (Pruitt 1950 and Gold 1979).
Holly Springs was seized by Union forces and used as a base of operation by General Grant during the Civil War. When Grant departed to march on Vicksburg in December of 1862, Confederate General Earl Van Dorn raided the town and captured and destroyed munitions held by the Union troops. One building used for the storage of high explosives, the old Masonic Hall on the courthouse square, was destroyed during the raid. Though this raid by Van Dorn destroyed most of the north and east sides during the Civil War, the west side did not suffer (Pruitt 1950). Holly Springs was then re-captured by Union troops. In 1864 some Union soldiers under General J.A. (Sooey) Smith who were held prisoner in the courthouse by their own officers set fire to the bell tower and the entire courthouse was burned (Pruitt 1950). The following year a committee requesting Congressional aid to rebuild the courthouse was refused. A tax levy of $25,000 was put in place and the new brick courthouse was built (Pruitt 1988) (Figure 6.125). It was
completed in 1870 and enclosed by a cast iron fence in 1871 (McAlexander 2000). This courthouse was used as a hospital during the Yellow Fever epidemic in 1878 (Pruitt 1950). Jesse Peters Norfleet, a cabinetmaker, provided the furniture for the courthouse (McAlexander 2000). During the era of Reconstruction political and social conflicts continued and were manifested on the square (Gold 1979). During the 1870s the square saw an intense rebuilding period, including the construction of several two-story brick row buildings. A north-south walk-through on the ground floor of the courthouse improved the cross-axial emphasis of the courthouse (Gold 1979). It was remodeled and tripled in size in 1929-30 (McAlexander 2000).

Figure 6.125  Etching of courthouse. Holly Springs, Mississippi. 18--. Image courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
Until around 1960 the north and east sides of the square were roped off when county elections were held (McAlexander 2000). Sawdust would be scattered over the concrete to hold a street dance on one side of the square and on another side a large board was placed to announce the results of the elections. People would sit on quilts, on canvas chairs, or in their cars. McAlexander reports that “the whole county” would gather on these evenings (2000, 138). Brokers for cotton were still found in operation on the square when the courthouse square was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980 (Gold 1979).

In more recent years Holly Springs has been the setting or filming location for four movies, according to the Holly Springs Chamber of Commerce. These include “Cookie’s Fortune,” “Big Bad Love,” “Heart of Dixie,” and “Home From the Hill.” In addition, Holly Springs is the boyhood home of the fictitious Father Tim Kavanagh in the highly successful Mitford series by Jan Karon. It is receiving additional “press” as Karon’s new “Father Tim” series begins with Home to Holly Spring. The website www.visithollysprings.org lists three books that feature Holly Springs which include The 50 Best Small Southern Towns, Must See Mississippi, and the aforementioned Home to Holly Springs. Holly Springs is a town that has been important in Mississippi’s history and it was listed as one of the three best representations of courthouse squares in Mississippi (National Register of Historic Places).

Each side of the square remembered

Holly Springs has an extra bit of information that was not found for Canton or Lexington and that is a brief history of each side of the square, including the location of
landmark businesses, as told by the curator of the Marshall County Historical Museum, Lois Swanee.

The Southern Side of the Square in 1862

The South side of the square is the oldest side of the square remaining intact, not having had any major fires. Citizens formerly lived above the businesses around the square, as some still do (Swanee 2002). One of the earliest buildings reportedly built was a wooden building owned by a Mr. Cato on the south side of the square. An early business on this side of the square was “The Republican Newspaper.” A drugstore was on the corner and another drugstore was located on the southwest side of the block where Utley’s Building is now located. On this block there was a cotton office that was formerly a bowling alley that was formerly a ten cent store. Next to this was a grocery store which was next to a double dry goods store. On the corner of the block was a grocery store (ibid).

Across Center Street to the east was another drugstore. During the Civil War, one of the buildings was used as an office by the paymaster of the northern army. In the middle of the block was a hat shop (Swanee 2002). Around 1940 this changed hands to become Western Auto. A furniture store was located on the eastern corner of the block, where City Café was, and now J.B.’s Family Restaurant is located there. There was an embalming establishment in the back of the store, before funeral parlors became more prevalent. This same building was used as a law office before the Civil War and as the Federal army’s band members’ barracks during the Civil War (ibid).
The West Side of the Square

Reports say that the west side of the square in 1838 included two blocks made up of brick buildings. An exception to this material was the livery stable that was probably made of wood. Other businesses on this side of the square included the Northern Bank and later, on the southwest corner, a store that sold saddles and bridles. Next to this store was a hardware store, with a feed store next to it. A candy store and a general store were also on this block. The general store moved to the southwest corner and became a clothing store. This building was previously used as a mercantile business. In the early days of the square, this building was built as the second Presbyterian Church. Vadah Cochran’s store also housed Stafford’s Café. The bus station was located there. This site has a “claim to fame” in that Elvis Presley would stand at the curb playing his guitar and singing, before he became famous (Swanee 2002). Next to this café was a department store. When the department store closed, it was incorporated into the north half of the café. In 1962, the building burned. On the north end of the block was a mercantile business that later became a café whose windows overlooked the post office and street. This block has a second “claim to fame” in that “Cookie’s Fortune” was filmed at this spot (ibid).

The North Side of the Square

The Magnolia Hotel once sat on the west side of Center Street. It was destroyed during the raid by Van Dorn and was replaced by Norfleet’s (Swanee 2002). Also on this side of the square in the 1930s were a drug store and a movie theater. Another theatre was located across the street. On December 15, 1949, the movie theater caught on fire which
resulted in the deaths of three people who lived in an upstairs apartment next door. It
later became an auto sales store. This block also housed a barber shop above Stubbs
Department Store. Kroger’s formerly occupied the space that the hat shop later occupied.
A dry goods store also existed on this block. Before 1926 the Post Office was in the
middle of this block (ibid).

The East Side of Holly Springs Square

Many changes have come to the east side of the square since 1836. The Masonic
Hall was one of the original buildings (Swanee 2002). It was a three-story building that
housed a ballroom and stage on the third floor that was used for plays and speeches. It
also housed a drug store. At the time it was the tallest building on the Square. This
building was destroyed in the raid by Van Dorn. A duplicate of the building was built
after the Civil War, but it burned to the ground on February 7, 1951. Another store on
this block was the former I.C. Levy’s store, which he had owned since 1858 (Figure
6.126). It became Linwood’s department store. The upstairs area above the store was
used as the local USO in World War II days. Linwood’s is one of the oldest department
stores in the state (ibid). Sadly, in February of 2008, it was holding a “going-out-of-
business” sale.
A saloon and gambling hall was located on the College Avenue end of this side of the square after the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1878 (Swanee 2002). In the 1870s, a trolley line ran from the trolley depot to the square and back. A bank later sat where the trolleys turned around. The building that was formerly a Merchants and Farmers Bank and is currently the tax assessor’s office was built around the turn of the century. The buildings between the bank and Booker’s Hardware changed hands over the years. One was used as an electrical shop by two different owners. The businesses next to it consisted of a jewelry store and a five and ten cent store. Next to Booker’s was a dress shop. In the line of businesses next to the Masonic Building was a department store, a furniture store, and a hardware store (Figure 6.127). There were three gas pumps on the Square, two of them on the east side of the square, and the other where Utley Realty was located (ibid).
Landscape Elements and Character-Defining Features of Holly Springs’ Square

Spatial Organization and Land Patterns

On the 1887 map, the square at Holly Springs is defined by Depot Avenue on the south side, Memphis Street which became Oxford Street on the west side, Hernando Avenue which became College Avenue on the north side, and Market Street on the east side. Center Street, a central north-south street bisects the outer square, providing a strong visual axis for the inner, courthouse square (Gold 1979). By the 1925-33 map Depot Avenue is referred to as Van Dorn Avenue, Memphis Street no longer becomes Oxford Street, and College Avenue is known as “West College” and “East College.” The pattern that is made up of the four streets intersecting the squares at the corners of the square with two roads bisecting the south and north blocks makes this a Harrisonburg
square (Figures 6.128, 6.129). This value of this type of pattern is that it provides central
views of the courthouse as one drives up the road.

Figure 6.128  Harrisonburg Square Prototype from Robert Veselka’s *The Courthouse
Square in Texas* (Veselka 2000, 19). Courtesy of the University of Texas
Press. Also, the prototype rotated to show a better match with the Holly
Springs square

Figure 6.129  Earliest Sanborn map for Holly Springs, Mississippi. 1887. Sanborn Fire
Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi
From the way that the town was originally designed, prominence was given to the courthouse as it is set apart from the other buildings. The fact that it stands alone and that there is a swath of land separating it from the other businesses on the square demonstrates the importance that it held for the community. It has been the focal point of the town and has held a place of dominance throughout the life of the town. Surrounding the courthouse are long rows of connecting structures making up each block. The west and east sides are made of a single stretch of commercial properties. The north and south sides are made up of two “half blocks” each. Each corner of the square is further defined by commercial properties. In the 1887 map, the only gaps in the property occurred on the north side where the corner is left empty and the half block east of the corner has a gap between properties as well. All of the buildings directly on the square were either two or three story structures. Though not apparent in the sketch by Simplot, in the early photographs and in the 1887 Sanborn map, galleries are seen above the first floors of most of the buildings offering shade to the pedestrians. The density of the square has stayed relatively constant over the years. As the square developed quickly, the high concentration of buildings at the square was apparent from the earliest Sanborn map. As one traveled away from the square, the density dropped.

_Sanborn Map Comparisons_

The Sanborn maps clearly demonstrate that the majority of the buildings on the square are of commercial use (Figure 6.130). This is apparent from the map of 1887 through the maps of 1925-33. The second largest concentration of buildings is residences, which are found radiating outward from the square.
There was not a drastic change in density between the 1887 and 1902 Sanborn maps (Figures 6.130, 6.131). There is a loss of some buildings on the west central block of the square. A building has come to stand on the northwest corner of the block that was previously empty. These are the most noticeable changes between these two maps.
Figure 6.131 Figure Ground Study based on “Holly Springs, Mississippi. 1902. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi.” From Figure 6.130, the west central block has a loss of some buildings and a building has been added to the northwest corner of the block.

The changes between the 1902 and 1925-33 maps are also not very drastic (Figures 6.131, 6.132). The building that was found on the northwest corner has disappeared and a building a little further back on that block has somewhat taken its place. The west central block has begun to fill back in and the north central half block has completely filled in. In addition to the overall growth in density in the square, there was a growth in the density of people as well. According to the Sanborn maps, the population in 1887 was 2900 people, the population in 1902 was 3500 people, and the population in 1933 was also 3500 people. According to the 2000 census, the population of Holly Springs was 7957 people.
Figure 6.132  Figure Ground Study based on “Holly Springs, Mississippi. 1925-1933. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi.” The main differences from Figure 6.131 are that the building that was found on the northwest corner has disappeared, the west central block has begun to fill back in, and the north central half block has completely filled in.

*Topography*

The topography around the square is relatively flat and even. The square itself was built on some of the higher ground in the city.
Vegetation

From Simplot’s sketch it appears that the trees were originally planted in clusters around certain parts of the courthouse. There was what appeared to be a grove in the “front” of the courthouse with a similar, but less densely planted grouping in the “back.” The “side” of the courthouse that is viewable in the rendering was left unplanted. Perhaps this was to allow for clearer views across the square from the balcony. Also, shade was provided through the manner in which the sides of the courthouse were constructed. In the earliest rendering, no foundational plantings were apparent.

This courthouse was burned and the next etching is of the courthouse that was built in 1872 (see Figure 6.125). The previous fire and the construction of the new courthouse must have damaged the trees that were seen in Simplot’s rendering. The etching represents the courthouse anywhere from 1872 through the early 1900s and the trees appear to be rather young as they barely reached the top of the first floor in terms of height. They are planted both inside and outside of the fence. Those outside the fence are protected by tree wells. Most of the trees are deciduous with part of an evergreen tree showing. Foundational plantings are lacking. The next representation of the courthouse is a photograph that would have been taken after the etching as the trees had grown considerably and were almost to the height of the cupola. Both evergreen and deciduous trees are visible, with the evergreens being planted next to the courthouse and the deciduous trees found around the perimeter, near the fence. No trees are shown outside the fence. Some foundational shrubs were later added. Though the vegetation is concentrated around the courthouse, an occasional tree is seen in photographs in other parts of the square.
Circulation

As was the case with Canton and Lexington, the roads were originally unpaved and were left largely undefined. The only type of “parking” area was found in the form of hitching posts to tie up horses and mules. However, from the historic photographs, we can see how people defined their own circulation patterns and how they used the land around the square. For example, large animals were left outside the fence and the interior of the courthouse grounds was reserved for people. In general, most activity that took place seemed to happen outside the fence of the courthouse, with the exception of the candidates’ lunch, which likely occurred within the courthouse grounds to take advantage of the shade provided by the trees.

Structures, Furnishings and Objects

Little is know about what types of furnishings were originally found on the square. Various water cisterns are shown on the Sanborn maps from 1887 and a water tower is visible on the east side of the square in an early photograph. The 1897 Sanborn map shows the addition of a water cistern to the courthouse grounds. Another structure has been added by the 1902 map, and it is in the location of a gazebo that is currently there, though it is not labeled as such. It and the water cistern from the earlier map are both labeled as “1x” meaning that they are one-story structures. They are both rounded structures. By the 1915 map the previous cistern has been removed.

An additional “site furnishing” came in the form of piles of cotton that were temporarily stored on the square every year (Figure 6.133). It was an important product for Holly Springs and was stored wherever land was available until 1918 when a cotton
compress was built at the end of College Avenue to store it (McAlexander 2000). While at first glance, this would not seem to be a furnishing, it has been mentioned that to kids it was as to them it was very fun to climb on the stacks of cotton around town. This was done well into the 1920s (McAlexander 2000). Before the Civil War, Marshall County produced more cotton per capita than anywhere else in the nation (McAlexander 2000).

Figure 6.133  Cotton on the Square. Holly Springs, Mississippi. 18—and 189—, respectively. Photos courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History

_Fencing_

The earliest rendering of the courthouse square shows what looks to be a wooden fence enclosing the courthouse grounds. It is not “squared off” on the corners but rather forms an elliptical shape around the courthouse. Openings allowing access to the courthouse are shown on the three sides of the courthouse in view so it was likely that the fourth side also had an opening as well. A wrought iron fence was added when the courthouse was re-built in the 1870s. It was later removed.
Paving Materials

The roads were wide and unpaved. Most were dirt that had been compressed. It is unknown of what the other paving materials were made.

Existing Conditions and Character-Defining Features

Spatial Organization and Land Patterns Today

Today the overall density around the square is very similar to what it was during the 1925-33 Sanborn map (Figure 6.134). The western block remains much as it did with a courtyard found where the gap appeared in the 1925-1933 Sanborn map (Figure 6.135; see Figure 6.132 for map). The northwest corner remains the same with a Post Office set back from the corner.

Figure 6.134 Density of the East side of the square
Vegetation Today

Both evergreen and deciduous trees are still found around the courthouse in Holly Springs (Figure 6.136). Of the three squares studied in detail, Holly Springs had the most diverse vegetation. The trees include magnolias, pines, and oaks (Figure 6.137). Foundational plantings are found in terms of evergreen shrubs and also include beds of flowers on the sides of the courthouse. The vegetation has a different look depending on what time of year one is viewing the courthouse lawn. During the winter the courthouse is much more visible through the trees (Figure 6.138). During the summer, the courthouse is less visible and the courthouse lawn is much more shaded (Figure 6.139). The vegetation is definitely concentrated around the courthouse but is found elsewhere as well in the form of flowers and shrubs in planters placed around the square (Figure 6.140). The only tree found directly on the square that is not on the courthouse lawn is in front of Tyson Drug store (Figure 6.141). According to the shop owner it was there during the time of Van Dorn’s raid. Trees are found right off the square and provide a pleasant view to the areas where they are found.
Figure 6.136   Vegetation around the courthouse from the northwest

Figure 6.137   Magnolia and pine trees found on the courthouse lawn
Figure 6.138  Looking at courthouse from the southeast.  February 2008.  Courthouse much more visible through deciduous trees

Figure 6.139  Looking at courthouse from the southeast.  August 2007.  Courthouse barely visible through dense canopy of trees

Figure 6.140  Planters found around the square
Figure 6.141 Other trees found in front of Tyson Drug and on the courthouse lawn, respectively

*Circulation Today*

Circulation today is much more strictly controlled than it was in the past (Figures 6.142, 6.143). This is done through a clear segregation of places for people to walk and vehicles to drive. Areas for pedestrians are indicated by the use of sidewalks and crosswalks indicating where one may cross the street. Areas for vehicular traffic are indicated by the use of asphalt.

Traffic patterns are interesting around this square. There are two paths that one may travel around the square. He or she may travel around the outer portion of the square in either direction, but travel around the inner portion of the square is for one-way traffic traveling clockwise. Parking is available on all sides of the square directly in front of the businesses with angled parking spaces on one side of the street. On two sides of the square, the east side and west side, angled parking is available on either side of the one-way lane. On the east side there is an additional row of parallel parking on the “outer” side of the angled parking. On the north side, angled parking is found on the outer row of the one-way lane with parallel parking found directly in front of the
courthouse. On the south side of the square, angled parking is found directly in front of the courthouse and there is not an outer row of parking on the one-way lane. Parking spaces and handicapped spaces are clearly marked around the square.

Figure 6.142  Circulation patterns around the square

Figure 6.143  Circulation patterns around the square
Structures, Furnishings and Objects Today

Structures around the courthouse lawn consist of a gazebo on the northeastern side, a gazebo on the southwestern side, and a small building on the western side. The courthouse lawn also contains various signs and memorials. The signs include an informational sign about Holly Springs as well as signs telling about stops along the Van Dorn raid (Figures 6.144). There are two memorials found on the courthouse lawn. One of these is a war memorial to the veterans of World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War (Figure 6.145). The other is a memorial to Osborne Bell, the first African-American elected sheriff of Marshall County (Figure 6.146). Benches are found around the war memorial and are built into the gazebos as well. A flagpole is also located on the courthouse lawn.

Figure 6.144   Signage found around the square
Figure 6.145  War memorial, benches, and flagpole

Figure 6.146  Osborne Bell memorial
Around the square various site furnishings are found. A continuous line of metal storefront canopies were added around the square as part of an urban renewal project in the 1960s (Gold 1979). These function to give shade to the sidewalks and pedestrians. Ornamental iron is found on the cornices of the galleries (Figure 6.147). Flags are found all around the square on flag holders attached to gallery poles (Figure 6.148). Decorative lamps are found all around the square under the galleries, and some of them are working gas lamps (Figure 6.148). Concrete planters are also found all around the square, though not all of them had living plants or flowers in them. Two types of trash receptacles are found on the square. One type is a rough concrete aggregate style and the other type is a black metal style that matches the benches in front of the war memorial (Figure 6.149). Wrought iron railings were found at the ends of some blocks, as well as framing the doors of some buildings (Figure 6.149). Brick planters were found in some areas around the square. One item was found that was surprising to see on the square was a payphone in the middle of one of the blocks (6.150). A mailbox is also located on the square. Two styles of traffic lights are found on the square. On the east side of the square one type is found, and on the west side a type that is more fitting with the historic character of the square is found (Figure 6.151).
Figure 6.147  Wrought iron cornice and metal bench

Figure 6.148  Flags and planters (left photo) and gas lamps and planters (right photo)
Figure 6.149   Trash receptacle and wrought iron railings

Figure 6.150   Payphone found on the square
One rather unique item is found which is certainly a nod to the name of the town. This would be the “holly” found on top of the courthouse and the gazebos. The sprigs of holly are forms with lights on them. Though only lit up during the holidays, they remain on the structures year-round as evidenced by the following picture that was taken in August (Figure 6.152).
**Fencing Today**

Today there is no fencing around the courthouse square. According to Lois Swanee, the Marshall County Historical Museum curator, the fencing was purchased by someone and has been placed around a historic home.

**Paving Materials Today**

The roads are paved with asphalt and there are concrete curbs, concrete sidewalks around the courthouse lawn, and some medians made of concrete (Figure 6.153). The sidewalks in front of the commercial buildings are all made of brick (Figure 6.153), which looks very nice. Around the courthouse, the curbs are made of granite.

![Figure 6.153](image)

Figure 6.153  Paving materials include brick, concrete, and asphalt. Brick sidewalks are found on all sides of the square
Views of Holly Springs Then and Now

1863 to 2007

Figure 6.154   Holly Springs, Mississippi.  1887.  Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi.  Shows location of Figures 6.155 and 6.156

Figure 6.155   Simplot’s Etching of square from Harper’s Weekly.  Holly Springs, Mississippi.  January10, 1863.  Image courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
Simplot’s drawing is the earliest rendering of the square (McAlexander 2000). This sketch shows a good deal about the square in its earlier day (Figure 6.155; see Figure 6.154 for position from which image was drawn). This was drawn about 26 years after the town’s incorporation so it is evident from this sketch that quite a lot of building went on during the first few years of the town’s history. The second courthouse had already been built taking the dominant position in the town’s landscape. To the right of the 1838 courthouse is the grand Magnolia hotel (McAlexander 2000). The landscaping consisted mainly of trees planted around the courthouse and around town. It is evident from the drawing that the street trees, not those around the courthouse, were relatively young and did not provide the shade that they would likely later give. The fence around the courthouse appears to be in an oval formation instead of the rectangle that would later come when the fence changed from being wooden to being ornamental iron. It is evident that the streets form wide boulevards and are used by both people and wagons alike. It does not appear that there were separate “lanes” designating human usage versus vehicular usage. Poles and wires appear in the drawing. These were likely to have been telegraph poles as electricity and telephones were not available then.

The modern-day view is quite different (Figure 6.156). The buildings in the sketch are not recognizable in the photo, though the overall density is similar. The streets still form “wide boulevards” but instead of being filled with people and horse-drawn wagons on dirt they are filled with automobiles and asphalt. The courthouse is different as well, though it can not be seen very well. The trees are planted in a different pattern today and are dispersed more evenly around the courthouse grounds. When the deciduous trees are dormant, the courthouse can still be viewed, but when they are leafed
out, they provide ample shade to the courthouse lawn. Other differences between the historical view and the modern view include galleries over the sidewalks today, the removal of the telegraph poles, the addition of electrical lights, and the addition of furnishings such as trash receptacles and flags.

Figure 6.156  View of square looking west. August 2007
Figure 6.157  Holly Springs, Mississippi.  1887.  Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi.  Shows location of Figures 6.158 and 6.159

Figure 6.158  Street Scene In Holly Springs.  Holly Springs, Mississippi.  18---.  Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History

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This photograph is looking south on Memphis Street to the west side of the square (Figure 6.158; see Figure 6.157 for position from which photograph was taken). It is the only extant view of the Presbyterian Church, which was completed in 1869 and is the tallest building in the photograph, showing the Romanesque tower. This photo shows a different façade from its current one (Swanee 2002). The picture was taken on December 13, 1894 (McAlexander 2000). Though it is not the clearest photo, it is evident from the photo that the square was a functional place. There was already a density of business buildings around the square. People and horse-drawn and mule-drawn wagons took up the majority of the unpaved surface of the square. Additionally, the photograph also shows animals being herded through the square, as cattle trucks had not yet been invented (Swanee 2002).

Today the church looks different as do most of the other buildings in the older photograph (Figure 6.159). Though both pictures show galleries across the buildings, they are connected in the later photograph giving the square a more unified look. As in the previous comparison, the roadway is no longer used by people and animals but rather by asphalt, concrete, and automobiles. Vegetation is seen in both photographs near the square, but is only seen on the square in the modern photograph.
Figure 6.159  Memphis Street looking south.  August 2007

18-- to 2008

This photograph gives a good view into the square (Figure 6.161; see Figure 6.160 for position from which photograph was taken). It is taken near a store which was then called Levy’s and later became Linwood’s. Like many Southern towns, cotton was a vital part of Holly Springs’ economic history. This is evident from the number of photographs showing cotton piled up all over town. In this photograph both people and animal-drawn wagons use the space in the square. There is no clearly-marked differentiation of space along the dirt roads. It is evident from the number of people and wagons that the space was well-used and was a vibrant part of the life of the town. The importance of the courthouse is further evidenced in it being fenced off so that the economic workings of the town occur outside its lawn. It is kept separate and is untouched by the everyday economic activities going on around town. The trees have not
reached their full height yet at the time that this photograph was taken, and power lines are seen on the square.

The courthouse today is larger than it was in the historical photograph (Figure 6.162). The trees have grown taller. The awning that was shown in the older photograph has been changed to be a gallery. Outside access to the upper floor of the former Levy building has been removed. Power lines still are visible. Electric lights have been added, as have amenities such as the flags and trash receptacles. Automobiles mostly replace the people and animals that were seen in the previous photograph.

Figure 6.162  From above Tyson Drug store looking west. February 2008
Figure 6.163   Holly Springs, Mississippi.  1887.  Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi.  Shows location of Figures 6.164 and 6.165

Figure 6.164   Van Dorn Avenue Side of Levy's, people everywhere  Holly Springs, Mississippi.  18--.  Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
This photo (Figure 6.164; see Figure 6.163 for position from which photograph was taken) is taken from almost the same point as the previous one. The major difference is that this one shows a large mass of people gathered in the square. This demonstrates that the square was also used for events held in the town as well as the more everyday activities that occurred there. The people are mostly wearing hats, the men in suits and the women in dresses, showing that people going to the square likely viewed this as an occasion and dressed appropriately. It is difficult to give a true comparison between the historic and modern views as no event was going on when the modern photograph was taken (Figure 6.165). What can be seen is that the power lines have been updated and are less obtrusive in the modern photograph. Also, the circulation today is more strictly controlled and there is a clear delineation between people places and automobile spaces.

Figure 6.165  From Van Dorn Avenue looking west. February 2008

Figure 6.167  Cotton on the east side of the square. Holly Springs, Mississippi. 18--. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
This photograph, taken in the first decade of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, shows that cotton was still very important to Holly Springs through the early part of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century (Figure 6.167; see Figure 6.166 for position from which photograph was taken). The streets were still unpaved and the buildings were already made of brick. The modern view demonstrates that the space is now filled with asphalt and vehicles instead of dirt and cotton (Figure 6.168). The buildings in the left part of the photograph look largely the same, though they likely have been painted different colors (even in a black and white photograph, a difference in color of the blue building and the beige building would be noticeable – see Figure 6.169). The power poles that are visible in the historic photo are different in the modern photo and electric lights have been added. The re-built Masonic Hall is evident in the earlier photograph, but has been replaced by a different building in the later photograph. Galleries are present in both photographs, though they have a different look today.
Figure 6.168  East side of the square. August 2007

Figure 6.169  Same photograph as figure 6.166 showing that differences in paint color regarding lightness and darkness can still be detectable in a black and white photograph
Figure 6.170  Holly Springs, Mississippi. 1887. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – Mississippi. Shows location of Figures 6.171 and 6.172

Figure 6.171  East Side of Square. Holly Springs, Mississippi. 19--. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
This photo shows a transitional time in the history of Holly Springs (Figure 6.171; see Figure 6.170 for position from which photograph was taken). Mule or horse-drawn wagons can be seen right alongside the “horseless carriage” of the modern automobile. This photo shows the density of the buildings and how the galleries were used to provide protection from the elements at street level. Some of the shades have been let down on the right hand side of the picture, providing further protection against the glare of the sun. The older water tower is evident in the photograph, as is the old Masonic building. There is still no delineation of lanes in the roads. It must have been interesting to see how the cars and the horse-drawn wagons went around each other during this time when both used the same space.

There are several changes evident today (Figure 6.172). One of the most noticeable differences is the loss of the Masonic building. Also, the types of vehicles found on the square today are very different from one picture to the other. The galleries are still there, but the shades are gone. The water tower is different today also. Circulation patterns are clearer today as lines painted on the road help to control traffic.
Figure 6.172 East side of square. February 2008

Figure 6.173 Candidate’s Picnic, Public Square. Holly Springs, Mississippi. 19--. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History
The preceding is one of the few historic photographs that shows the interior of the courthouse square (Figure 6.173). It is evident from this photograph that the grounds were shady when the leaves were on the trees. This shows another event occurring on the grounds of the square, a candidate’s picnic. Women and children are apparent in the photograph and are dressed in their “Sunday best” for this event.

Figure 6.174  Man atop wagon loaded with cotton. Holly Springs, Mississippi. 189-.  
Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History

This photo taken during the 1890s, also demonstrates cotton’s importance (Figure 6.174). This photo shows that the square was utilized by both African-American and European-American people as members of both groups are in evidence in this photograph. A man stands atop an oxen team-driven wagon that is loaded with large bales of cotton. The unpaved streets are visible in the photograph, as are the multi-story commercial buildings.
Views of the Courthouse

Figure 6.175  County Court House. Holly Springs, Mississippi. 19--. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History

This photograph shows that the courthouse is a two-story brick building, with a columned pedimented portico above arched entrances (Figure 6.175). The clock tower is visible as are the grounds, the trees, the fence and a portion of the street. The fence and hitching posts are visible.
This sketch shows details about the courthouse (Figure 6.176). It gives additional details about the landscaping that may not be evident from other photographs. For example, it demonstrates how the young trees were protected by using tree wells. The ornamental fence is easier to see in the sketch. The separation of the animals and wagons from the grounds of the courthouse is also clear from this sketch.
It is apparent from this photograph that the trees grew over time providing shade and a softening affect around the courthouse (Figure 6.177). Evergreen trees are used next to the courthouse providing structure and deciduous trees are placed around the perimeter near the fence, providing a better view of the courthouse through their bare branches. It is clear from this photo that a place has been provided for people to leave their horses unattended while conducting business on the square in the form of hitching posts outside the fence.
This photograph was taken during the 1950s (Figure 6.178). Several changes are apparent. The landscaping is more manicured and formal-looking. A gazebo has been added. Horses and wagons are no longer visible. A curb is apparent indicating that the streets have been paved at this time. The ornamental fence is no longer there, and instead the curb marks the separation of vehicles and the courthouse grounds. Though the empty vehicles serve as evidence that people are around few are visible. The windows are vastly different from what they were like before the expansion. A gutter-draining system is now in place.

The courthouse today does not look very different from the photograph in the 1950s (Figures 6.179, 6.180, 6.181, 6.182). The trees look different, as does the landscaping around the gazebo. The makes and models of the vehicles seen parked in
front of the courthouse also look different today. See Figure 6.183 for an aerial view of the Holly Springs courthouse square today.

Figure 6.179 Marshall County Courthouse looking northeast. February 2008
Figure 6.180  Marshall County Courthouse looking north west.  February 2008

Figure 6.181  Marshall County Courthouse looking south.  February 2008
Figure 6.182 Marshall County Courthouse looking northeast. August 2007

Figure 6.183 Aerial view of Holly Springs. From Microsoft Virtual Earth
Summary of Changes

The density of the square at Holly Springs has stayed relatively constant through the years, at least from the earliest Sanborn map in 1887 through now. The manner in which the land has been used has also been consistent, as most of the buildings facing the courthouse remain commercial properties. One thing that has changed is the variety of businesses found on the square. From the earliest map, the businesses included several dry goods stores, several groceries, a few drug stores, hardware stores, general stores, a barber, a bank and a furniture store, among others. There were about five vacant buildings. Also, the second floor was sometimes used as an office or a dwelling. Today businesses on the square include several lawyers’ offices (Figure 6.184), several realty companies, two restaurants, a sweet shop, an auto parts store, a furniture store, a hardware store, a bank, a museum, and the Chamber of commerce, among others. According to the Chamber of Commerce, there are between six and eight vacant buildings on the square (Figure 6.184), and there are currently about five apartments above the square with possible plans to add more. As with the other squares today, in the past all of the daily needs of the citizens of the town could be met on the square, but the choices of goods available are a bit more limited today.
As was the case with Canton and Lexington, circulation patterns are dramatically different now, as are the types of vehicles found on the square. Because of the difference in vehicles, the paving materials have certainly improved over time. Additionally the furnishings found on the square have changed and range from such functional items as trash receptacles and street lights, to items of beauty and decoration such as planters and flags. One thing that has remained the same is that the square is still used as a place for town gatherings to occur and as demonstrated by the following photograph a place for people to inform members of the community about such gatherings (Figure 6.185).
Holly Springs is in the process of becoming a “Mississippi Main Street” community. This should help the town by informing the community that this is an area that has value. The citizens, especially the shop owners, should in a sense become “ambassadors” of the town and take pride in what the town has to offer, particularly in terms of history. One addition to the square, J.B.’s Family Restaurant, is a move in the right direction, as it is offering breakfast, lunch, and dinner on the square. Offering additional incentive for people to enjoy the square will help to make this place a viable interesting public space once again. The principle idea behind the Main Street approach is to “encourage economic development with context of historic preservation in ways appropriate to today’s marketplace” (Mississippi Main Street Association). They encourage the rebuilding of traditional commercial districts that feature the unique aspects of an area that include distinctive architecture, an environment that is friendly to pedestrians, personal service, and a sense of community. The Main Street Four-Point Approach™ combines design, economic restructuring, promotion, and organization to
address the commercial district’s needs (Mississippi Main Street Association). With a few changes, the Holly Springs square can and should be appreciated as both a reminder of the history of the town as well as an economically viable alternative to the development that is growing along Highway 78.

Assessment of Landscape Integrity and Significance

Integrity

The square in Holly Springs has been altered over time, including both the addition of new buildings and vegetation and the subtraction of buildings. Most of these additions and subtractions have been due to fire and then re-buildings. The addition of items such as the metal canopies on the storefronts detracts from the architectural integrity of the buildings, as they do not reflect the style of the buildings. However, the historical photographs do confirm that galleries were indeed apparent on the square after 1870 (Gold 1979). The loss of such structures as the Masonic building also takes away from the integrity of the landscape. There is not one overall time period reflected on the square, but the period of significance ranges from 1824 through 1924. In this way, the landscape does not present a unified whole. However, according to the Urban Land Institute architectural variety contributes to the feeling of a place that is authentic. Also, the town square acts almost as a virtual museum of time periods and architectural styles. Unifying elements have been added, such as the use of wrought iron, gas lamps, brick sidewalks and flags around the square. The wrought iron and brick particularly contribute a richness of materials to the square which is very pleasing.
As it stands today, the square at Holly Springs does display some historical integrity, but there is room for improvement. Replacing the metal canopies with something that more accurately reflects the historical architecture found around the square would add to the integrity of the square, as would replacing the electrical lights with a different style that is more in tune with the historical nature of the rest of the square. Making use of all of the gas lamps around the square would be an additional improvement. Additionally, restoring buildings that are in a state of disrepair would add to the integrity of the building. Holly Springs has great potential and making a few needed adjustments would help to contribute to the integrity of the square and help it to “read” as a unified whole.

Significance

The Holly Springs Courthouse Square Historic District is comprised of a group of commercial buildings that possess considerable architectural and historical significance for the State of Mississippi (Gold 1979). It is significant on the local level as confirmed by its placement on the National Register in 1980. According to the National Register of Historic Places, the Holly Springs Courthouse Square Historic District includes 49 buildings. Its historic significance includes that historically important events occurred here and the architecture/engineering found on the square. Several architectural styles are represented here which include Late Victorian, Mid 19th Century Revival, and Late 19th And 20th Century Revivals. The periods of significance include 1825-1849, 1850-1874, 1875-1899, and 1900-1924. There are several areas of significance listed which include architecture, military, exploration/settlement, community planning And
development, and commerce. Its historic function is commerce/trade. It also holds further significance as one of only six representatives of Harrisonburg squares in Mississippi, and one of only three that are not modified Harrisonburg squares.
CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter will identify the implications of the research presented in this thesis for landscape architects, the limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research.

Discussion of Results

The history of small town Mississippi is told through the history of town squares. The design of the squares is connected to the frontier conditions that existed when many of the squares were created. The simplicity of the square provided drama and order while the courthouse established a clear and reassuring presence of authority in the early part of the nineteenth century. The manner in which the squares were organized and landscaped further emphasized this authority by creating a contrast between the mostly open, calm, green space around the courthouse and the dirty, bustling chaos of the surrounding traffic and businesses. During the south’s economic renewal of the late 1800s, the squares became more densely developed and were the scene of many social, cultural, and political events as the landscape around the courthouse appears to have become more ornamental. During the twentieth centuries, the squares adapted to the speed and spatial requirements of the automobile, though most of the squares appear to have remained vital and busy civic spaces through mid-century. The town squares of Mississippi today face a
number of challenges and their vitality varies greatly from town to town. The success of each individual community and the type and design of the square in question does have an impact on the overall success of the square. Some of the challenges that the squares currently face include increased suburbanization, bypass and highway construction, and a lack of programming and investment. It is hoped that this study is a small step toward improved stewardship of the town squares of Mississippi – that through emphasizing their significance and improving our understanding of their evolution educated decisions can be made to secure their future.

Sometimes historical preservation involves roping off an area to preserve how it was during a certain time so that it’s a nice place to visit to see how things were “back then”. Historical museums collect artifacts from the past to demonstrate what life was like during certain time periods. In these ways, there is no impact on one’s life today - one visits the history, views it, but then returns to his daily life in the here and now. Town squares are different. While they do demonstrate what was valued in a community during a different time, they are still vibrant, engaging places (or they should be) that evolve over time. Ideally, they preserve those things that are treasured parts of a town’s past while adapting to offer goods and services that are needed in the daily lives of the current members of the community.

This study discovered that there are approximately more than 70 town squares in Mississippi. These town squares take many different forms and there is no overwhelming pattern to which style of square is found in which region. The types of squares found in Mississippi include the traditional courthouse square types of Shelbyville, Lancaster, Harrisonburg, two-block or four-block, and the newly discovered “12 Street Plan.” Also
found are the non-traditional courthouse square types of plaza-style, railroad-influenced, irregular-block, less than a full block, and the square without a courthouse, the public square. The most common type of square in Mississippi is the Shelbyville square with the second most common type being the less than a full block square. Three squares were chosen and studied in more detail. These included Canton, which is an example of a Shelbyville square; Lexington, which is an example of the previously unidentified “12 Street Plan; and Holly Springs, which is an example of a Harrisonburg square.

**Sense of Place revisited**

One of the goals of good design is to impart a “sense of place” to the spaces that are created (Prenshaw and McKee 1979). As we examine our history, we see this concept recur. As mentioned in the introduction, a symposium was held 30 years ago about Mississippi’s sense of place. The participants discussed Mississippi’s past with a view towards creating a more favorable future. On speaking of the South and Mississippi in the last century Willie Morris had this to say:

> Of course no one would argue that the rapid development of the South and of Mississippi in the twentieth century has been without its advantages. Southern universities have prospered. And many of the negative legacies of the past, the oppressive poverty, the vicious sharecropping system, the rural isolation and illiteracy, the crimes of segregation, are gradually disappearing. But the necessary changes have brought their modern plagues, and no Southerner, no matter how enthusiastic he may be about progress and the new wealth, would deny that the face of the land has lost something of its old character. (Prenshaw and McKee 1979, 4).

It will likely continue to lose more of its old character is cultural heritage sites such as our town squares continue to be neglected in more communities than they are appreciated and preserved.
Mississippi, to the curiosity of many, produced such great writers as William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, and Willie Morris during the twentieth century. On speaking of this phenomenon Willie Morris said:

These impulses of the imagination that gave us our literature were an expression of many things:...the love of a place where individual human beings, relationships, family histories, the link with generations gone, not only mattered, but buttressed the everyday life-the ineluctable perception of a common past: a past of guilt and tragedy and suffering, but also of courage and nobility and caring (Prenshaw and McKee 1979, 12-13).

Though these comments were related to the creation of great literature, they are applicable to landscape architects today as one of the goals of great design is to create a sense of place. It almost seems that the writers of the last century such as T.D. Young were speaking directly to the landscape architects of today to teach us of the importance of creating a sense of place as he said, “This awareness of place as more than merely a location where things happen, to know it as a concrete phenomenon that allows an interrelationship between personal and cultural history, permitted the writer to attach values to precise local places” (Prenshaw and McKee 1979, 52). We have important lessons in how to create a sense of place right here in our home state. The spaces that our fore-fathers designed created great public spaces that helped to breed a newfound literary voice in the last century. It has been 30 years since Willie Morris and T.D. Young wrote the above words and many of our vernacular landscapes have become neglected during that time. During this century we should embrace a newfound appreciation for and restoration of those places that are distinctly Mississippian. A great starting point is with our town squares. They offer both a connection with our past and a lesson as to how to make a better future.
T.D. Young also describes the environment that he enjoyed while living abroad for a year at the University of Leeds in England. He described it as follows:

just across the street...were business establishments to satisfy our ordinary needs-butcher, post office, bakery, grocery, green grocer, bank, TV shop, hair dresser, and service station. Within two or three minutes from our house was a four-mile wide green belt-complete with walking trails, bicycling and jogging paths, picnic grounds, overnight camping sites, and even wilderness. One result of these zoning laws, allowing each neighborhood to have its own small business establishments, and of this green belt on which no commercial establishments were allowed, was to discourage suburban shopping centers (Prenshaw and McKee 1979, 56-57).

This is the way that our town squares were originally built with the necessities of life clustered together, with plenty of room being left for nature to exist also, often surrounding the towns square. This paper was presented in 1979-how different might our suburbs look had people heeded its words back then? We’re still struggling with the same issues almost 30 years later. This is one reason to preserve our town squares and honor them.

Limitations

There are some limitations associated with this study. One such limitation is that a greater number of squares were not studied in detail. It was not feasible to study every town square in Mississippi in one study. One other limitation was the availability of both historic photographs and historic information for the town squares. As mentioned in the methods chapter, when doing a historical investigation, one is limited to the material that is available. The particular towns that were studied were chosen in part because there was a sufficient amount of material available to study them. However, had even more historic photographs been available, an even clearer “picture could have been painted” of
what town squares were like at different points during their history. That most of the
pictures were simply black and white means that information about the original colors
used in the town is missing. Additionally, because some of the historic photographs are
not crisp and clear it is difficult to observe everything that one would like to know about
the town. Akin to this is the fact that we are limited to the views that the photographers
deemed to photograph. One other limitation was that Sanborn maps are not available for
all of the towns with squares in Mississippi. In this way, the classification of towns with
squares in Mississippi created through this study is not absolutely accurate.

It would have been nice to answer the questions, “Who designed the squares?
What did they use as precedents for their designs? Did the same person/company design
groups of squares within the state?” In some cases, this information is known. In other
cases, it has been lost to history. Perhaps in the future, a donation will be made to a local
library when someone uncovers some historical evidence tucked away in his attic. In this
case, future research using those materials will add to our understanding of Mississippi’s
town squares. While this study is in no way comprehensive, it is hoped that it can serve
as a starting point for other researchers interested in town square projects.
Suggestions for Future Research

One of the things that the researcher discovered is that there is one person who in most towns is a “veritable walking encyclopedia” of history. She was directed to Phil Cohen in Lexington and Lois Swanee in Holly Springs with any questions that she had about the history of the town. A good project would be to do an oral history project as part of a town square history study to add further knowledge about what is known about the town. This knowledge could include information that may not have been recorded in history books such things as what day of the week was the busiest on the square. Adding additional methods could also be beneficial. For example, behavior observation could teach us about how squares are used (or not used) today. Also, looking at how the square contributes to the economic life of the town in which it is located could show whether these forms are still viable today. Comparing different towns could show which forms in which towns still act as assets in the towns in which they are located. An additional item to study would be how the roads that connect the square to the newer development affect the current success of the square.

As there are roughly 69 towns squares in Mississippi and only three were covered in detail in this study, someone else could look at some other towns as well, provided that there is enough information available for a study of them. This in turn would be a step toward building up the body of knowledge in landscape architecture as we attempt to create a “library” of information about Mississippi’s town squares. One town in particular that would be good to study would be Oxford, as it has a well-known town square. It being set in a university town has given it a different demographic than other towns with squares. It is an example of a town square that had successfully adapted to a
changing environment of development. It was not chosen for this study as it was designed to focus on some of the less famous squares as well.

Along with documenting the town squares in Mississippi, one could document the town squares in other states as well. Further studies could then be done comparing the town squares in two states or one region’s use of town squares versus another region’s use of them. These could then further be compared with the use of town squares in other countries. In addition to studies on town squares, one could conduct research focusing on other patterns of development, such as the growth of main streets in the twentieth century. These two patterns could then be compared more thoroughly. The more town square studies and the like that are conducted will help to build up the body of knowledge of this important historical land development form.

**Implications for Landscape Architecture**

Looking at the town squares shows us how people valued their public space. They put the public space on often the choicest land available and gave it prominence. It was never “left-over” space. Having a mindset of creating great public spaces is at the fore-front of many designers today. The lessons learned from examining the past creation of spaces can help us to create great spaces in the future. It is directly relevant today with the trends of smart growth, new urbanism, and traditional neighborhood development. Revisiting the design principles from the past such as giving a sense of importance to the most-valued buildings by setting them apart, creating a sense of unity through the use of harmonious architecture, and providing accessible green space can help us to create better spaces in the present with a look towards the future.
According to the Urban Land Institute, when creating a town center, historic buildings should be included because they add value. In many towns across the nation, town squares could be the backbone or framework of renewal projects as the history is already there. This is particularly useful to landscape architects working with towns engaging in renewal projects as they want to keep what is great about the history of their towns but redevelop them to make them into viable public spaces today that attract both locals and visitors.
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APPENDIX A

MISSISSIPPI TOWN SQUARE CHARTS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County Name</th>
<th>County Seat</th>
<th>County Founded*</th>
<th>Town Incorporated+</th>
<th>Square? (Verified by a Sanborn map)?</th>
<th>Type of Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>Natchez</td>
<td>1799</td>
<td>Mar.10, 1803</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Less than Full Block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcorn</td>
<td>Corinth</td>
<td>1870</td>
<td>Mar.12, 1856</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Modified Shelbyville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amite</td>
<td>Liberty</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>Feb. 24, 1809</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attala</td>
<td>Kosciusko</td>
<td>1833</td>
<td>Feb. 27, 1836</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Shelbyville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benton</td>
<td>Ashland</td>
<td>1870</td>
<td>Mar. 8, 1871</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivar</td>
<td>Cleveland</td>
<td>1836</td>
<td>Mar. 25, 1886</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Modified Shelbyville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rosedale</td>
<td></td>
<td>Feb. 2, 1882</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Modified Lancaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calhoun</td>
<td>Pittsboro</td>
<td>1852</td>
<td>Oct. 16, 1852</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carroll</td>
<td>Carrollton</td>
<td>1833</td>
<td>Feb. 27, 1836</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Shelbyville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vaiden</td>
<td></td>
<td>Feb. 10, 1860</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Railroad Influenced (1st) and Less than Full Block (2nd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickasaw</td>
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*Information from National Association of Counties
http://www.naco.org/Template.cfm?Section=Find_a_County&Template=/cffiles/counties/state.cfm&statecode=ms

+ Information from:
## Table A.2  Summary of Mississippi County Information

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APPENDIX B

PERMISSION LETTER TO USE FIGURES
18 April 2008

Amanda Rogers
663 Teagarden Ln.
Starkville, MS 39759-7410

Dear Ms. Rogers:

Re: THE COURTHOUSE SQUARE IN TEXAS by Robert E. Veselka, Copyright © 2000

You have our non-exclusive, one-time permission to use Figure 4 “Four prototypes of central courthouse squares in the United States” on page 19 and Figure 6 “Types of nontraditional courthouse squares.” on page 22 of the above title. These figures will be used in your thesis entitled Creating a Sense of Place or Simply a Good Parking Space? Evolution of the Historic Town Squares of Mississippi. We understand that you are writing this thesis as part of the requirements for your Master’s degree in Landscape Architecture at Mississippi State University with an expected graduation date of August 2008.

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Peggy L. Gough
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