



STATE OF ALABAMA



ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
725 MONROE STREET
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130
PHONE: 261-3184

ALABAMA REGISTER OF LANDMARKS AND HERITAGE
Nomination Form

COUNTY Washington

NAME: Present Washington County State Bank Historic Taylor House

LOCATION: Street and Number U. S. Highway 43

Town (Give directions if rural) Leroy, Alabama

A MAP WITH THE LANDMARK MARKED MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THIS FORM

CATEGORY: Building (X) Structure () Object () Site () District ()

USE: Present Branch Bank Historic Residence

OWNERSHIP: Public () Private (X)

Owner's Name Washington County State Bank

Mailing Address Att: Mr. Michael Blount, Mgr., Leroy, Alabama, 36548

INTEGRITY: Original Site () Moved (X) When? March, 1984

From where? Jackson, Alabama. (Give details in significance.)

CONDITIONS: Excellent (X) Good () Fair () Ruins ()

THREATS: No (X) Yes () By What?

RESTORATION WORK: Being considered () Underway (X) Completed () Not planned ()

SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT: Open land () Woodland () Scattered buildings ()
High building density () Commercial (X) Industrial ()
Residential () Rural ()

Acreage One acre

For all categories other than a district and object give a site plan with a North arrow. Show related buildings.

For a district give a verbal boundary description and attach a sketch map of the district.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Why is this landmark significant? (X) associated with events, persons, or movements
Local () State () National ()
(X) a good example of a type or style of structure
() other

Explain: (Briefly state why the above is true)
(See attached history and architectural description)

Date of Construction or Period of major importance. circa 1843

Architect or Builder (Give name and biographies, if known)

unknown

Give a complete but concise history of the Landmark. Include information on important people and events associated with the landmark. (USE ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY)

(see attached sheets)

State sources of information, giving full bibliographical data:

History of Clarke County, published 1881, by Rev. T. H. Ball

History of Clarke County, published 1923, by John S. Graham.

Probate Records, Clarke County, Alabama, Grove Hill, Alabama.

DESCRIPTION: PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE LANDMARK MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THIS FORM.

Complete as directed below for each category.

BUILDING:

Number of stories one Foundation masonry piers Basement no

Wall Material: (Note changes from one floor or wing to another)
(clapboard, brick, stone, wood shingle, board and batten, stucco over wood or brick, metal, logs)
clapboard (heart pine)

Structural System: (If known)
Wood frame (X) Load-bearing masonry () Iron or Steel ()

DESCRIPTION (Continued)

Roof Type: (Gable, Gambrel, Mansard, Flat, Hipped, Combination) Pyramid Roof

Roof Covering: (Wood shingle, Asphalt, Tile, Metal, Slate) Wood Shingles

Roof Trim: (Cornices, bargeboard, brackets, etc.) Plain heart pine Greek Revival

Porches: Front (type and description) Gable Roof small entrance porch (reconstructed)

Rear (type and description) Recessed with square columns

Side (type and description) _____

Floors: Main entrance (location, description) Two panel Greek revival

Other entrances (location, description) same

Windows: Types and number of each floor of facade six over six - four windows

Types and number per floor for sides and rear six over six - six windows
rear has been altered to accomadate banking necessities.

Interior: Describe mantels, stairways, wainscoting, plasterwork and any unusual features.

Original mantels removed. Original plasterwork lost during move.
Walls now sheetrocked.

Other: Use this space to describe any additions, alterations, outbuildings or other features of the structure and its surroundings.

Interior fireplaces removed to enlarge rooms and vault constructed at rear of building.

On an additional sheet make a sketch of the floor plan of the building, showing dimensions if possible.

THIS IS NOT REQUIRED!

DESCRIPTION (Continued)

- STRUCTURE: On a separate sheet of paper give a complete as possible verbal description of the structure. (See examples)
- OBJECT: On a separate sheet of paper give a complete as possible verbal description of the object. (See examples)
- SITE: On a separate sheet of paper give the present description of the site and how the site is believed to have looked during its period of importance.
- DISTRICT: On a separate sheet of paper give a general description of the district. Also needed is a numbered list of the structures in the district corresponding to the sketch map. This listing should include a name for the structure, a date of construction, a brief description, a statement of why the structure is significant, if it is.

A MAP WITH THE LANDMARK MARKED AND PHOTOGRAPHS MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THIS FORM

Map: A U.S. Geological Survey Map is preferred, but if you are unable to obtain one a county highway map may be used.

Photographs: Black and white, glossy finish, 5 x 7, or 8 x 10, is preferred.

FORM PREPARED BY

Name Louis M. Finlay, Jr. Date December 19, 1984
Address P. O. Box 131 Telephone 246-3278
Town Jackson, Alabama, 36545
Organization Clarke County Historical Society

Alabama Historical Commission use only

STAFF COMMENTS:

MAP REFERENCE: MAP _____

U. T. M. Reference
 Zone Easting Northing

Thematic Category _____

Added to ALABAMA REGISTER _____

NATIONAL REGISTER Potential

THE TAYLOR HOUSE

The Taylor House is a very pleasing example of a pure Greek Revival structure with a pyramid roof, often seen in East Central Alabama, but most unusual in Clarke County, Alabama. On its original site in Jackson, it was raised very high off the ground on both brick and stone piers. The huge stone piers (native sandstone) were located at each corner of the house, with large slave brick and stone piers interspersed between them, effecting a most uncommon appearance. Pilasters on each side of the entrance doorway and at the front corners of the house add sophistication to the structure. The large dignified front door has an overlight and sidelights with panels underneath. The kitchen wing was detached from the house, but later joined by a covered porch.

The Taylor House was built by a prominent Jackson citizen, Walter Taylor who was born in Jackson on September 14, 1817, the son of David Taylor and Judith Carr Parker. David Taylor, born 1780 in Augusta, Georgia, came to Jackson (then Republicville) in 1812 and served as one of the original commissioners of the Town when it was incorporated in 1816.

According to the Reverend T. H. Ball in his 1882 book, A Glance Into The Great South-East, Or Clarke County, Alabama and It's Surroundings, From 1540 to 1877, Walter Taylor "attended the University of Alabama but graduated at Augusta, Kentucky in 1835, then the seat of a flourishing Methodist institution where Bishop Bascom then was presiding. He studied law at Transylvania University in Pennsylvania and was a classmate of Frank P. Blair. He returned to Jackson, but did not continue the profession of law. From 1856 to 1859 he made an experiment in Illinois farming. Wheat rusted in those years, and money was lost. After the War he engaged in business at Jackson as a merchant."

On January 5, 1841, Walter Taylor married Amanda Caroline Lankford of Coffeetown. She was born September 12, 1821, the daughter of James A. Lankford and Jean Rutherford, who came to Clarke County from the State of Tennessee. All evidence points to the likelihood that Walter and Amanda Taylor began construction of their fine new house shortly after their marriage and had completed it by 1843.

A search of the probate records of Clarke County failed to reveal the deed transferring title of the lot on which the house was built, to Walter Taylor. It is possible that he inherited the lot (Number BC) from his father David Taylor, for David was one of the original subscribers to shares in the Pine Level (Jackson) Land Company in

1816 and one of the original purchasers of lots in the town. (It is also possible that he inherited the lot from his grandfather Jesse Parker, another wealthy and prominent pioneer of the town). However, when David Taylor died in 1839, he was no longer a wealthy man. His estate was insolvent and all of his personal property was sold at auction to pay his creditors.

A curious fact is that Lot BC, which contained the Taylor house, is not listed on the original plat of Jackson which was drawn and recorded in the County records in Grove Hill in 1817. A much later city map shows lots B, C & D as occupying the two large plots of land which were designated on the 1817 plat as those lots reserved to the town for a public square and market place. As the town declined over the next few decades and the square and market place never materialized, it is possible that Walter Taylor purchased those lots from the Town of Jackson, but no deed to that effect could be found in the records.

(We are compelled to note here that with the removal of the Taylor House from its old site in 1984, and the construction of a new Jackson City Hall scheduled to open in January, 1985, after 168 years. Lots BC will now be utilized for their original purpose - a public square for Jackson!)

Deed Book C, pages 119 and 120 of the Clarke County records show that on December 26, 1846, Walter and Amanda Taylor deeded lots on square BC (premises with appurtenances) plus lot Number 88 (Fitzsimmons Lot) in the Town of Jackson, to Archibald Smoot and his wife, Sarah Ann (Kimbell) Smoot, for the sum of \$1,200.00. Then, curiously enough, they repurchased the same property from the Smoots on March 17, 1849 for the sum of \$1,000.00. This deed is recorded in Deed Book E, pages 421-22, and mentions specifically the conveyance of the "premises and appurtenances" including "houses, outhouses, buildings, barns, stables, rights, liberties and privileges". These two deeds strongly indicate that the house had been built and was on the lot by 1846.

In his book Clarke County and It's Surroundings, Rev. T. H. Ball states on page 361, "In his home at Jackson, where he (Walter Taylor) now lives in retirement and almost blind, eight children have grown up. Six of these, five daughters and one son are now living. This family is characterized by intelligence and refinement. In church relations they are Methodists. From 1812 until now (1879) some representatives of the Taylor family have been active leaders in the business, social, and religious life of Jackson."

Then on page 362, Reverend Ball further states: "There are at present no imposing residences in the place (Jackson) but the square or block where stands the home of Walter Taylor, with its trees and shrubbery, presents quite a city like appearance."

Walter Taylor died at his residence in Jackson on March 24, 1886. His widow Amanda C. Taylor continued to reside there until 1893 when she sold the property to Mr. John C. Stewart and his wife, Nancy McVay Stewart, who had moved to Jackson from Clarkesville, near Grove Hill.

From History of Clarke County
by John Simpson Ghaham
1923

J. C. STEWART



Mr. J. C. Stewart, who died at his home in Jackson the 1st day of November, 1933, was one of the most widely known business men in the county of Clarke. He was a farmer and merchant. He embarked in the mercantile business at Clarkesville, this county, about fifty years ago. He started out with limited capital, but by strict economy and close application to business he made rapid strides and soon became one of the biggest taxpayers in the county. He came to Jackson in 1893 and purchased the Walter Taylor home on Commerce Street, moved into it the

same year and lived there until his death. He soon, after moving here, purchased the lot on which the bank is situated and erected a store house and commenced a general mercantile business, associating with him Mr. George W. Powe, Sr. He and Mr. Powe subsequently dissolved co-partnership and Mr. Stewart purchased a lot and erected the house now occupied by J. C. Stewart & Co., conducted by his sons. Mr. Stewart was a good man and will be greatly missed by his friends and acquaintances. He left a widow and six children, four sons and two daughters. His sons are S. A., J. C., W. C. and Bob H. His daughters are Tooma and Velma. His daughters are single, but his sons are married. W. V. is engaged in the drug business, the other three are in the general mercantile business.

Mr. Stewart was born near old Clarkesville in January, 1853. He was the son of J. C. Stewart, Sr., and Nancy Stewart. J. C. Stewart, Sr., came from South Carolina and settled in Clarke County many years ago. He had two sons and eleven daughters. An explanation is here necessary. J. C. Stewart, the subject of this sketch, married Nancy McVay, so it will be seen that both his wife and his mother were named Nancy. There are two more J. C. Stewarts, namely, Carley Stewart and his little son.

Mr. Stewart was married to Nancy McVay on May 11, 1876. His only brother, Doog Stewart, was in the Confederate army, and died in prison. His living sisters are as follows: Mrs. E. M. McLeod, Mrs. Elijah Chapman, Mrs. G. W. McVay, Mrs. Andrew Calhoun, Mrs. J. T. Wilson and Mrs. John Calhoun.

The deed from Amanda C. Taylor, et al to J. C. Stewart was executed on January 2, 1893, and is recorded in Deed Book 27, pages 87, 88 and 89. It was signed by Amanda C. Taylor, the widow, and her children and spouses: Carrie and Charles Neville, Josie and John D. Prosser, Walter I. and Sarah S. Taylor, and Eva and Louis Massey. The consideration was \$1,500.00.

The property remained in the hands of the Stewart family for 86 years, until October 5, 1979 when Jack S. Hunt, son of Velma Stewart Hunt and grandson of John C. Stewart, sold the property to South Central Bell Telephone Company. The Company had plans to remove the house and build an office to house new and sophisticated communications equipment. An effort was made by Leon McVay Stewart, great-grandson of John C. Stewart, to purchase the house and move it to family property north of Jackson, but the efforts proved fruitless and shortly thereafter, South Central Bell abandoned plans to build their new building, and sold the property to the City of Jackson as a site for a new City Hall Complex. This transaction took place on September 30, 1983 (Deed Book 654, page 600).

The City of Jackson began immediately to make plans to remove the Taylor House from the property, along with adjoining buildings on adjacent property. The Jackson Historical Committee, civic groups and interested citizens appealed to the Jackson City Council to save the house, restore it and incorporate it into the new City Hall Complex, but efforts failed and the house was sold to local housemover Lewis Reed for \$300.00 with a deadline for removal from the property. Fortunately, the Washington County State Bank Board of Directors realized the potential value of the beautiful and historic building, and purchased it from Reed for placement on their lot at Leroy, Alabama, for use as a branch banking facility. It is now being restored to it's 1840's appearance and is scheduled for opening in early 1985.

STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE TAYLOR HOUSE

Like most old residences, the Taylor House has undergone a series of changes during it's one hundred and forty-odd years of existence. Nicholas H. Holmes, noted restoration architect from Mobile, has carefully examined the house and determined that the original structure was composed of the center hall and four main rooms - two on each side of the hall. The two side wings and two small rear rooms on either side of the back porch were added at a later date, but not much later. During the present renovation, while removing the interior wall covering of the east side-wing, old newspapers dated 1848 were found pasted on the walls, probably as a backing for wall paper. This would indicate that these wings - and possibly the two rear rooms - were added by Walter Taylor shortly after he repurchased the house from Archibald Smoot in March, 1849. No doubt, his growing family of eleven children required additional room.

The John C. Stewart family purchased the house in 1893 when Victorian architecture was at the height of its popularity. They set about remodeling the house in the new style. First, they ripped off the small Greek Revival gabled front porch, replacing it with one reaching across the entire front of the main house. They also installed "eyebrow" gables in the pyramid roof, and as a finishing touch, decorated the house on all sides with "gingerbread" embellishments. These Victorian additions remained intact until the house was stripped for removal to its new location in Leroy.

CONCLUSION

Two events, important to the history of Jackson and connected with the Taylor House, bear mentioning. First, Western Union's first office in Jackson was located in one of the side wings of the house. Secondly, Amanda C. Taylor was very instrumental in the founding of the Jackson Methodist Church. The following quote is taken from page 244 of History Of Methodism In Alabama And West Florida, by Marion Elias Lazenby, 1960:

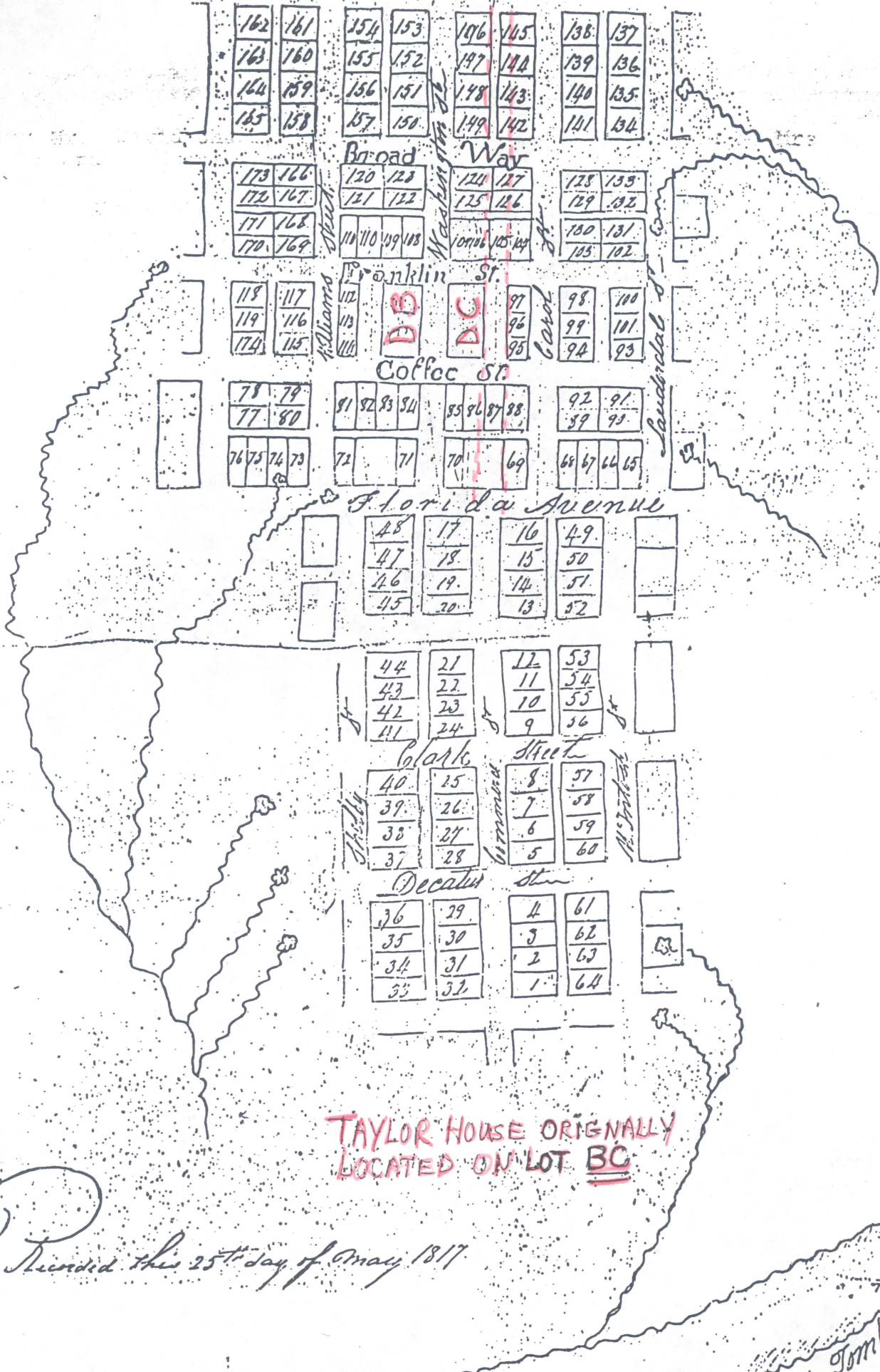
"In 1842 Mrs. A. C. Taylor, wife of Walter Taylor, probably a son of David Taylor, joined the Methodist Church, and "immediately had a dwelling house moved to a suitable lot, and such changes made in the building as was necessary to adapt it to public worship, and furnished it with pulpit and seats." Mrs. Taylor then prevailed upon the nearest Methodist pastor to make that a regular preaching place. He did so, and organized a Methodist Church there with three members. It was, in 1843, a part of the Tombecbee Circuit of which Thomas Killough and J. T. Curry were, during that year, the pastors. Methodism got a slow start at Jackson, and for many years grew slowly. But, with the passing years it has grown to be one of the most important churches in the Demopolis District."

The Taylor House has been important to Jackson. It now begins a new era of importance to Washington County and Leroy.

by Louis M. Finlay, Jr.

PLAT OF TOWN OF JACKSON - 1817
(submitted by Madge Hahn)

Jackson Home of Democracy



TAYLOR HOUSE ORIGINALLY
LOCATED ON LOT BC

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Recorded this 25th day of May 1817

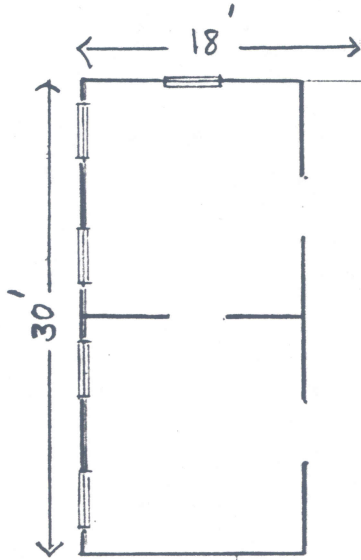
Tombigby River

LINE DRAWING OF FACADE - TAYLOR HOUSE - CIRCA 1843

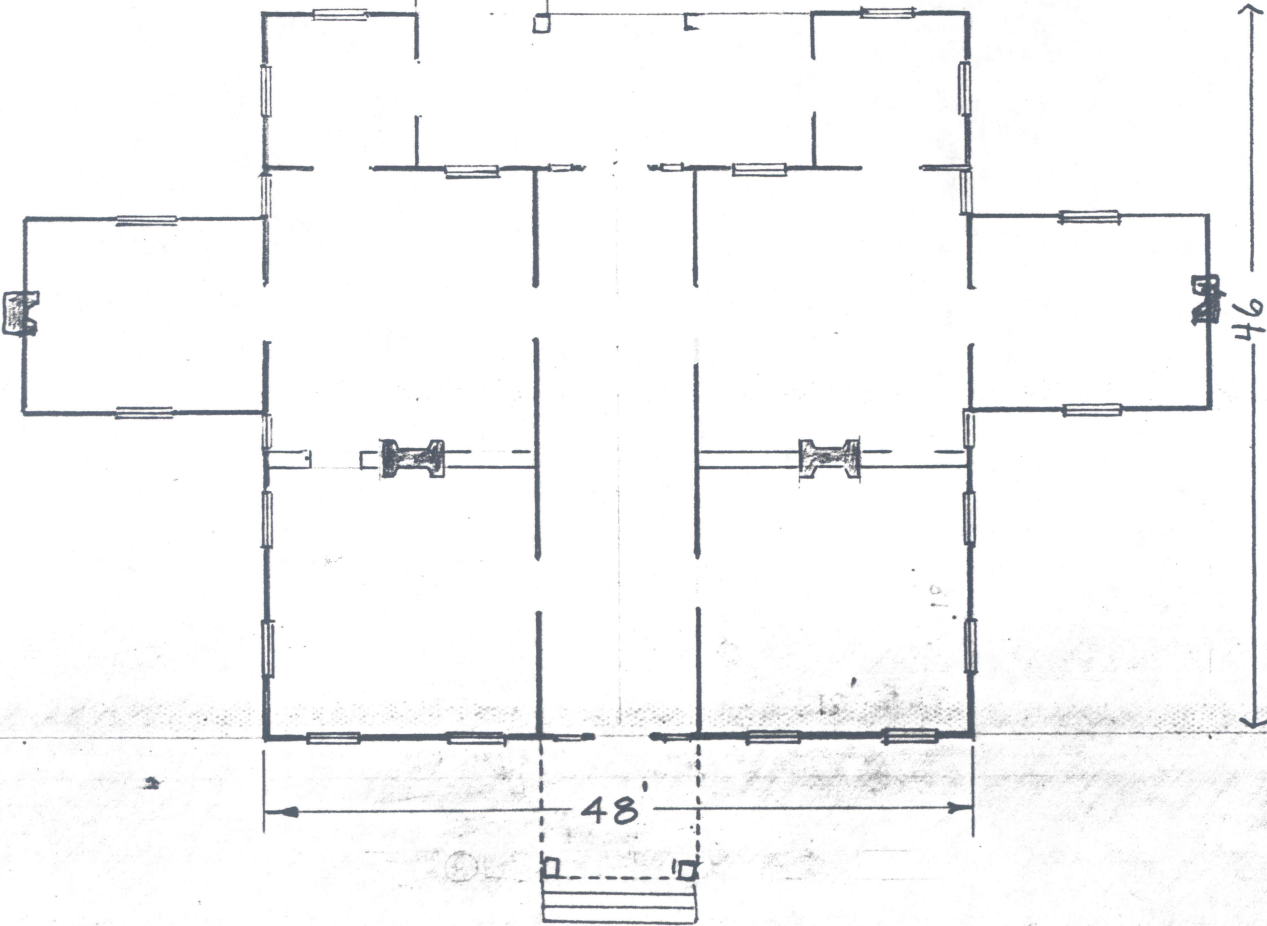


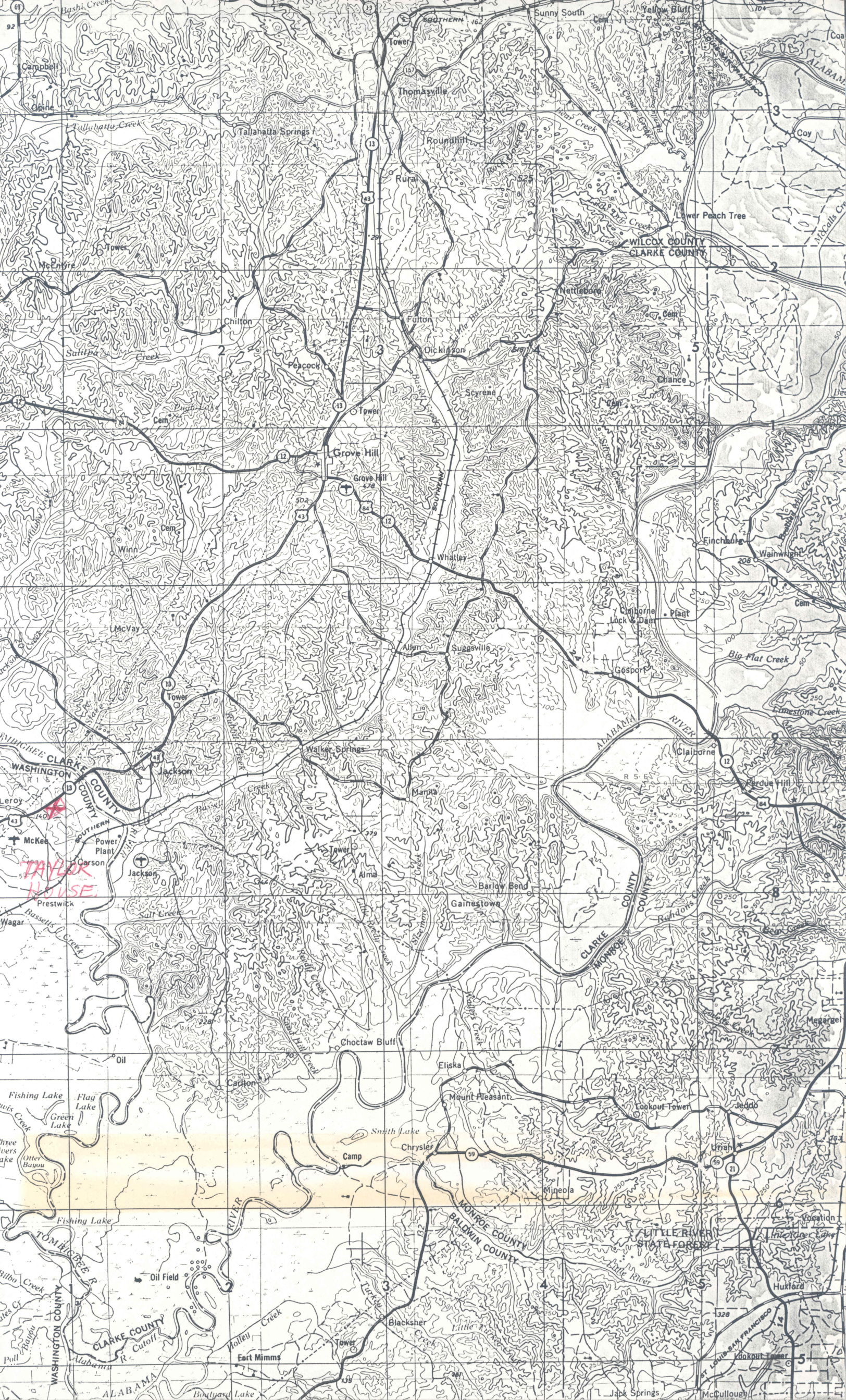
SCALE: $\frac{1}{4}'' = 1'-0''$

TAYLOR HOUSE
ca. 1843



SCALE:
1" = 12'-0"





TAYLOR HOUSE

CLARKE COUNTY

MONROE COUNTY

LITTLE RIVER STATE FOREST

CLARKE COUNTY

ALABAMA RIVER

WILCOX COUNTY

CLARKE COUNTY









