

The Historic Resources of Mississippi

Antebellum houses and Civil War battlefields and related sites seem to be the places that most vividly represent the history of Mississippi to many residents as well as non-residents of the state. Indeed, many fine examples of the architecture from the antebellum period have been preserved, many of them beautifully restored, and they are often perceived as the epitome of Mississippi architecture.

However, the architectural legacy of the state is far richer than this, encompassing a wide array of significant buildings ranging from pioneer log houses to Art Deco skyscrapers. There are notable examples of virtually all major American architectural styles of the 19th and 20th centuries, including Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Second Empire, Romanesque Revival, Stick Style, Shingle Style, Victorian Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Neoclassical Revival, Beaux Arts, Italian Renaissance Revival, Craftsman Style, Mission Style, Spanish Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Art Deco, and more, as well as a fascinating and diverse range of traditional vernacular architecture. Many of these buildings have significance individually, but it is when they are grouped into the historic districts of neighborhoods, downtowns, and rural communities they most evocatively tell the story of Mississippi's people.

The prehistoric and early historic era Native American sites are also defining characteristics of the state's past, including a remarkable collection of ceremonial, burial, and midden mounds, as well as village and campsites (some of which are over 11,000 years old), fish weirs, and other diverse resources.

In addition, historic archaeological sites in Mississippi are important for their association with early historic inhabitants of Mississippi, particularly during the French, Spanish and English colonial periods, the Territorial period, and the early years of statehood. Historic archaeological sites provide important information about such subjects as early trading posts and Indian agencies, life in riverboat towns, plantation life, and tenant farming. Buildings, settlements, transportation routes, and cultural landscapes all have associated archeological components also. Many sites in Mississippi are also multi-component and can range from Mississippian to early historic sites, such as French settlements on what once were previously Natchezan settlements. Historical archaeological sites such as these are invaluable to the heritage of Mississippi because they provide such a wealth of information that is not readily available from other sources.

Transportation development in the state can also be seen through the historic fabric. Ships and boats, shipwrecks and other underwater resources along the Gulf Coast and in Mississippi rivers are symbols of a history involved with early exploration and marine industry. The historic roads that first connected pioneers with the larger world are maintained and preserved.

The railroad was an important means of transportation and the symbol of connectivity within the state and the related buildings and equipment still allude to that period of the state's history. And most recently, properties associated with space exploration at the Stennis Space Center are the physical evidence of the state's impact on future transportation and exploration.

Because Mississippi has historically been an agrarian state, the historic landscape uniquely expresses the historic identity of the state. The natural rural landscapes and landscape features structured the history of the state: development of towns, of industry and agricultural pursuits, of modes of transportation. The man-made landscapes that speak of a people's aspirations, desires, and artistic expression can be seen in the parks, gardens, cemeteries, and college campuses as well as public and private statuary and art.