

Beauvoir Outbuildings & Landscapes

Handout for Tour

2012 Mississippi Historic Preservation Conference

To restore Beauvoir's historic appearance, not only that of the house itself, but also that of the grounds and the entire household complex, Beauvoir's Board of Directors and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History undertook an extensive study of that subject. They employed Albert & Associates, Architects (of Hattiesburg) to prepare a series of Historic Structures Reports on the physical history of the house, the lawns, the outbuildings, the gardens, the fences, and the entire ensemble that constituted the Beauvoir estate from the time it was first occupied in the mid-nineteenth century to the time of Jefferson Davis's death in 1889. The studies included the physical history afterward as it impacted the earlier buildings and landscape. More recently, MDAH and Beauvoir employed Barber and Mann Inc. (of Ridgeland) to add to that research and prepare plans to restore the gardens and landscapes, including plant materials, walkways and fences.

The research included examination of written documents and artists' sketches but photographs provided the most accurate and complete account of the historic appearance of the estate.

This handout features some of those photographs to allow you, the reader and visitor to the site, to stroll the grounds, place yourself where the photographer was standing, and see for yourself how much of the original landscape survives and how the photographic evidence has been translated into actual buildings that help reconstitute the complete appearance of the estate as it appeared at the end of Davis's occupation.

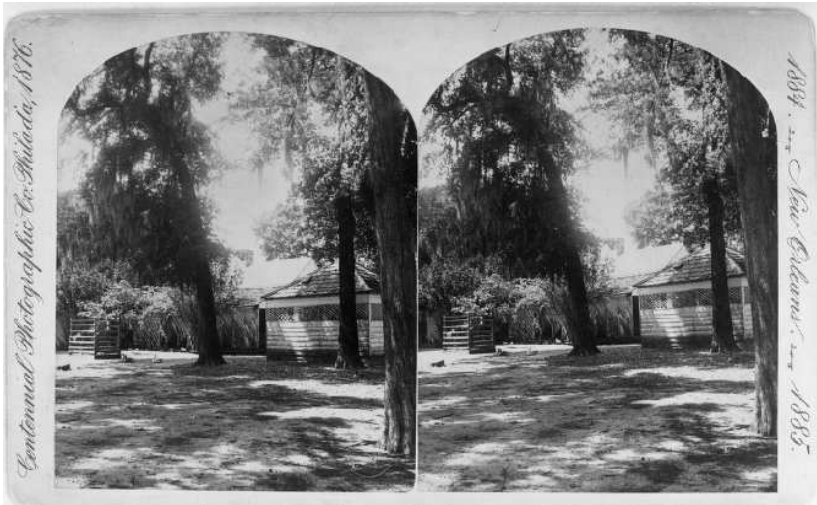


1901 image by the Detroit Publishing Company from the Library of Congress taken from just inside and west of the front gate looking north and slightly to the east.

The Kitchen & the Connector to the Dining Wing of the House

(looking northwest)

An 1884 stereopticon image from the Library of Congress entitled "Under the Oaks" shows the food service area of the house. The rear wall of the dining wing is just out of sight to the left end of the lattice connector between the house and the kitchen, which is in the center of the picture (see enlarged detail below). Like the connector, the kitchen porch is faced with lattice. Lattice also encloses



the open windows wrapping around the upper wall of the chicken house to the far right. Such ventilation is typical of 18th and 19th-century chicken houses, from Williamsburg to Natchez and Biloxi. The detail below reveals that lumps on the ground are actually chickens and ducks, waddled down into the cool earth in the summer heat.



An 1873 *Notice for Sale* of the Brown estate (as Beauvoir was known then) is the first documented reference to a kitchen. It describes "a very convenient, comfortable and well built Kitchen and Large Store Room joining it, covered gallery to dining room built for enclosing in bad, cold or rainy weather, and communicating with the Wood Shed." This description matches the photographic evidence seen above. Unmentioned is the "dry well" that served as a refrigerator and still remains just inside the basement of the house, located between the end of the connector and the foot of the stairs to the dining room. The enclosed connector allowed servants to be unseen as they went about their duties, as was ideal in 19th century households in both Europe and America.

The Kitchen & the Connector to the Dining Wing of the House (looking southeast)



The detail above, taken from a 1901 image from the Paul Jermyn collection at right, shows the lattice connector (or gallery) between the house and the kitchen, as seen from the west side. You can see that the roof of the conductor was covered by boards and battens by 1901 (as was the roof of the gallery on the kitchen itself). The large tapered cylinder to the right of the connector is the above-ground cistern, which was filled by water conducted by pipes from the roof gutters.



The Kitchen

(looking north)

The 1901 image by the Detroit Publishing Company on file at the Library of Congress was taken just inside and to the east of the front gate, looking at the front and east side of the house. If you stand in the same spot, you may be amazed that many of the same trees still stand after more than 100 years. At the back of the house, and just to the right, is the kitchen. As you



can see in the detail below, it was dilapidated only 12 years after Jefferson Davis's death. By this time, the lattice had been removed and the shingled porch roof seen in the 1884 photographs had been replaced by a board and batten roof which was falling apart, and had separated from the front eave of the roof of the kitchen. The attachment of the porch roof at the bottom edge of the main roof is unusual and is one reason that the porch is considered by some to be an addition to the original kitchen.



The Carpenters and Servants Houses

(looking east-north-east from inside the front gate)



The 1901 image from the Library of Congress is taken from just inside the front gate looking east and slightly to the north. In the center is the library. To the left are three buildings, seen in more detail below. The left most, with the dark band of lattice around the top of the wall, is the chicken house, seen in an 1884 photograph called "Under the Oaks." To the right is, first, the Carpenters House, and to its right, the Servants House. On the next pages are details taken from this photograph. The details provided the information needed for the reconstruction of these two buildings .



The Carpenters and Servants Houses

(looking east-north-east from inside the front gate)



The **Carpenters House** shows some evidence of changes made over time. The board and batten cladding of the corner room at the east end of the porch is evidence that this porch room, called a “cabinet”, was added to the building, which is itself clad in clapboards, seen clearly on the end wall at the left. You can also see that the cabinet room at the west end is covered with clapboards, unlike the east cabinet room.



By 1901, many of the outbuildings had fallen into decline, as seen in this image of the **Servants House**, where the posts of the front gallery have fallen and are resting on the ground, causing the porch roof to separate from the main roof of the building. Note the board and batten siding on the entire building as well as the cabinet room at right.