NINETEENTH-CENTURY NATCHez, MississIPI

IN PHOTOGRAPHS: TWO PERSPECTIVES

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts in History

By

Janet Bruce

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The thesis of Janet Bruce is approved:

Professor James E. Sefton                      Date

Ronald L.F. Davis, Ph.D.                      Date

Joyce L. Broussard, Ph.D., Chair             Date

California State University, Northridge
DEDICATION

To Henry C. Norman, who took the photographs

To Thomas H. and Joan W. Gandy, who saw the history in them

and

To my parents, who gave me my first camera when I was seven years old
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I opened a slim volume of late-nineteenth-century photographs and historical essays at the CSUN library several years ago, I never imagined that I was beginning a journey that would take me many times to Natchez and Jackson, Mississippi, and to the Louisiana State University campus in Baton Rouge. This has been very much a group effort, and I am ever grateful to everyone who has helped me along the way.

For me, there would be no thesis – and no Natchez experience – without the patient guidance and inspiration of my advisor and mentor at CSUN, Dr. Joyce L. Broussard. I could happily have just wallowed in the photographs, but she pushed me to analyze them for their history as well. She was right, of course. She also sent me in the direction of Dr. Ronald L.F. Davis. “Impish” is not exactly an academic term, but it fits him. He would listen patiently to my progress updates, and then begin a sentence with, “You know, you should get in touch with . . .” or “Have you thought of . . .” It was at once energizing and terrifying. Dr. Davis and Dr. Broussard knew what they were talking about, however, since he originated the Natchez Courthouse Project, and she now continues the Natchez association as she takes students to that wonderful city.

Dr. James E. Sefton taught one of my first (and favorite) classes when I returned to school in 2002 – in using photographs as historical resources. He has been a continuing presence in my academic life, and has advised me as I work with the family photographs that initially brought me back to school. It was Dr. Sefton who said one day, “You just have to finish this thing [my thesis], and then move on.” He was right, and here I am.

Sue Mueller and Kelly Winkleblack Shea keep the CSUN History Department Office running smoothly. Their experience in navigating the labyrinthine process of
getting an education has kept me on course and out of trouble. Their active support has been a frequent reminder to me that large institutions are only as good as the human beings who work behind the scenes every day. I thank them both for being there.

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History in Jackson can be a daunting place. It is packed full of the “stuff” of history – everything from public documents and records, to once-private correspondence written in the days of ink bottles and dip pens. There is visual history, too, in the photographs and other artifacts that, to me, make history come alive. I spent many hours piecing together the story of the life and times of a late-nineteenth-century Natchez photographer, and of the twentieth-century doctor and his wife who recognized the value in the visual history left behind. At every step of the way, Anne Webster and her very gracious and knowledgeable Reading Room staff made the going not only easier, but fruitful indeed. I could not have asked for more.

I also spent hours in the Hill Library Reading Room at LSU, submerging myself in box upon box of photographic file prints – their images first created by Henry C. Norman with his camera, and then revealed again by the hand of Dr. Thomas Howard Gandy in his basement darkroom. The images number in the tens of thousands. I did not see them all, but occasionally, it felt like it. I feel sure that there were times when the Head of Public Services, Judy Bolton, the Reading Room staff, and Mark E. Martin (Processing Archivist for the Thomas H. and Joan W. Gandy Photograph Collection), winced when they saw me come through the door, but they never let on. Were it not for their patient help, I would still be trying to navigate my way through the database.

Serendipity connected me with the Interim Head of Special Collections, Tara Zachary Laver, who suggested whole new search directions that “introduced” me to some
of the people in Henry Norman’s photographs. Connecting past with present, she also put me in touch with the great-granddaughter of Mary Britton Conner, a Henry Norman contemporary and frequent subject of his photographs. Lisa Ludwig then turned me toward Thomas H. Gandy, Jr., who graciously invited me to his Baton Rouge home for an unforgettable couple of hours of first-hand reminiscences about his father. I never knew Thomas H. Gandy, Sr., but I believe I glimpsed him then in his son.

Natchez was always home base; more specifically, the Historic Natchez Foundation, where I could always count on a place to work, a surrounding gold mine of information, and someone to help me find it. The staff generously let me study their maps, city directories, photographs, and other records. They also put me in touch with local genealogist and historian Teri Tillman, who gave me important information on Natchez’s Jewish history. The staff at the Adams County Courthouse helped me to navigate a maze of court records and deed books. Secretaries at the Trinity Episcopal and Jefferson Street United Methodist Churches trusted me with aging, fragile membership records. The Armstrong Library staff made me comfortable as I searched their vertical files. A single phone conversation with a lady named Thelma Wallace Williams helped to unlock the mystery behind one of the photographs that was especially important in my work. I quickly learned that, to Natchezians, “hospitality” is a verb.

The Historic Natchez Foundation Director, Mimi Miller, is a walking historical resource, and she often took her very valuable time to point me in some new direction, or to locate some source I had never thought about. I found friendships I truly cherish with Mimi and her husband, Ron, and cannot think of anywhere else I would rather stay when
in Natchez than at Wensel House, their Bed and Breakfast. Natchez may have been “home base,” but the Millers’ was “home” whenever I was there.

Crucially, the Foundation agreed to store and make available to me materials that were the crux of my research: the many boxes of unprocessed Gandy Papers that Joan W. Gandy kindly left there for me when she sold the Gandy home and went back to school herself. I am beyond grateful to her for graciously allowing me access to them, for answering my ongoing questions, and for taking time from her busy life to let me interview her. Were it not for her generosity, this thesis could never have been written.

Were it not for the encouragement of my family and friends, however, I would never have gone back to school or stayed with it so long in the first place. My brother Bob, and sister-in-law, Donna, have been intensely proud of me all along, even when I have floundered. I have been reminded many times of my good fortune in having a family who are also my friends. In the steadfast support of friends both old and new, I am also reminded that I am fortunate enough to have friends who are “family.” Tangibly and intangibly, they have helped me with my work, fed me in body and spirit, and made me laugh. I haven’t words to thank them enough. That goes, too, for Portland, my frequent study companion and occasional muse. This thesis is partly hers as well.
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ABSTRACT

NINETEENTH-CENTURY NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI

IN PHOTOGRAPHS: TWO PERSPECTIVES

By

Janet Bruce

Master of Arts in History

This study maintains that photographs expand and clarify the history of late-nineteenth-century Natchez, Mississippi in ways that documents alone do not. Visually, they reveal details and perspectives that are often overlooked in textual form. In the process, they personalize history by connecting their viewers intellectually and emotionally with the people, places, and events they represent. In so doing, they help to clarify how the past shapes and influences the present.

Photographs also reveal the visions, intentions, and perspectives of their creators. This thesis will focus specifically on the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century photographs of the Natchez, Mississippi photographer Henry C. Norman, whose work represents a forty-year timeline of daily life in the small, Southern, river city. The details in Norman’s images often demonstrate small nuances and contradictions, and may reveal powerful dichotomies of race, class, and gender.
The study will focus, too, on the work of Thomas H. and Joan W. Gandy, Natchez residents who owned a collection of some 60,000 images created by Henry Norman, his predecessor, Henry Gurney, and Norman’s son and successor, Earl M. Norman. The Gandys were particularly drawn to Henry Norman’s work, and devoted significant time and energy to presenting their interpretative studies of it in both book and exhibit form. They worked especially to raise awareness of the images’ importance as visual history, rather than simply as illustrations or art. Their efforts both benefitted historians and actively supported the city of Natchez, which, despite an abundant textual history, depends heavily on visual history for its economic wellbeing.

Henry C. Norman and Thomas H. and Joan W. Gandy effectively collaborated to create a collection of photographs that bridges different eras, and visually broadens, enhances, validates, and even corrects the understanding of Natchez history during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth.
INTRODUCTION

From the mid-1870s until his death in 1913, a professional photographer named Henry C. Norman ran a studio in Natchez, Mississippi. There, he produced thousands of glass plate negatives that reveal a lively, multi-faceted community at work, at home, and at play. In 1960, Natchez physician Dr. Thomas Gandy acquired the negatives, along with some from Norman’s predecessor, Henry M. Gurney, and Norman’s son and successor, Earl M. Norman. For the next forty years, Gandy and his wife, Joan, used lectures, exhibits, and books to raise awareness of Henry Norman’s photographs and their value as visual history. This study maintains that the images expand and clarify Natchez history in ways that documents alone do not. They make the past visual, and lead to a better understanding of its relationship to the present. They engage viewers intellectually and emotionally with people, places, and events, personalizing history in the process. Often, they reveal small nuances and contradictions, and demonstrate powerful dichotomies of race, class, and gender.

Photographs reveal the visions and intentions of their creators and original recipients, as well as the times in which they were made. Norman’s images present a remarkable timeline of daily life in a small, Southern, river city at the close of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. In both what they include and what they leave out, the photographs reflect Norman’s perspectives and his conscious support of white Natchez’s own vision of itself as a forward-looking, attractive place in which to live and work. The Gandys’ published and exhibited versions of the images present their own interpreted vision of Norman’s Natchez. They also reveal the couple’s supportive
relationship with the city that now carefully preserves its architectural past, and financially depends on its formal presentations of a mythical vision of the slavery-dependent, antebellum social structure that funded and constructed many of the mansions and other buildings attracting visitors today. Bridging different eras, the Gandys effectively collaborated with Henry Norman to create a meaningfully organized collection that, while possibly misleading at times, visually enhances, validates, and even corrects our understanding of Natchez history. These collaborations between past and present, and the history they represent, form the basis of this study.

The photographs enlarge on and fill in the interstices of an abundant textual history dating back to the late seventeenth century. The city is home to a wealth of legal records – some of them in volumes labeled “colored” and “white.” Along with census information, newspaper files, letters, and diaries, they can be explored in places including the Adams County Courthouse, the Historic Natchez Foundation, the Armstrong Public Library, and the personal collections of some of the city’s oldest families.

It is important to remember that not all of Henry Norman’s negatives survived, so it cannot be presumed that he never photographed certain places, individuals, or groups. Similarly, the number of images in any given category does not necessarily indicate a

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1 In 1991, working with the Historic Natchez Foundation and the National Park Service, Professor Ronald L.F. Davis, from California State University, Northridge, created and then directed the Natchez Courthouse Records Project. To date, students have processed many of the over 100,000 documents and 1,200 volumes of county records that were in danger of being lost to neglect. Published citations and acknowledgements attest to the value of these primary sources in studies of Natchez history. Ronald L.F. Davis and Joyce L. Broussard, eds., *Natchez on the Mississippi: A Journey Through Southern History, 1870-1920* (Los Angeles: Norstel Press, 1995), 4-5; Joyce L. Broussard and Ronald L.F. Davis, *The Courthouse Records Project: The Exploration and Preservation of Adams County Courthouse Records in Natchez, Mississippi*, California State University, Northridge (2008), un-paginated flyer.
preferential vision of Natchez and its inhabitants.² It should also be remembered that, like their textual counterparts, photographs do not always accurately or fully represent truths, or the complex layers of the community and individuals they depict. By accident or design, both photographs and textual records can misrepresent, or even stage reality, rather than reflect it. Photographs do not, for example, actually show what hard work looks like – only the laborers themselves paused for the camera in images that may, in fact, reinforce negative stereotypes. Similarly, perceptions about individual relationships in one group image may be overturned by changes in position or posture in another.

Nevertheless, as good resources do, photographs draw their viewers in with the questions they inspire. What did Henry C. Norman’s focused vision of the Natchez community include, what did it leave out, and why? Did he intend the images as a comment on socioeconomic status, race, outward appearance, or inward dignity? Do his photographs represent a past reality, or an orchestrated vision of momentary, pseudo-history? What do Norman’s photographs tell us that textual documents alone do not?

The Gandys’ work elicits questions as well: What do the images selected for, or omitted from, exhibits and books reveal about their interpretations of Henry Norman’s work and their own, twentieth century vision of Natchez? Do Thomas Gandy’s enlarged, reframed, and sometimes-retouched images expand Norman’s vision of Natchez, or do they reinterpret it into something altogether different? How does the Gandys’ vision of Natchez differ from their father’s?

² When Henry Norman’s son, Earl, died in 1951, the studio’s contents were moved a partially protected patio at the Norman home. There, they were exposed to weather and to mischievous children who sometimes threw the glass plates down a cistern to hear them break. Joan Gandy, lecture to tourists at First Presbyterian Church, Natchez, Mississippi, April 2, 2007; Joan Gandy, interview by author, Natchez, Mississippi, August 11, 2008; Joan W. Gandy and Thomas H. Gandy, Norman’s Natchez: An Early Photographer and His Town (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1978), 10-11.
photographs as history compare with those of other visual historians – among them, Alan Trachtenburg, Robert M. Levine, and Martha Sandweiss?

Chapter One explores Henry Norman’s vision of Natchez. It follows his integration into the daily life of his adopted city as he interpreted it through his camera lens. Many images lend visual presence to people who might otherwise have existed only as names or numbers in census rolls, newspaper texts, or personal records. Their dignified postures and direct expressions often speak more loudly about their humanity than does the written word.

Norman’s photographs reveal three different, but intersecting, facets of Natchez life, and the physical, emotional, and spiritual structures that collective societies and individuals construct around themselves in order to function as they do. The first facet is the Natchez business sector, with its necessary associations between formerly dominant planter elites and an increasingly influential, heavily Jewish merchant class with money to extend the necessary credit for economic survival after the Civil War. Documents connect planters and merchants through their business dealings and other associations. Norman’s photographs visually connect them to their places of business and, by extension, to one another as well. In visual counterpoint, the images also reveal the rough-edged, but no less vital, business world of Natchez Under-the-Hill. In reality, Natchez On-Top and Natchez Under-the-Hill depended on each other for commercial success.

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3 For more on the role of the Jewish merchant class in Natchez’s post-bellum economic and political recovery, please see Aaron Anderson’s “Jewish Merchants in Natchez: Enterprise and Exploitation in the Postbellum South” (masters thesis, California State University, Northridge, 2004); and Wendy Machlovitz, Clara Lowenburg Moses: Memoir of a Southern Jewish Woman, (Jackson: Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, 2000).
The second facet addresses some of the social spaces that structured daily life. Churches, clubs, and other organizations formalized people’s contacts with one another. As they recovered from Union occupation, Natchezians quickly reclaimed their public spaces in less formal ways as well, with social and cultural events, and other community activities.4 People once more used public pathways along the top of the bluff, and the uniquely mobile public spaces on the decks of steamboats that again plied the Mississippi River. Norman’s images also reveal how people embraced pastimes and leisure activities that were popular elsewhere in the country. Letters and newspapers describe these gatherings in words. Photographs show what they looked like.

The third facet of Natchez daily life is omnipresent, and yet elusive to define. Absent slavery, the hierarchical, race-based divide that overtly and covertly structured antebellum life was sometimes less demonstrably clear during Reconstruction and the early part of the Jim Crow era. The new, and sadly temporary, legal and political rights of African-Americans once regarded solely as property confounded many whites, who struggled to adjust to a societal structure now turned on its head. Natchez households had to come to terms in practical ways with former slaves now working as paid servants, with limited, but defined “rights” under law, however short-lived. Norman’s photographs of white families often reveal these separate, yet oddly porous, associations. Images of blacks and whites together can be especially provocative, and may raise more questions about these complex relationships than they answer.

4 Dr. Joyce Broussard examines the Natchez District’s public spaces and their evolution into what she contends were “instrument[s] of anchorage” within a larger, still-patriarchally defined societal framework. Joyce Broussard, “Female Solitaires: Women Alone in the Lifeworld of Mid-Century Natchez, Mississippi, 1850-1880.” (PhD diss, University of Southern California, 1998).
Norman often photographed white families in their yards or on their porches at home. To a rising middle class especially, houses were an important symbol of achievement. In appearance-proud Natchez, Norman often used houses as backdrops for family photographs. His studio portraits were a more personal expression, reflecting the impression people wanted to convey to others as they sat for his camera. They evidence Norman’s intention to create the best possible image for everyone who could afford a trip to his studio. Whether looking into the distance, or directly at us through the equalizing safety of the professionally managed camera lens, the faces reveal an inherent human dignity that often transcends time, economics, social status, and race.

Chapter Two examines the collaborative efforts of Thomas and Joan Gandy to preserve and present a visual history of nineteenth-century Natchez. It addresses their own visual interpretations of the late-nineteenth-century city during a twentieth-century time when slavery and civil rights were at the forefront of America’s consciousness. It follows Thomas Gandy’s personal progression from “history buff” to knowledgeable and respected local historian. Frequent interactions with scholars and the public alike informed and invigorated his studies. Born and raised in Natchez, Joan Gandy brought her own perspective to their work. She sometimes laughingly accused her husband of marrying her because she knew how to write, but she was, in fact, a gifted writer and researcher. Her journalistic and publishing experience facilitated the complicated processes of organizing exhibits and publishing the Gandys’ books.

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5 Joan Gandy interviews by author, Natchez Mississippi, April 2 and 7, 2007.

Chapter Three}

Norman and the Gandys viewed Natchez from different eras and perspectives. Chapter Three examines the interpretive similarities and differences between some of Norman’s negatives and the Gandys’ prints, and the strengths and weaknesses in the visual history each portrays. Norman’s panoramic views, for example, give an overview of the city’s growing footprint. Thomas Gandy often cropped or enlarged them to reveal proximities, details, and identities that Norman may have been unaware of in the print sizes of his day. If Henry Norman sought to picture Natchez as the sum of its parts, Thomas Gandy wanted to disassemble the whole in search of details.

A need for organization and identification led the Gandys to arrange the images into specific groups. A collective history began to emerge. Late-nineteenth-century Natchez came alive again in a different way, documenting fashion trends, the naturally advancing timeline of growing children, business and social associations, leisure activities, and important life moments. One group of images revealed a surprisingly large, previously under-recognized population of middle-class African-Americans.7

In an intriguing parallel, Henry Norman photographed Natchez in the racially charged climate of the post-Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras, while Thomas Gandy brought them into public view during the racially charged era of the Civil Rights Movement. The boundaries of race and class were given in the lives of both men. Curiously, however, neither one appears to have sought to use the images to argue for either change or a perpetuation of the status quo. Instead, we are simply presented with the conscious and unconscious racial intersections and separations of daily life.

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7 Joan Gandy, interview by author, Natchez, Mississippi, August 11, 2008.
In Chapter Three, photographs from two families merit particular study in the power of visual and textual history combined. In the first case, Washington Miller and at least one other immediate family member appear in a single image. Miller was a local African-American hackman who apparently lived in Natchez when Norman arrived. He died in 1898. Two other images include members of the prominent, white Joseph N. Carpenter family. Norman photographed the family many times, and their names and activities appeared often in newspapers. The Miller and Carpenter images raise provocative questions about both their content and symbolism.

A short concluding chapter and an epilogue revisit some of the questions that have framed this research. In number, variety, and time span, Henry C. Norman’s images uniquely represent one photographer’s individual and corporate vision of Natchez, Mississippi at the close of the nineteenth century. They make visually understandable many of the descriptions and terminology, facts and figures that may otherwise overwhelm or even slip by altogether in textual form. They connect faces with names, or draw attention anonymously to the faces themselves. On a visceral, sometimes-undefined level, they engage us with the past. Building on Norman’s work, Thomas and Joan Gandy’s re-framed and enlarged prints expand and inform our perceptions of the past by calling attention to the small details making up the whole. In the context of time and place, these interpreted images help to refine historical perspective, and lead to a better understanding of modern Natchez’s vision of, and dependence on, its past. It becomes easier, then, to recognize and examine the complexities of the past as history, and to understand how that past influences the present.

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CHAPTER 1
HENRY NORMAN’S NATCHEZ

When twenty-year-old Henry C. Norman stepped off a steamboat arriving from Louisville, Kentucky in 1870, the weather-worn buildings clustered along the muddy shoreline gave little hint that there was more to Natchez, Mississippi than what he could see in front of him. Hidden from his sight by a 200-foot high bluff were the neatly platted streets of the town’s civic, business, and residential centers. Visually, the two locations could not have been more different. A convenient assist from geography inspired their divergent nicknames: “Natchez-On-Top” and, at the base of the bluff, “Natchez Under-the-Hill.” From where he stood, Norman could see a wharf boat and functional, working-class buildings reminiscent of a lifestyle once dependent largely on river commerce and male appetites for liquor and loose women. Flooding regularly reconfigured the shoreline, leaving the impression that, despite its importance as a commercial shipping point, much of Natchez Under-the-Hill was better defined by the word “transience.”

In contrast, nearly everything about Natchez-On-Top seemed to evidence permanence and respectability. Homes, businesses, churches, and other buildings fanned

\[1\] Norman was born in Newnan, GA on October 22, 1850, to Dr. Joshua Norman and the former Hulda McDaniel. Sometime after her husband died, Hulda Norman and her children moved to Louisville, KY. The Natchez area was long home to the Natchez Indians. Beginning in 1716, France, England, and Spain successively occupied the region. Mississippi became a United States Territory in 1798, gained statehood in 1817, seceded from the Union in 1861, and rejoined it in 1870. Emily B. Calhoun to Mrs. Thomas Gandy, August 18, 1977, Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, GA; Henry C. Norman Death Certificate, July 3, 1913. Both sources are located in the unprocessed Gandy Papers (hereafter Gandy Papers) at the Historic Natchez Foundation, Natchez, Mississippi (hereafter HNF); Gandy and Gandy, City Streets, 7. For a more extensive timeline of early Natchez history, please see D. Clayton James, Antebellum Natchez (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968).

\[2\] James, 169; Gandy and Gandy, Norman’s Natchez, 78. Natchez Under-the-Hill’s reputation had tamed considerably by 1870.
out in all directions from the massive Adams County Courthouse. Around the low hills in town and extending out into the countryside lay one of the most densely concentrated gatherings of antebellum mansions in the South. While their impressive facades now sometimes hid the postwar financial distress of their owners, the houses were a visual reminder that, in earlier times, Natchez was home to one of the largest accumulations of wealth in the country. Less enviable now, but no less real, was the city’s antebellum reputation as the home of the second largest slave markets in the country.  

The bluff that obscured from Norman’s sight the more upscale areas of the city also protected its topside inhabitants from unwanted interaction with working-class people down along the river’s edge. A long ribbon of road cut a steep, diagonal slash from the shore to the top of the bluff, giving shared space to freight wagons, carriages, and pedestrians. People arriving or leaving via the river could thus be transported quickly past sweating dockworkers and the saloons and whorehouses that, under the cover of darkness, served all classes of people with money to pay for services rendered.

Soon after his arrival, Henry Norman found work as a camera operator in Henry Gurney’s photography studio. Norman may have had some prior photographic experience while living in Louisville, but why he went to Natchez or to work for Gurney

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1 Slaves arrived in Natchez via both overland and river routes. The largest interstate slave trading company was Franklin, Armfield, and Company, which maintained its southwest headquarters at Forks-of-the-Road in Natchez. Slave auctions regularly took place at the courthouse, on Main Street, and on the landing at Natchez Under-the-Hill. James, 159,197. For an overview of the Natchez slave trade and, more specifically, a description of the Forks-of-the-Road, please see Ronald L.F. Davis, *The Black Experience in Natchez, 1720-1880* (Denver: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Parks Service, 1994), 60-77.

4 In 1882, mule-drawn trolleys from the Bluff City Railway began transporting freight, and eventually passengers, more directly up the bluff and through the city to St. Catherine Street and the N.J. & C. Railroad Depot. S.E. Rumble (partner in Rumble and Wensel), was the line’s president. The large, brick Rumble and Wensel building appears in many Norman photographs. Constructed in 1872 to sell groceries and other provisions, it was a landmark to river traffic for years. Norman also photographed Bluff City Railway cars. Gandy and Gandy, *Norman’s Natchez*,76; Dave Rattray, *The City of Natchez Mississippi, 1881* (Natchez: Democrat Book and Job Print, 1881), 41-42 (courtesy of Rare Book Collection, Southern Pamphlets, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill).
At Gurney’s however, he gained valuable experience in the quickly expanding field of photography, as well as an entre into the Natchez business world. For the remaining forty-three years of his life, Henry Norman photographed both Natchez-On-Top and Natchez Under-the-Hill, visually preserving their look and activities with apparently equal interest and thoroughness.

Newspapers track the changing, competitive face of the photographic profession in Natchez. In 1870, N.H. Black advertised his studio and the services of the “accomplished artist of New Orleans,” Mr. J.P. Phelps. A year later, Henry Gurney was having a sale on Ambrotypes (reduced from $25 to $10 each), and Gem Pictures (at 12½ cents each). Black’s advertised the latest in cartes-de-visites and crayon pictures, and A.L. Blanks had replaced Mr. Phelps. By 1872, Black was apparently gone entirely. J.P. Phelps had his own studio, where he advertised “photographs at two dollars per dozen.” At that time, A.L. Blanks either worked for, or had space in, Gurney’s Studio, promising “fine photographs [at] four for fifty cents without cases.”

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6 In 1870, there were 7,558 professional photographers in the United States. By 1890, the number was 20,040. In the mid-1850s, the collodion (wet plate) process began replacing Daguerreotypes and, later, tintypes. Gem Pictures were the smallest form of tintype (up to sixteen images to a quarter-sized plate), and were popular from 1865 and into the 1870s. Ambrotypes, which replaced Daguerreotypes and were also printed on glass, gave way to tintypes and cartes-de-visites in the 1860s. The name “cartes-de-visite” came from the print size (4½ x2½ inches), which was the size of a formal visiting card. Cartes-de-visites spawned the photographic album industry. After the 1850s, better lenses, exposure times, and multiple exposures from a single plate made photographic images cheaper and more readily available. Easier-to-use dry plates were common by the 1880s. In 1888, George Eastman’s Kodak camera revolutionized popular photography. Natchez Tri-Weekly Democrat, July 23, 1870, February 14 and October 14, 1871, and April 23, 1872; Robert Taft, Photography and the American Scene: A Social History, 1839-1889 (1938; repr. New York: Dover Publications, 1964), 61, 118-9, 164, 384-404; Gordon Baldwin, Looking at Photographs: A Guide to Technical Terms (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1991), 8, 22, 27-8, 80-1. Two other informative photographic histories are Beaumont Newhall’s The History of Photography from 1839 to the Present (New York: The Museum of Modern Art 1982) and William Welling’s Collectors’ Guide to Nineteenth Century Photographs (New York: Collier Books, 1976). For more on the history of photo albums, please see Elizabeth Siegel’s “Galleries of Friendship and Fame: The History of Nineteenth-Century American Photograph Albums.” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2003).
Although a nationwide financial panic in 1873 would again slow the city’s recovery efforts, by 1870, Natchez was showing signs of post-war growth.\(^7\) Downtown, long-established and up-and-coming businesses vied with one another for customers and space. Stores provided necessities and luxuries in town and to the outlying areas. At the corner of Franklin and Locust, finishing touches were underway on Aaron Beekman’s two-story building, with “two capacious and handsome stores, both of which will be occupied by Beekman and Meyer, one a grocery, the other . . . a dry goods store.”\(^8\) On the site of his old Main Street store, J.C. Schwartz prepared to move into a new, iron-fronted building housing his hardware and cutlery emporium. Over time, Henry Norman photographed the Schwartz building and, separately, its owner, his children, and his grandchildren.\(^9\)

During the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, an ambitious Natchez community worked to move beyond the effects of a Civil War that, thanks in part to the town’s surrender and occupation rather than resistance, left most of its buildings intact, but crippled its cotton-centered economic and social structure. Now, a complex mixture

\(^7\) Another financial panic followed in 1893, when railroads across the country declared bankruptcy, causing multiple bank failures. Natchez suffered then as well. The *Natchez Evening Banner* declared in 1894 that “all signs seem[ed] to indicate that a new era of prosperity ha[d] set in and that Natchez [would] soon be forging ahead again,” but the optimism was premature. In 1897, the *Natchez Daily Democrat* headlined some 15,112 business failures nationwide that year, second in number only to those in 1893. *Natchez Evening Banner*, June 12, 1894; *Natchez Daily Democrat*, January 1, 1897.

\(^8\) *Natchez Democrat*, October 12, 1870.

of long-established planter elites, a rising middle-class, poor whites, free blacks and former slaves, entrepreneurial businessmen, and families shared a new and sometimes uneasy coexistence. In the aftermath of wartime occupation and the legal abolishment of slavery, Natchez, like much of the South, had to adapt to a more interdependent socio-economic structure. Wealth and social position no longer wholly insulated planter elites from unwanted association with classes or races once considered safely beneath them. Many long-time citizens now depended ever more frequently on local merchants for loans and credit, more for survival than to regain their antebellum wealth.

The real issue was power. Well-entrenched, race-based societal divisions now shared contested space with economically emphasized class distinctions. Blacks and whites alike had to come to terms in practical ways with a radically changed societal

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10 Several studies address the racial, economic, and social world of Natchez during Reconstruction and the Jim Crow eras. Jack E. Davis argues that, while whites strove to perpetuate the antebellum illusion of intellectual, emotional, and economic supremacy, blacks strove for the inherent power of a common identity. Both groups sought a sense of place in an outwardly changed world. Jack E. Davis, Race Against Time: Culture and Separation in Natchez Since 1930 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2001), 1-12, 24-92; Jack E. Davis, “A Struggle for Public History: Black and White Claims to Natchez’s Past,” The Public Historian 22, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 45-63. In Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow (Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1989), 3-32, Neil R. McMillen addresses the Jim Crow era in Mississippi from the African-American point of view. He examines the largely unwritten racial boundaries and the blacks’ sense of “place” that existed during Henry Norman’s era. Michael Wayne’s The Reshaping of Plantation Society: The Natchez District, 1860-1880 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1983) views change from the standpoint of the planter elites both before and after the war, including their relationship to a rising merchant class. In The Black Experience in Natchez, Ronald L.F. Davis discusses the disparities between promised freedoms and realities that tied blacks to the inequalities of sharecropping in much the same way as they had been tied to the inequalities of slavery. For an examination of the logistical problems involved in establishing and maintaining a new agricultural work structure, and the consequences of obstructive attitudes on the part of the formerly-dominant planter elites toward a now-free black labor force, as well as the changing planter-merchant relationship after the Civil War, please see Ronald L.F. Davis’ Good and Faithful Labor: From Slavery to Sharecropping in the Natchez District, 1860-1890 (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982).

11 Ronald L.F. Davis says that, in addition to extending credit, many merchants acted increasingly as agents. By 1870, fewer than one quarter of the antebellum plantation estates were still intact. Planters who owned the most land were hit hardest, in terms of acres actively worked, and in the diminished holdings size. By the 1880s, merchants had surpassed planters as the chief suppliers to freedmen, and sharecropping had been institutionalized into what Davis described as the most expedient method of “supply, land tenure, and class relations.” Accommodating in their methods and purpose, merchants clearly profited from the changed post-war economic and labor structure. Ronald L.F. Davis, Good and Faithful Labor (138-144),
structure that no longer profited from the free labor of enslaved blacks or ceded uncontested economic power to white plantation owners. Agriculturally, Natchez struggled to shape and implement a functioning labor system under which crop production might resume.

Ultimately, a new system of sharecropping would perpetuate a mutant form of slavery, while redrawing economic and racial structures into sadly familiar patterns. Planters, many of whom felt forced to accept sharecropping, still maintained the fundamental belief that inferior blacks lacked the mental or physical capacity to supervise themselves in field labor, or to function elsewhere without white control.12 Faced with a now fractured, but still-paternalistic system, planters pragmatically accepted sharecropping, but controlled crop types, planting locations, and schedules.13

For a time, the direction of political also shifted to give greater control to blacks. In addition to a substantial slave population, antebellum Natchez had been home to a number of comparatively well-to-do free blacks, many of them owning property and even slaves.14 After emancipation in 1863, former slaves from elsewhere swelled the black

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12 In 1941, social anthropologists Allison Davis, Burleigh B. Gardner, and Mary R. Gardner studied the evolution of ante- and post-bellum racial caste and class systems structuring relations between blacks and whites. Although identified only as “Old City,” the place was clearly Natchez. Conducted forty years into the twentieth century, the study’s conclusions revealed a still-present, race-based caste/class system that was strongly in force by the end of the nineteenth century. The study concluded that the races were divided unalterably into castes, with unequally apportioned status, privileges, and opportunities designed to preserve racial purity and social control. Sexual relations between white men and black women were permitted, but banned between white women and black men. Interracial marriage was never allowed, and social sanctions ensured that whites would always be in control and blacks would be in subservient positions. With varying degrees of success, individuals could move up or down class “ladders” within their respective castes. The barrier between castes, however, was always rigid. Deferential behavior was the most visible form of social control for inter-caste behavior. Allison Davis, Burleigh B. Gardner and Mary R. Gardner, Deep South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class (1941; repr. Authors’ abridged ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).


14 Please see Appendix A.
population further as they sought Union army protection. By 1870, some 1,200 of the
1,600 registered voters in Natchez were blacks. Until the 1880s, blacks were a political
presence on local, state, and national levels. Before being cut down by the 1890
Mississippi Constitution and legally oppressive Jim Crow laws, blacks held local elective
office in posts including mayor, police chief, and sheriff. In 1869, Robert H. Wood (a
free-born) was appointed, and later elected, mayor. Lewis Winston, an African-American
lawyer, served variously as Adams County Assessor and Circuit Clerk. Natchez residents
John R. Lynch (born a slave) and Hiram Revels (free-born) served in the U.S. House of
Representatives and in the U.S. Senate, respectively.¹⁵

Ultimately, the end of Reconstruction would bring new laws designed to “legally”
ensure white supremacy by stripping this vibrant black population of their newly secured
legal, political, and economic power. An implacable resistance on the part of whites to
conceding dignity or real power to blacks continued to dictate public and private
behavior. While legally freed from their chattel status, blacks were still treated in
dehumanizing ways that gave them neither the right nor the means to live freely among
whites. Cash-strapped planters, too, had to reckon with both a labor force they no longer
controlled by ownership and an economic power structure now favoring Natchez
merchants willing and able to extend money or credit to planters and blacks alike.

¹⁵ Born a slave in Louisiana, Lynch (1847-1939) later went to Natchez, where he was a slave at
Dunleith before being freed during the occupation. He was a member of the Mississippi State House of
Representatives 1869-1873, and served in the United States Congress 1873-1877 and 1882-1883. Born in
North Carolina, the Reverend Doctor Hiram Rhodes Revels settled in Natchez in 1866. He was pastor at
the Zion Chapel A.M.E. Church, and was elected to the State Senate in 1870. After Mississippi rejoined the
Union in 1870, he became the state’s first black United States Senator. Davis and Broussard, eds. Natchez
on the Mississippi, 47; Sheryl Lynn Nomelli, “Jim Crow, Louis J. Winston, and the Survival of Black
Politicos in Post-Bellum Natchez, Mississippi” (master’s thesis, California State University, Northridge,
2004), 2, 35-38; bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=L000533;
Adams, B.D., Cyclopedia of African American Methodism in Mississippi (Natchez: R.A. Adams, 1902),
146, 154.
Merchants were important to Natchez’s post-war commercial recovery process. Many of them were Jews, and a number were also cotton buyers. Jews had begun settling in the area in the 1840s. Although they never numbered more than five per cent of the city’s population, they owned up to a third of the businesses. By 1877, Natchez boasted no fewer than twenty-eight Jewish establishments, including over half of the dry goods stores and cotton buyers. Jews built nearly all of the downtown commercial structures and many of the late-nineteenth-century Victorian houses standing today.

The challenge of adapting to a legally and economically redefined labor system permeated Natchez households as well. Behind the walls of many antebellum mansions, formerly wealthy families struggled for practical necessities while trying to maintain outward appearances and implacably hierarchical household systems no longer based on slave labor. In the post-bellum world, once-upper-class, slave-holding white women often had little or no idea how to perform the menial tasks required to run their households. Many parents had to weather personal and financial losses, while raising children too young to fully and experientially comprehend what the Civil War had cost the strongly patriarchal, intensely proud Southern way of life. Deeply incensed over the perceived trampling of states’ rights during the so-called “War of Northern Aggression,” many white southerners stood ready to continue the fight on philosophical, if not physical, terms. Attempts to reassert white power gained traction on the familiar ground of

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16 Many Natchez Jews emigrated from either Bavaria or Alsace. John and Jeanette Meyer arrived early in the 1840s, followed by Aaron and Fanny Beekman, and the Tillmans. The large Meyer and Beekman families intermarried. Aaron Beekman was a leader in the Natchez community from 1843 to 1901. Isaac Lowenburg and Henry Frank came to Natchez as Union sutlers during the war and, with the others, formed a strong, tight-knit merchant community. Machlovitz, 3-6, 43, 46,47; Anderson, 2-3, 14-15.

attitudes toward racial superiority. By the 1880s, those attitudes would find common voice in the mythical history that was promulgated in the “Lost Cause” movement.\textsuperscript{18}

To be successful as a commercial photographer, Henry Norman would have to work in these varied climates without appearing to overly preference one group or societal layer over another. So long as they could pay for his services if asked, whites and blacks, rich or poor were welcomed in front of his camera lens. Mindful of the challenge, Norman began integrating himself into the Natchez community. On July 21, 1874, he married 17-year-old Clara H. Field, the daughter of Natchez residents Larkin C. and Omelia Field.\textsuperscript{19} Studio portraits introduce a pretty, dark-haired young woman posed conventionally in a wedding dress, and a beardless young man in a coat and striped tie (see figs. 1.1 and 1.2, p. 172). Later that year, Norman extended his formal involvement

\textsuperscript{18} Jack Davis argues that the Lost Cause movement promoted a mythical version of history as a struggle for states’ rights in the face of northern tyranny in a violation of the founding principles of the country. It elevated the South’s self-perceived cultural greatness and justified the reasons for white supremacy. Jack E. Davis, “A Struggle”: 47-50. Davis also examines the Lost Cause movement and its role in the Natchez Pilgrimage in Natchez in Race Against Time, 31-34. Other information on the Lost Cause movement may be found in Melody Kubassek’s “Ask Us Not to Forget: The Lost Cause in Natchez, Mississippi,” Southern Studies, 3, no. 3 (1992): 160. Kubassek particularly concentrates on the role of women in the rise of the Lost Cause movement, which is discussed at greater length later in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{19} Field (sometimes “Fields”) is found in the Adams County marriage records, but his record in the U.S. manuscript census is unclear. In 1860, L.C. Field (39, Mississippi-born, no listed occupation) lived in Natchez with his wife, Amelia [sic], and their four children (including four-year-old Clara). In 1880, L.C. (63 born in Kentucky, Planter), and Omelia (48) Fields lived in the Court House District with daughters, Ida (14) and Corinne (11). L.C. Field died in 1896 at age 80. In 1900, Omelia (66) and “Katie” (30, probably Corinne) lived with the Henry Norman family. Michael Wayne indicates that 36-year-old Larkin C. Field (a butcher, who owned 10 slaves and “1 town lot” at the time) was part of the Petit Jury Pool from which a jury was chosen in the 1857 trial of three slaves accused of murdering an overseer, Duncan Skinner. See Marriage Records, Adams County, Mississippi, Book I (hereafter cited as Marriage Records); Manuscript Population Schedules for Adams County, Mississippi, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1890, U.S. Census (hereafter cited as Population Census Schedules), www.ancestry.com; Sexton Records; Michael Wayne, “An Old South Morality Play: Reconsidering the Social Underpinnings of the Proslavery Ideology, The Journal of American History, 77, No. 3 (Dec. 1990): 857 (Table 6).
with the community when he joined the Jefferson Street United Methodist Church. Clara followed suit a year later.\footnote{Gandy and Gandy, \textit{City Streets}, 10; Register of Members, Jefferson Street United Methodist Church, Natchez, Mississippi.}

Extant records do not reveal where the couple lived immediately after their wedding. By 1880, they were living on Jefferson Street with three of what would eventually be their four children.\footnote{The Norman children were Henry C., Jr. (1875), Burdette (1878), Clara O. (1879), and Earl M. (1889). The Normans often had extended family living with them. Clara’s sister, “Kittie” (Katie) and a nephew, Lonie[sic] Simmons (23) were there in 1880. Simmons’ occupation was “photographer,” a trade that he likely learned from his uncle. By 1881, he had a studio in Natchez. Population Census Schedules 1880, 1900; Rattray, 54. Please see also Appendix B.} Sometime around 1883, Norman built an eleven-room, cottage-style house over on South Union Street.\footnote{The three oldest Norman children stand on the front porch in the photograph. The house, now slightly altered, stands today. Gandy and Gandy, \textit{City Streets}, 11. Please see also Appendix B.} Late in 1885, the family moved again, to a sprawling house known as “Etania,” which was then just beyond the city limits on Liberty Road.\footnote{Etania was just beyond the scope of the 1886 Natchez City Census. Absent that and the 1890 U.S. Census, it is difficult to say if members of the Field family lived with the Normans while they were at Etania. \textit{Natchez Daily Democrat}, October 31, 1885 and November 1, 1885. Please see also Appendix B.} The family moved a final time in 1896, to a new house and adjacent studio at 506 Washington Street, just behind Trinity Episcopal Church.\footnote{The new studio is described in greater detail later in this chapter. The house may be the one in the background of a Norman photo of a black man selling vegetables from his wagon. A tarp hides a second floor wall skylight. I am indebted to Mimi Miller, Director of the Historic Natchez Foundation, for this information, May 9, 2011; \textit{Natchez Daily Democrat}, June 27, 1897. Please see also Appendix B.}

Henry Norman opened his first studio in 1877, on the northwest corner of Main Street and Locust Alley. The lease agreement with business partners Robert Donaldson and Gustave Bahin called for “three rooms on the east side of the hall” over Donaldson’s Bookstore, “for the purpose of enabling said Henry Norman to carry out his photographic
business or occupation . . .” In a possible form of barter, Norman was also required to construct “. . . a frame addition in the rear of his half of the Donaldson Bldg.”

For a short while at least, Gurney and Norman were both competitors and neighbors. At some point, Gurney evidently either sold or gave equipment to Norman and, in February 1879, Norman used it as collateral for a loan. The list reads much like a photographic supply catalogue. In addition to prop furniture, there are camera stands, head rests, light screens and frames, a chemical showcase, bath apparatus, a revolving background and stand, and a trunk of Daguerreotype plates. Loan papers also included “all the Photographic Stock of every description now in the Photograph Gallery on the corner of Main and Commerce streets in said City of Natchez over the store of Thomas Perrault and known as H.D. Gurney’s Photograph Gallery.” Specifically excluded from the transaction were Gurney’s private pictures and negatives of himself and his family.

Sometime around 1880, Henry Norman carried his cumbersome equipment up to the base of St. Mary’s Cathedral steeple and to the belfry of the First Presbyterian Church. Facing his camera sequentially in all directions, he visually recorded the layout

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25 The frame structure may be the one visible to the rear upstairs in Figure 1.4, p. 174. Please see also Appendix B. Donaldson and Co. to Henry C. Norman, June 7, 1877, Deed Record Book VV, p. 553-554, Adams County Courthouse, Natchez, Mississippi (hereafter cited as Deed Book).

26 Gurney’s studio was at 97½ Main; Norman’s was at 111 Main. They are the only two photographers listed in the directory. Sometime after 1877, Gurney moved to Minnesota, where he owned and operated a high-grade granite quarry. He revisited Natchez in at least 1882, 1884, and 1888. Complete Directory City of Vicksburg, also Business Directories of Yazoo City, Jackson and Natchez, with Other Useful Information, (Vicksburg: Rogers and Groome, 1877), 239; Natchez Daily Democrat, March 30, 1883, November 21 and December 7, 1884, and April 25, 1888; Gandy and Gandy, City Streets, 10; Steamboat, v.

27 The loan amount was $400. T.E. Perrault sold clothing, hats and caps at 99 Main St. Mrs. Adeline H. Baker (T. Otis Baker, Trustee) to Henry Norman, February 10, 1879, Deed Book WW, p. 206; Complete Directory 1877, 236, 239.
of the Natchez community below. Whether he made the climb on commission, or to satisfy an abundant curiosity to see Natchez from these higher, broader perspectives is not known. Aerial and panoramic images had been in use for years. At the height of westward expansion, growth-minded towns and cities across the nation used lithographs derived from wide-angle images to illustrate advertisements designed to attract businesses and families to settle in given areas.

Natchez was no exception. Anxious to compete with New Orleans to the south and a recovering Vicksburg to the north, the city ambitiously promoted itself as a spacious, orderly, cosmopolitan place in which to live and work. Promotional tracts described cotton-related industries, businesses, railroads (both real and anticipated), steamboats, homes, churches, schools, secret societies, and even the region’s healthy climate. One early publication separated Natchez Under-the-Hill from its “discreditable” past, and pointed instead to its now “excellent order and absolute freedom from sharpers and others of the criminal class.” The pamphlet also lauded Natchez-On-Top residents for their “high morals” and “conspicuous . . . refinement and native gentility.” As a society,

28 Ninety years later, Thomas Gandy repeated Norman’s climb, presumably with lighter equipment. He later thanked Monsignor Paul Hession of St. Mary’s “. . . for permitting me to ascend the tower of the Cathedral in order to make photographs. The experience is not one that I will soon forget because I just happened to be on a ladder adjacent to the bell when the clock struck 4 o’clock. I was utterly grateful that I had not tried to make the trip at 12 noon.” Gandy and Gandy, Norman’s Natchez, 27; Thomas Gandy to Monsignor Paul Hession, May 8, 1970, Gandy Papers, HNF. Please see also Appendix B.

29 Martha A. Sandweiss examines the role of panoramic photography in the popular narrative tradition that accompanied westward expansion. The hilly terrain and relatively tall buildings of San Francisco probably made it the earliest western city to be extensively photographed in panoramic form. Stereographs were very popular from the time of their appearance in the 1850s until after the turn of the century, and were often produced in sets that visually advertised towns and cities throughout the country. The half-tone printing process, which would permit direct transfer of photographs to printed pages, was not commonly used in publishing before the 1890s. Martha A. Sandweiss, “Undecisive Moments: The Narrative Tradition in Western Photography,” in Photography in Nineteenth Century America, Martha A. Sandweiss, ed., (New York: Abrams,) 111-115; Welling, 37-54; Taft, 430-446; Newhall, 251-252.
Natchez was said to be “exceedingly free of prejudice. . . . The rights of every citizen, black as well as white, are religiously respected.”

Natchez’s idealized self-image remained largely unchanged through the forty years of Henry Norman’s career. Many of his photographs visually reflect the community’s pride in its appearance of permanence and survival. Looking out from his church-top vantage points, Norman could see across the landscape around him many of Natchez’s distinguishing natural landmarks, including the edge of the bluff that still physically, economically, and socially bifurcated the city into Natchez-On-Top and Natchez Under-the-Hill. Visible through the trees were the rooftops, cupolas, steeples and belfries that architecturally distinguished homes, businesses, and community institutions. There is little visible street activity in most of the panoramic photographs. Humans and animals appear almost incidentally, going about their business while apparently unaware of the photographer and his camera observing them from above.

Deeds describe property in terms of measurements, adjacent lots, fences, roads, or previous owners. Norman’s photographs visually evidence architectural details, as well as building proximities to one another and to surrounding landmarks. They also reveal the city’s surprisingly hilly terrain and its nearness to the Mississippi River. Collectively, the images underscore the blended nearness of businesses and homes, wealth and poverty coexisting within blocks of one another in the small city.

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Two images illustrate the point. The first one looks southwest from St. Mary’s (see fig. 1.3, p. 173). The faded stereographic print reveals aging, wood-frame shanties, tenements, and residences, with outbuildings scattered throughout. Close examination reveals laundry draped over balcony railings and on clotheslines strung between posts. The multi-story, frame building in the middle of the image backs up to Commerce Street. A large masonry building across Commerce, at the corner of Pearl Street, identifies the business district. Dominating the corner of Commerce and Washington at the upper left is the massive French Second Empire-style home constructed for Natchez merchant Christian Schwartz and his family in 1875. Now called Glen Auburn, it is one of the finest examples of Victorian architecture in Natchez. A block west on Washington is the rear of Magnolia Hall. Originally owned by the merchant Thomas Henderson, this Greek Revival home was the last mansion to be constructed in Natchez prior to the Civil War.

For the second image, Norman turned his camera west along Main Street (see fig. 1.4, p. 174). Here, the winding river visually separates the distant Louisiana shoreline from Mississippi. A faint, white, crescent shape rising from beyond the bluff edge to the right of center may come from the smokestack of an arriving or departing steamboat at Natchez Under-the-Hill. Pointing skyward in the center of the image are the brick smokestacks of the Natchez Cotton Mills. Opened in late 1877, the mammoth, three-story main building housed nearly 340 looms and ran between ten and twelve

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31 A. [August] Botsai was a camera operator for both Gurney and Norman. He probably made the church-top climbs with Norman, and may have handled a stereo camera on his own. Norman taught his sons and his nephew, Lonnie Simmons, the profession, so it is reasonable to assume that he extended the same opportunities to Botsai. Botsai listed his occupation as “photographer” in the 1880 U.S. Census. Several stereographic views of Natchez in the Gandy Collection at LSU are stamped, “A. Botsai,” but they would likely have been taken in connection with Norman’s studio. Population Census Schedule 1880.

thousand spindles. At more than 100 feet tall, the smokestacks were easily visible from the river – landmarks that Natchezians eagerly pointed out to visitors. Referring to the better-known cotton mills in Massachusetts, one contemporary promotional pamphlet proudly suggested that Natchez would soon become known as the “Lowell of the South.”

To the right of the Natchez Cotton Mills rise the still-unfinished walls of the Rosalie Yarn Mills. In this image, the upper-floor windows of the building have been enclosed. A second image, from the belfry of the Presbyterian Church, reveals that Henry Norman made more than one church-top climb (see fig. 1.5, p. 175). In the second image, the unenclosed window openings indicate that it is an earlier photograph. The two images demonstrate the often-incremental nature of change over time.

The view down Main Street toward the river must have interested Norman personally as well as professionally (see fig. 1.4, p. 174). The large, brick Donaldson Building in the right foreground housed his upstairs studio. The frame addition at the rear may be the one called for in Norman’s original lease agreement. Over time, Donaldson’s maintained a circulating library and sold, among other things, musical instruments, toys, and toiletries. Norman’s fellow tenants at the time of the image included a telegraph office, August Zurhellen’s Watch and Jewelry Store, and the offices of Dr. R.C. Jeffries, a dentist.

33 A later, street level Norman photograph of the Natchez Cotton Mills shows its massive size. From the 1820s on, the textile mills in Lowell, MA combined all steps in the textile production process in single factories to produce finished cloth on a massive scale. Rattray, 15-17; Gandy and Gandy, City Streets, 26-27, 76; Natchez Democrat Trade Edition, October 24, 1888.

34 Begun in 1880, the Rosalie Mills opened in 1881. Gandy and Gandy, City Streets, 35; Rattray,16.

Norman had a professional interest in promoting the use of his photographs to individual business owners and in community publicity. At least twice, his work graced sophisticated promotional pamphlets. Sometime in 1887 or 1888, *Natchez On Top, Not "Under the Hill"* featured lithographs created from Norman’s images of city homes and landmarks, as well as studio portraits of prominent community leaders.  

Later, *The Memento: Old and New Natchez, 1700 to 1897*, used the newer, half-tone printing process to incorporate Norman’s photographs directly.

The Norman Studio received more individual credit on an undated poster advertising the services of the steam tug, *J.B. O’Brien*. A panoramic view of the Natchez-Under-the-Hill shoreline provided a backdrop for the tug in the foreground. Featured, too, were cameo images of its operators, James and A.B. O’Brien. For years, the hard-working *J.B. O’Brien* supplied coal to steamboats and other businesses up and down the river. Also appearing in the image was the Anchor Line boat, the *Minnie*, which made the run to St. Joseph, Missouri, three times a week during the 1870s.

Norman photographed many downtown businesses. Most of the formulaically staged images feature storeowners and their employees standing in doorways or on the sidewalks out front. They create a visual impression of stores ready to furnish necessities and luxuries, both locally and at greater distances. The uniform compositions support the argument that many such photographs serviced promotional campaigns on the part of the

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36 The publication date is inferred from Dr. J.C. French’s short essay on the healthy climate of Natchez, (23), in which he says that he arrived in Natchez in November 1885 and has lived there for three years. Additionally, Henry Frank’s advertisement on page 12A says that the firm has been in existence “from 1863 to 1887.” I am indebted to Mimi Miller, Director of the HNF, for this information.

37 Norman and his nephew, L.D. Simmons, contributed equally to the book’s photographic contents. Reber, 106,114.

38 Gandy and Gandy, *Steamboat*, 60; The badly-damaged poster is in the Gandy Papers, HNF.
larger Natchez community or through the efforts of individual stores. The images also evidence some of the photographer’s process in composing images that would present his commercial clients in the best light. By extension, they reflect Norman’s own vision of Natchez as an ambitious, modern Southern community.

Taken sometime in the early 1880s, two Franklin Street photographs demonstrate these points. Absent Norman’s daybooks, it is not possible to definitively determine the date or order in which the images were taken. For purposes of this discussion, it is assumed that he took his longer, establishing shot before pushing in to focus on a specific store. To photograph the north side of Franklin, Norman positioned his camera on the southwest corner of Franklin and Commerce. Beginning with the corner at left are the stores of Marks and Mason, I. Lowenburg and Company, and Pollock and Mason, with Pollock House overhead (see fig. 1.6, p. 176). The names evidence some of the business partnerships that were relatively common in late-nineteenth-century Natchez. Long hours and a myriad of details involving store operations, pooled finances, and the need to travel elsewhere on business made such partnerships advantageous. The arrival of the telephone exchange in 1881 facilitated faster, less time-consuming business methods.39

In this image, activity on the dirt street is minimal except for the movement of wagons and mules just beyond Pollock House. Other than some blurred figures near the brick Marks and Mason store on the corner, people scattered along the sidewalk stand still, curiously watching the camera that is, in turn, “watching” them.40 Three laborers

39 Reber, 61. For more on merchants and their stores, please see Anderson, 226-233.

40 The store belonged to Charles Meeks and Samuel A. Mason. According to the 1877 City Directory (237, 238), they bought cotton and sold groceries, but the signage just to the right of the doorway and behind the tree in figure 1.6 (p. 176) indicates that, at the time of this photograph in about 1880, they sold lime and cement. The 1879 introduction of “dry” negative plates (replacing the more cumbersome “wet” collodion process) led a cascade of technical advancements, including sharper lenses and more sensitive,
stand in the street near the uprights of the Pollock House balcony. A bit farther down, a mule-drawn dray faces away from the camera.\textsuperscript{41}

Norman used his opposite-corner vantage point and the slight upshot of the camera angle to create the impression of wide, level, orderly, uncluttered streets and capacious store buildings along Franklin Street. Almost certainly, the image would have pleased Natchez boosters anxious to promote the city as an inviting place for business interests. The camera’s distant vantage point, however, might have appealed less to Isaac Lowenburg and his partner, Cassius Tillman, whose store is distinguished in the photograph by its light façade and giant letters proclaiming “GROCER.”\textsuperscript{42}

Selling mainly at wholesale, I. Lowenburg and Company carried a wide variety of groceries and plantation supplies. Like their neighbors, Pollock and Mason, the firm also bought and sold cotton. Lowenburg’s proudly devoted an entire floor to liquors of every variety, including California wines. In a singular form of advertising, a barrel labeled “WHISKY” stood atop a tall pole at curbside in front of the store.\textsuperscript{43} One of Thomas Gandy’s enlarged prints reveals Isaac Lowenburg and his partner Cassius Tillman on the

\textsuperscript{41} T.C. Pollock and Thomas Mason furnished staples and fine groceries to Natchez residents and to neighboring Mississippi counties and Louisiana parishes across the river. Pollock came to Natchez in 1846, and died in 1884. Mason died in 1887. Rattray, 57; Sexton Records.

\textsuperscript{42} Isaac Lowenburg and Cassius Tillman were almost certainly partners when these images were made. After Lowenburg died in 1888, Tillman, an estate executor, ran the store until affairs were settled. Elected in 1882, Lowenburg was Natchez’s first Jewish mayor. Ill health forced him to resign from a second term in 1886. Born in Natchez in 1852, Tillman served as Adams County treasurer and sheriff. Both men were city aldermen. Machlovitz, 43-44 and 50; \textit{Natchez Weekly Democrat}, September 12, 1888; Rattray, 58.

\textsuperscript{43}The barrel is visible just to the left and slightly above the sign advertising, “wagons & carts.”
sidewalk near the store’s doorway. Lowenburg wears a white vest and shirt; standing next to him, with his hand on his hip, is Tillman.44

Norman pushed in for a closer view with his second image (see fig. 1.7, p. 177).45

Previously more scattered, the group now clusters around Lowenburg’s doorway. The dray, too, is positioned more directly in front of the store, visually associating hauling services with the store’s merchandise. Two of the laborers stand nearby, physically connecting them with their jobs. Lowenburg and Tillman are again in front of the store. It is not known how many people are store employees and how many are customers or interested onlookers. Nevertheless, the image conveys the impression that I. Lowenburg and Company has the goods and services customers need and want.

The historian Robert M. Levine maintains that photographs, like documents, contribute to historical insight through the analysis of their details. Using a repeatable framework of questions (some of which appear here), he examines photographs for their internal and external information about historical context and its significance to the past and present. Internal information addresses the natural or structured composition of the photograph and the people in it, including clothing styles. Does the image reveal what is expected about the subject matter, or are there unexpected details? What do body language and placement of sub-groups and within the image field imply about relationships? External information focuses on the circumstances under which the photograph was made, including the time period and the intentions of both the photographer and his subject. What does the image say about the region and historical

44 Gandy and Gandy, Norman’s Natchez, 41; Gandy and Gandy, City Streets, 70.

45 For layout purposes, or to highlight the material under discussion, the photographs used in this thesis have occasionally been cropped slightly. In this case, the height of the sky has been shortened. No visual information relevant to the immediate discussion has intentionally been sacrificed, either here or elsewhere.
period? How would the image be interpreted during that time and in that place? Studied in this way, photographic images guide interpretation of the “ordinariness” of daily life, customs, and social interactions.46

Viewing them from the opposite perspective, Alan Trachtenburg argues that photographs not only reveal visual history, but also represent the process photographers undertake to bring their own meaningful order to the small details in life. Photographs, he believes, represent not only the image in front of the lens, but the view from behind it. They become history – and therefore enable greater understanding of the present – only when both the image and the photographer’s viewpoint are examined and understood.47

The approaches of Levine and Trachtenberg are useful in studying the Franklin Street images. They reveal non-verbal details and nuances that structured daily life in Natchez, as well as details of time, place, and the social fabric of the community. They also combine with textual information to date the images. Written records suggest that Tillman was a partner in the store by sometime around the mid-1880s. Isaac Lowenburg was in ill health for a couple of years prior to his death in 1888. Although the store remained open for some time afterward, the presence of both Lowenburg and Tillman in the images makes it probable that they were taken sometime around 1886.

46 Robert M. Levine, Insights into American History: Photographs as Documents (New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2004), ix-x, 9-18, 51-59, 68-69. John Szarkowski also proposed five “primary [elements] of photographic vision” that suggest some of the biases historians should be aware of when using photographs as sources. They include whether or not the image truthfully represents the item photographed, the fragmentary nature of the photograph as a representative of the whole, what the photographer does and does not include in the image, a caveat against blindly inferring the whole from a single representation of it, and the fact that any image necessarily reflects the photographer’s own viewpoint. John Szarkowski, The Photographer’s Eye (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966), quoted in Marsha Peters and Bernard Mergen’s “‘Doing the Rest’: The Uses of Photographs in American Studies,” American Quarterly Magazine, 22, No. 3 (1977): 287-293.

47 Trachtenburg, Reading American Photographs.
Visual details expand information about the physical look of Natchez, including dirt streets, brick sidewalks, and contemporary signage. Characteristically, most of the men on the sidewalk, including Lowenburg and Tillman, wear vests and ties, and the laborers wear overalls and aprons. Embracing necessity more than fashion, nearly everyone wears a hat against the sun. The boys scattered along the sidewalk and elsewhere mimic their elders in the hats they wear, but make their own fashion statement by going barefoot. Regardless of body language, class, or race-based sub-groupings, most of those present pay purposeful attention to Norman’s camera.\(^\text{48}\)

Any historical analysis of Norman’s photographs would be incomplete without addressing their composition in terms of blacks and whites together in a single image. What do the photographs say about the often unspoken boundaries of the caste system that structured life in post-war Natchez differently, but still no less powerfully, than it had during slavery? Do the Franklin Street photographs represent only dividing lines based on race, or is there perhaps another layer to the relationships?

Slavery had been legally removed from the equation, but race remained a primary determining factor in a caste system that still positioned “superior” whites on top and “inferior” blacks beneath them. Additionally, whites functioned within hierarchical subsets that included longevity in the community, social station, religion, and economics. Blacks, too, maintained a nuanced, hierarchical class system. Free-born versus freed, 

\(^{48}\text{The Gandys speculated that the young man standing in front of Meeks and Mason in the dark suit and hat may have been August Botsai. He appears in other Norman photographs. Joan Gandy, interview by author, Natchez, Mississippi, August 11, 2008. Gandy and Gandy, }\text{natchez City Streets, 49, 60, 68,72.}\)
dark-skinned versus light, and job types varying from school teacher to day laborer were only three of many subsets within a larger whole. 49

Behaviorally, deference remained one of the primary expressions of a caste/class system. Many whites maintained an outward appearance of graciousness, while doggedly practicing lifelong racial, social and patriarchal attitudes of superiority. For blacks, however, deference was a pragmatic key to survival. The etiquette of deference was complex, and extended even to the greeting rituals involving men’s hats. When greeting whites, black men were expected to respectfully touch their hats. Whites never returned the gesture, but generally did return the greeting. Blacks, including those delivering goods from Lowenburg’s, went to the back door at white homes. If necessary to go to the front door, they stood, hats off, away from the door by the steps. 50

In business, the labor vacuum created by slavery’s demise sometimes led to an outwardly ambiguous working relationship between blacks and whites. Norman’s photographs bring some of these race-infused ambiguities into the light. Accustomed to viewing slaves as property and a source of free labor, whites now had to interact with them as free individuals who could and did expect payment for their work. While sharecropping would soon tip the power scales back in favor of landowners, downtown businessmen had to deal with black employees who, like whites, were entitled to wages. Race, however, remained an immutable dividing line. Blacks working in white-owned businesses remained at the bottom of the hierarchy, both racially and economically. No matter how long their employment or how good their work, common laborers were at the bottom of a strongly hierarchical pay scale.


50 Ibid.
The caveat here is against reinforcing pre-drawn conclusions by over-reading the images. Norman’s second photograph of Lowenburg’s is a case in point. The apparent marginalization of black laborers to one side of the group in front of the store could evidence race-based deference on their part, or their position in the economic hierarchy. In truth, it is probably both. The black workers stand to one side, but also nearer to the freight-hauling drays and dollies associating them with their jobs. In dress and location, they cannot be mistaken for employees who might wait directly on customers inside the store. It is entirely possible, too, that the laborers and their dray were been placed to the side to better showcase the storefront and the people on the sidewalk.

Left unanswered is the question of whether the image reflects the practicalities of posing people, carts, and animals on a major shopping street to achieve a client-pleasing result, or the personal vision of the photographer. Again, it is likely both. The images are staged to showcase the Lowenburg store and the Natchez business district itself. The spacious, quiet neatness of the streets, graded level to accommodate pedestrians as well as wheeled traffic, contribute to a sense of order and permanence. All is in readiness, both for shoppers and for new businesses to become part of the community. The images visually demonstrate, not only the nuanced details of life at the time, but also the importance of appearances in the business life of the post-war city.51

51Harvard University Professor of English and African-American Studies John A. Stauffer uses a Norman image of blacks and whites in front of the F.A. Dicks Drugstore to argue that his street scenes evidence “commercial interracialism or interspatialism,” in which the black/white spatial divide is broken down so that they appear “together in the same plane, interspaced on the sidewalks, and amid shop signs, advertisements, and entrances.” Within that composition, he maintains, is “a carefully delineated hierarchy of segregation” reflecting social hierarchies. Stauffer draws attention to similar postures and positions of both races, and maintains that the men are clearly “posing [italics his] for Norman, who has arranged the composition according to his vision of the city.” The question in the Dicks and Lowenburg photographs is whether Norman consciously composed his images with race and economics in mind. Practical staging conditions discussed in the Lowenburg photographs, and the need to create an image pleasing to a paying client would also have been in play. “Place,” whether based on race or economics, was often so deeply
A third Norman photograph faces the south side of Franklin between Union and Commerce Streets (see fig. 1.8, p. 178). Ten or more years after opening his store on the corner of Franklin and Locust, Aaron Beekman still sells hardware, clothing and groceries, and also buys cotton. The upper floor of his building was also the meeting place for Washington Lodge No. 2 of the Odd Fellows. It was the oldest lodge in Mississippi, and was only one of many such societies and organizations in Natchez during the latter part of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{52}

The store in the foreground at left represents an anomaly among Norman’s business photographs. Partially visible through the awning framework, the store sign reads, “MRS. S. SCHATZ, _____ STORE.” Between at least 1877 and 1884, Mrs. Seligman (Miriam) Schatz had a store at 116 Franklin Street. In Norman’s photograph, the dress mannequin and other goods outside visually advertise her clothing selections.

The 1877 City Directory and separate newspaper advertisements in 1880 and 1884

\textsuperscript{52}After the war, men’s and women’s secret societies and benevolent organizations continued, overtly and covertly, to play important roles in the Natchez social scene. Many were listed in city directories or other publications. At Reconstruction’s end, the City Directory listed no fewer than sixteen such organizations, including two “colored,” two for women, and six Masonic lodges. In 1881, Henry Norman’s photographs of Harmony Lodge members hung in the Masonic Temple. Along with the Odd Fellows’ Lodge pictured here, at least seven other such organizations functioned in the community. \textit{Complete Directory 1877}, 228, 230, 232; Rattray, 34-36.
describe a more eclectic assemblage of offerings, including fancy and dry goods, millinery, underwear, shoes, hats, jewelry, trunks, and notions.  

Miriam Schatz was certainly not the only Natchez businesswoman during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. Female proprietors represented in city directories, promotional tracts, and newspapers, however, generally tended to be milliners, rooming house operators, or teachers. There were some interesting exceptions. In 1870, Mrs. Dr. J.B. Hitchens, a physician and accoucheur (obstetrician), advertised her office at Madison Street and Cemetery Road. In 1872, Mrs. H. Black advertised a Ladies’ Bazaar. Just over two decades later, Mrs. R. Pullen advertised facial massage and steam treatments, and Mrs. H.A. Stone provided hair dressing at the homes of her clients.

Miriam Schatz may have been one of only two women whose places of business can be identified in a Henry Norman photograph. At a time when store signs frequently featured only the first initials and last names of their proprietors, the “S” identifies her as Seligman’s wife, and the “Mrs.” both points to Miriam as proprietor and differentiates her gender. To the right of her store, a more conventionally lettered sign advertises “V. DRUETTA.” There, in gendered anonymity, Virginia Druetta sold clothing, hardware,  

53 Miriam Wexler married the merchant (and widower) Seligman Schatz in Natchez in 1866. In a prenuptial agreement, Seligman Schatz deeded to Miriam a house and land, over which she had sole control. The family’s financial reverses necessitated Miriam’s borrowing against the house on Madison Street. She defaulted on the loan, and the house was sold to Henry Frank. In 1884, Mrs. Schatz advertised in the newspaper that she was selling out her entire stock to satisfy her creditors. Miriam and Seligman Schatz and their children Theresa, Philip, Stella and Arthur moved to New Orleans in about 1888. Seligman died there in 1891; Miriam died in 1917. A letter from Stella Schatz Glaser to her granddaughter, Phyllis, suggests that Miriam may have begun working out of necessity when Seligman lost his money “and with it his courage,” not long after their marriage. The 1880 U.S. Census lists Seligman’s occupation as “merchant” and Miriam’s as “clerk.” Complete Directory 1877, 237; Natchez Tri-Weekly New Era, December 10, 1880; Natchez Crusader, June 28,1884; Grandma Glaser to Little Phyllis, September 27, 1941, Jewish History Research File, HNF; Population Census Schedule 1880. I am indebted also to Teri Tillman, Natchez genealogist and researcher on the Jewish history of Natchez, for her invaluable help in securing information about the Schatz family and Virginia Druetta.  

54 Natchez Tri-Weekly Democrat, July 23, 1870 and August 8, 1872; Natchez Evening Banner, March 28, 1894.
and dry goods. According to the 1880 census, 31-year-old Virginia Druetta and her merchant husband Antonio (36) lived with their son, John on Franklin Street. Antonio died in 1883, and in early 1886, Virginia married William W. James, also a merchant. They continued to live on Franklin Street with Virginia’s son, John, and eventually, his wife and six children. John also became a merchant. It is probable then, that Virginia ran the store in her name sometime between 1883 and 1886, making it likely that the image was taken at about that time.55

Henry Norman photographed many merchants in front of their stores.56 Not so, apparently, with Miriam Schatz or Virginia Druetta. The clothing displayed outside of Mrs. Schatz’s would have been subjected to dust and dirt from unpaved streets. A storeowner could ill afford to risk devaluing cloth merchandise by leaving it outside in an effort to advertise. If it was outside solely for the photograph, it is logical that Mrs. Schatz would have given permission. In that case, why is she not in the photograph as well?

The absence of Miriam Schatz and Virginia Druetta from the image exemplifies another gender-based characteristic of Henry Norman’s surviving photographs. Many Natchez businesses regularly advertised merchandise catering to women’s needs and


56Norman once pointed his camera out a window of his upstairs studio to take at least two photographs of the store of Robert S. Dixon, his neighbor and fellow businessman across the street. Dixon, who stood in the doorway, sold paint, wallpaper, and other supplies for interior decoration. The building, which exists today, is notable for the ornate grillwork on its balcony railings. In one image, three white women (probably Dixon’s wife and two daughters) pose on the balcony. In the other, a black woman (probably a servant) is also seated to the right of the others on the balcony. It was not unusual for merchant families in Natchez to “live over the store.” Gandy and Gandy, Natchez: City Streets, 51; Item Number 37780404605 Thomas H. and Joan W. Gandy Photograph Collection, LSU.
tastes. Women themselves, however, rarely appear more than incidentally in existing
Norman photographs of downtown Natchez. More than once, the Natchez Democrat
expressed concern for the safety of female shoppers on the crowded city sidewalks. In
1880, the paper complained that “merchants, business men and hucksters [were]
obstructing the sidewalks with their wares and empty barrels and boxes,” emphasizing
that “…attention is called to the fact that ladies are often rudely jostled in the more
frequented parts of the city…” In 1883, the newspaper pointed to sidewalks blocked by
“cotton boxes, barrels and goods on exhibition.”\textsuperscript{57} Despite these textually expressed
concerns, Norman’s photographs leave the erroneous impression that, if women in late-
nineteenth century Natchez shopped at all, they did so anonymously and invisibly.

A contemporary photograph by amateur photographer and Natchez resident
Robert L. Stewart evidences a decidedly different vision of Franklin Street than those
taken by Henry Norman (see fig. 1.9, p. 179).\textsuperscript{58} Wheeled and pedestrian traffic visually
fills the street from one end to the other; mules and oxen haul wagons of many sizes,
types, and cargoes. The crowded conditions and camera angle make the street appear
more narrow and the buildings smaller. Possibly, the photograph was taken on a
Saturday, which was generally the biggest day for street traffic, as people came into town
from outlying areas to pick up supplies for the upcoming week.\textsuperscript{59} The contrast between

\textsuperscript{57} Natchez Democrat, March 3, 1880 and February 11, 1883.

\textsuperscript{58} The undated image was taken from the opposite end and other side of Franklin. Electric light poles
visible on both sides of the street indicate that it was taken sometime after 1886, when the first electric
plant came to Natchez. The Bee Hive Store, which was two doors down from A. Beekman’s, advertised a

\textsuperscript{59} By at least 1898, Saturday was known as “The Darky’s Trading Day.” In what may have been as
much a warning to whites to shop at other times and for blacks to shop only on Saturdays, the Democrat
carried a lengthy, politely derogatory description of the activity. Titled “local color,” the column described
people dressed “in their best” and “worst,” come into town for supplies and gossip. Women carried the
Stewart’s crowded, almost chaotic streets and Norman’s orderly vision emphasizing the stores themselves is dramatic. At different times of the day, week, or year, both visions of Natchez were probably accurate, but Norman’s preference for presenting Natchez as a place of invitingly wide, un-crowded streets and spacious stores suggests that he supported the city’s verbally expressed vision of itself as a civilized, sophisticated city of the future.

Notwithstanding the comparative chaos in R.L. Stewart’s photograph, Natchez-On-Top generally represented long-established, civilized lifestyles and respectability. In contrast, Natchez Under-the-Hill was its rough-around-the-edges cousin. Despite their divergent characteristics, each area was necessary to the other’s existence. Before railroads expanded freight transportation methods, those who lived and worked atop the bluff depended heavily on steamboats to move cotton, supplies, and passengers through the area. In Natchez Under-the-Hill, Norman documented the arrival and departure of many types of river traffic, along with the eclectic group of individuals and mainly middle-to-working-class families who energized the place with their busy presence.

Photographs chronicle the changing topography, as buildings and streets hugged along the base of the cliff shared contested space with the river. Change over time here was both linear and cyclical, as high and low river levels combined with bluff erosion to recurrently rearrange both the shoreline and the lives of its inhabitants. Three Norman

money and did “the trading for the family,” while men did “the work for all.” The writer described at length how “darkies” asked for price reductions and counted and re-counted both money given and change received. The article praised storekeepers for their patience, as much as it demeaned the blacks for an inability to figure sums and to hang onto their money. As an afterthought, the paper acknowledged that, during the busy season, as many as 1,500 people came into town to buy from those same merchants. Anderson, 228-229; Natchez Daily Democrat, April 2, 1898.
images illustrate the point. In the first one, taken along Silver Street sometime during the late 1870s, houses and other small buildings line the bluff side of the road. The river is just out of view, at left (see fig. 1.10, p. 180). Dominating the left side of the street is the brick Rumble and Wensel Building. Constructed in 1872, it was a landmark to river travelers. The firm supplied groceries and other staples to settlements up and down the river and its smaller tributaries. By 1888, Rumble and Wensel had joined the Natchez On-Top business community with a store on Main Street. Also visible is D. Moses and Sons’ “Cheap Cash (dry goods) Store.” In 1878, they, too, moved topside, to Commerce Street.\footnote{60}

Norman took a second photograph in the opposite direction from atop the bluff (see fig 1.11, p. 181). High water around the foreground buildings indicates how extensively the river could encroach on the human-occupied area of the shoreline.\footnote{61} Partly visible on the left is the Rumble and Wensel Building. Wharf boats like the one at center right were a fixture at cities and towns along the river, furnishing anything from office space to hotel rooms and dining facilities. Because they rose and fell with river levels, they sometimes provided a landing place for passengers and cargo. Constructed from the hull of the old \textit{Belle Lee}, the wharf boat visible here served the port of Natchez from 1874 to 1886.\footnote{62}

Newspaper accounts describe her fate, and also give a glimpse of the sentimental attachment to these unique fixtures that served river traffic and the city itself. In August

\footnote{60}The “Cheap Cash” image gained wider fame in 1994, when it was used as the stage curtain in the Broadway production of “Showboat.” As he did with many reproduced images, Thomas Gandy tinted the print. \textit{Natchez Democrat}, October 5, 1994.

\footnote{61}Ultimately, nearly all of the buildings, small homes, shanties and tenements scattered at the base of the bluff succumbed to the river, bluff erosion, economics, or all three.

\footnote{62}Gandy and Gandy, \textit{Steamboat}, 24.
1886, work began to demolish the structure. “Roustabouts,” said the paper, “wander about as if their last friend was dead.” Two months later, a short, wistful line declared, “the front looks lonesome without the wharf boat.” To combat riverbank erosion, the hull was scuttled near the Learned’s Mill breakwater, just north of Natchez Under-the-Hill proper. The Belle Lee’s remains did not go quickly. She stayed only partly submerged for two months before the deck floated off and left the hull to act as a breakwater.63

A third image provides a wide perspective of the Natchez Under-the-Hill shoreline (see fig. 1.12, p. 182). Possibly taken from the wharf boat, the long, muddy shoreline illustrates the challenge in transferring passengers and cargo when the river was low or the bank damaged from flooding. Larger boats had a long gangplank (called a “stage”) that could be lowered outward from the bow either to shore or to the wharf boat. The O’Neil Coal Yard (also pictured), provided energy to homes and river traffic for years.

Upriver from the Rumble and Wensel building, Rufus Learned’s Lumber Mill furnished lumber and shingles to sites as far north as St. Louis and as far south as New Orleans. Peter Little started the mill in the 1820s, and later sold it to a Scotsman, Andrew M. Brown. He expanded the mill capacity and brought in new equipment to better supply a booming antebellum construction trade. Rufus Learned was Brown’s son-in-law. By the mid-1880s, the mill filled construction supply needs up and down river by putting out over 25,000 board feet of lumber per day. During the 1890s and beyond, the

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63 Joan Gandy Research Note Cards, Gandy Collection, LSU; Natchez Daily Democrat August 19, September 30, October 21, December 2 and December 11, 1886.
comparatively gentle slope of the shoreline near the lumber mill was a popular site for African-American river baptisms. Whites sometimes attended as invited guests.  

Henry Norman documented the post-war resurgence in river traffic before an expanding web of railroads around the country made water less inviting as a primary method of commercial transportation. At Natchez Under-the-Hill, he photographed the smaller boats that transported cargo and passengers across the river to Louisiana and to settlements up and down river, as well as larger steamboats “loaded to the guards” with cotton bales intended for mills along the river. Larger boats could average anywhere from 4,000 to 7,000 bales of cotton in a single trip. By as early as 1884, cotton mills in Natchez alone could produce some eight million yards of finished cloth per year.

In frequency and cargo size, cotton was the most visible commodity shipped by water, but it was certainly not the only one. Nearly all household or industrial materials traveled via the river at one time or another. Cargo manifests regularly itemized sacks of

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64 For more information about the lumbering industry in the southwest in general, and on Andrew Brown and Rufus Learned in particular, please see John Hebron Moore’s Andrew Brown and Cypress Lumbering in the Old Southwest (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967). Baptisms were common in Natchez churches and, less formally, in ponds or other local bodies of water. Baptism remained an important ritual after the war as well. Gandy and Gandy, Norman’s Natchez, 164 and Landmarks, 60; Ronald L.F. Davis, Black Experience, 111-119.

65 Dave Rattray expressed the city’s ambitions thusly in 1881: “It is an intention of Natchez, now in course of execution, to connect herself by rail, with all of the great Northern and Northwestern systems of railways, with New Orleans and her connections, on the South, with the Texas-Pacific, and with the roads pushing towards Southwestern Texas and Mexico. All of this will be effected by the building of three comparatively short and inexpensive lines of road.” By the end of 1881, the city was connected with the state capital in Jackson via the Natchez, Jackson & Columbus Railroad. There, passengers and freight made connections that would carry them virtually anywhere that rail lines existed. Natchez, however, never had great success in translating its ambition to become a railroad nexus into fact. The extension to Columbus remained an uncompleted dream, as did many other proposed and barely-started lines that would have connected the city in nearly all directions of the compass. Of the eight railroad lines mentioned in the 1888 Natchez Democrat Trade Edition, six were “contemplated.” Different track sizes and financing were only two of the problems that plagued early railroad systems around the United States. In 1893, railroad bankruptcies helped plunge the nation – and Natchez – into a prolonged depression. Rattray, 7-8; Natchez Democrat Trade Edition, October 24, 1888.

66 Gandy and Gandy, Steamboat, 38-42.
cottonseed and rice, as well as barrels of oil, sugar, and molasses, and countless smaller items shipped to or from factories and stores. Statistics, however, cannot adequately convey the sheer magnitude of the cargoes traveling on the river.

Although she was not one of the largest boats, a photograph of the Bob Blanks illustrates the point (see fig. 1.13, p. 183). Launched in 1903, she was one of the last successful cotton boats. She burned in 1912, just a year before Henry Norman died.67 Visible in Norman’s image of one side and most of the front of the boat are no fewer than three hundred bales of cotton, sacks of grain and, on the far side of the top deck, a wagon. Passengers and crew give a sense of human scale to both the overall cargo size and to individual cotton bales. Significantly larger in size, the massive Charles P. Choteau sailed the river from 1878 until 1887, when she, too, burned. For a time, she was the largest sternwheeler afloat, and once carried 9,000 cotton bales in a single trip. She also set a single season record of 77,000 bales transported. 68

Before hydraulics and forklifts, handling cotton bales weighing several hundred pounds each required human labor. Neither words nor photographs can wholly describe the backbreaking physical effort required to load and unload cargo at Natchez Under-the-Hill. Norman sometimes photographed black stevedores and roustabouts, whose labor literally and figuratively kept cargo moving along the river as they transferred it to and from shore. Still camera images, however, cannot convey either the brute force needed, or the dangers involved. Ironically, Norman’s photographs might actually create a false impression. Generally photographed while briefly paused in their labors or sitting down at the wharf or on nearby cotton bales awaiting orders, inactive workers projected the

67Ibid., 44.
68Ibid., 42.
antithesis of the labor they performed. Such images validated contemporary stereotypes of black laborers as lazy or incapable of performing undirected activity. Conversely, mammoth bales of cotton piled high on steamboat decks generally appeared to validate Natchez’s successful participation in the post-war recovery of the cotton industry.

Dangerous working conditions and multiple forms of discrimination against black workers were not confined to cargo handling, either before or after the war. In his examination of the ante- and post-bellum worlds of Mississippi River travel for blacks, Thomas C. Buchanan describes a closely contained, racially charged culture in which black workers endured relentlessly difficult and unsafe working conditions, exhaustion, and threat of assault. Within that larger construct, a complex, intra-racial hierarchy determined status and job titles. Deck hands held the lowest positions, below cabin workers in rank. In turn, the latter category was divided into subsets giving preference – and higher pay – to barbers and stewards over waiters or porters. Enduring the gendered hardships of both their race and position were chambermaids, who were subjected to the added danger of sexual attack at a time when women generally had few legal rights.  

Perhaps unintentionally, a photograph of the decks of the Guiding Star visually demonstrates the race-based socio-economic hierarchy that existed above and below decks, as well as between passengers and crew (see fig. 1.14, p. 184). The Guiding Star carried cargo and excursionists upriver as far as Cincinnati. White passengers in the image congregate near the upper-deck rail. On a middle deck, white-coated African-American stewards stand to the near side of a lifeboat. Sandwiched in with the cotton on the bottom deck are the lowest in the pecking order, the roustabouts and engine crew.

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Intriguingly, two blacks appear on the top deck with the white passengers. Partially visible above the passengers’ heads at left, wearing the white jacket, apron, and dark vest of a steward, a black man stands casually in one of the narrow doorways. Standing apart to the right, above the stairs to the upper deck, a black woman – perhaps a maid – looks toward the camera. Possibly, she thinks she is out of camera range. It would be virtually impossible to purposefully pose everyone in a photograph like this, except perhaps to make a general – and likely shouted - request that they stand close to the railings, look toward the camera and, at the photographer’s signal, hold still. The question here is whether the two blacks on the upper level are there out of curiosity about the camera, or in passive defiance of the racial demarcations that literally and figuratively held them back.  

Passenger steamboat travel peaked in the 1890s. Whatever the race-based boundaries or economic practicalities of river travel, Norman’s photographs clearly indicate that people could travel in physical luxury, particularly in the “off season,” when cotton did not claim almost every free inch of space on board. Whether bound downriver to New Orleans, upriver to Louisville and beyond, or out for a day trip, excursionists could enjoy the relative comforts of their moving surroundings. At least once (possibly on commission), Norman photographed the interior of the majestic J.M. White. At 320 feet, she was not quite the longest boat ever built (the Grand Republic was longer), but she was surely among the most luxurious. Her wide decks afforded space for

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70 The Guiding Star broke up in ice in early 1893. Although attributed to the “Norman Studios” in the LSU database (Item Number 377804105118a), the image may not be one of Henry Norman’s. The “a” indicates a negative, but it may have been a copy negative, of which there are many in the Gandy Collection. The database lacks information about whether they are copies of glass negatives that no longer survive, or represent images from photographers other than the Normans. The image is used here to visually demonstrate working conditions that were contemporary with Henry Norman’s Natchez. It visually demonstrates the caste system that continued to permeate daily life in Natchez at that time. Gandy and Gandy, Steamboat, 68, 71, 72.
comfortable passenger promenades, and her interior featured carpeting, skylights, and even sterling silver water coolers. A concert piano graced her mirrored grand salon. From her first trip on the Mississippi in 1878, until she caught fire and burned at Bayou Sara in 1886, the *J.M. White* was widely regarded as the most opulent steamboat ever constructed.71

Eventually, time constraints, limited ports of call, fires, floods, and the low water that disastrously exposed mid-river snags or stopped traffic entirely sounded a death knell for the steamboats that had once dominated transportation.72 As early as the 1880s, steamboat workers began gravitating toward the railroads for jobs. By 1890, railroad lines could and did carry ten times more freight than river transport systems. By the turn of the century, that number was at least thirty times higher.73

Natchezians worked hard, but they also prized their leisure and family time. Many Norman images reveal the community’s corporate and individual social activities and the amusements popular around the country at that time. Formal and informal gatherings reflected the interests and concerns of both the community at large and smaller groups making up the whole. Norman’s images depict many such activities and their participants. They also reveal the communal dynamics and boundaries defining the times.

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72 Norman and others photographed many wrecks. Curiously, waterlogged cotton bales were often dried out and moved along to their original destinations. Gandy and Gandy, *Steamboat*, 106-111.

73 Ibid., 106.
Arguably, one of the more elegant social occasions in late nineteenth-century Natchez was the Kirmess. Held in 1887, it was a social charity event held at Judge Thomas Reber’s Forks-of-the-Road Casino. Years later, Reber proprietarily recalled the spectacular evening as “the most georgeous [sic] entertainment ever given in the city.” Distinguished guests arrived via special train from Jackson. Reber’s street railroad, which began running in 1886, provided transportation from the ferry landing to the casino. His electric plant (a Natchez first) lighted the gala evening. The internationally themed entertainment involved some 150 local people performing tableaux representing different countries. These amateur performers included members of some of the city’s most prominent families, including the Minors, the Stantons, and the Martins. Isaac Lowenburg’s daughter, Clara, later recalled helping to make costumes and the rehearsals held out at the fairgrounds. With her uncle, she performed in “a peasant costume in a Swedish dance and in German wooden shoes.” A Mexican band, lately from New Orleans, provided the music for the night.74

Henry Norman’s photographs visually evidence the expense and attention to detail that went into making the evening’s costumes and props. Probably owing to an absence of flash photography at the time, the surviving images document the posed, costumed participants, rather than the entertainment itself.75 Norman’s familiar, painted backgrounds indicate that he photographed people in his studio – most of them in small groups.76 One of the individual portraits showcased Mary Britton, whose role as

74 Reber, Proud Old Natchez, 62; Gandy and Gandy, Landmarks, 77-79.


76 Painted backgrounds and props first appeared in the 1860s and grew in popularity when larger picture sizes (such as the cabinet photograph) came into vogue. Newhall, 70-71.
Cleopatra, Queen of the Nile, made her one of the evening’s more spectacular figures (see fig. 1.15, p. 185). Written accounts described her dress “...of cloth of gold and silver gauze, embroidered with silver and gold serpents and with the sphinx exquisitely copied on one side, ... all the work of the fair hands of this royal lady, the whole effect due to her artistic skill.”

Britton’s surprisingly casual pose attracts as much attention as her obviously expensive costume. Other participants pose formally, even tentatively, as if not sure how to portray their characters or, perhaps, how to be themselves when in costume and in front of a camera. Britton, on the other hand, has flung herself casually into the chair, evidently enjoying her relationship with both her character and the camera. Intriguingly unanswered is the question of whether Mary Britton or Henry Norman suggested the pose. Within a year, Britton married Lemuel P. Conner, Jr., a Natchezian. While she might have appeared again in such a costume, it is probably less likely that, as a married woman, she would have again posed so provocatively.

77 The description implied that Britton made the entire costume herself. Prevailing attitudes toward blacks – many of them skilled seamstresses – made it very unlikely that they would receive public credit for their work. As for Mary Macerity Britton herself, “flamboyant” might best describe her, except that she also knew how to behave as a social and civic leader. Born in 1836, she married Natchez native and lawyer Lemuel P. Conner, Jr. in 1888, and died in 1936. The Conners and their children were active on the social and theater scenes. Henry Norman photographed them many times. Recognizing her efforts to identify negatives from Norman’s Studio, the Gandys dedicated *Norman’s Natchez* to Mary Britton Conner. According to Joan Gandy, Mrs. Conner visited Earl Norman’s studio many times in her efforts at identification. A post card in the Lemuel P. Conner Family Papers at LSU suggests that, in addition to her interest in preserving Natchez’s visual history, she had a business relationship with the Norman Studio as well. Signing herself as “Mrs. Lemuel P. Conner, of Clover Nook, Natchez, Mississippi,” she wrote, “Having a collection of Negatives from the Gurney and Norman Studios, dating from candle-light days to 1920, I shall be glad to receive orders for copies of you and yours. Wee folk, grown-ups, belles and beaux, brides and grooms, real grandmothers and grandfathers, negatives [sic] from portraits, daguerreotypes, and silhouettes, Natchez scenes, homes, schools, bluffs, Brown’s Garden and ‘Natchez-Under-the Hill.’ I have them all! Gift albums to order. Orders taken for photos enlarged or colored, and for miniatures. For particulars Phone 363 – 9 to 11 A.M.” Two “account books,” in Mary Britton Conner’s hand, also support the likelihood of a business relationship with Earl. Gandy and Gandy, *Norman’s Natchez*, 169; Joan Gandy, interview by author, Natchez, Mississippi, August 11, 2008. See also Connor (Lemuel P. and family) Papers, Series VI, Photographic materials 1864-1895, no date, Box AE27, #1403, etc., Folder 414, File: “Pictures Gurney and Norman,” no date, LLMC, and Gandy Photographic Collection, Unprocessed Materials, [Mary Britton Conner] notebooks, Mss 3778-09, Acc 2009-25, Box 1, LSU.
During the 1880s and 1890s, people regularly gathered for community events at the downtown building known variously as Institute Hall or the Opera House. There, they enjoyed dramas, burlesque, minstrel shows, opera, and comedy presentations. In May 1891, the Woman’s Auxiliary sponsored an entertainment that brought together the business and social worlds of Natchez at the “Businessmen’s Jubilee.” Henry Norman’s images make it clear that words alone could not adequately describe the event.

Like the Kirmess, the Jubilee was a fundraiser; this time, to raise money to decorate the rooms at the Y.M.C.A. Tickets were fifty cents each; reserved seats went for seventy-five cents. For a week, the *Natchez Democrat* built interest with intriguingly vague information, promising only that many young people would participate in the “new” and “novel” entertainment. In a shrewd business move, “the popular artist” Henry Norman advertised that he would photograph them in costume for free if they would call at his studio to book appointments. Norman also announced that he would “shortly introduce something new and novel in the photographic line, in the way of flash[ sic], style, &c., which will be its first introduction in the South.”

The next day, the *Daily Democrat* tried gamely to describe the event: “All of the trades and professions had representatives…in the persons of handsome young ladies who took pains to announce the [addresses] of their principals.” Verbal capitulation

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78 Completed in 1853 as part of the Natchez Institute, Institute Hall was located on Pearl Street at Bracken Alley. For a time during the 1880s, it was known as the Opera House. It was used for school-related activities, and during the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Hall became a primary gathering place of public entertainment. In addition to a sizeable auditorium, the building also variously housed the public library and a skating rink. Subject File, Opera House Natchez, National Register of Mississippi, June 20, 1979, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi (hereafter MDAH).

79 Norman’s “new” introduction was probably flash photography. Invented in Germany in 1887, “flashlight powder” was safer and more reliable than its predecessors. Norman may have used flash to photograph his family on the steps of Etania sometime around the time of the Businessmen’s Jubilee (see fig. 1.21, p.190). In that image, rounded or averted eyes combined with exaggerated shadows and sharp contrast to show the difficulties of using the medium in the early days when intensity was harder to control. *Natchez Daily Democrat*, May 24 and 27, 1891; Newhall, 133.
followed: “It would be an almost endless task to…give each particular young lady the praise that she deserved for her clever impersonations or to describe the respective costumes of each, but it suffices to say in a general way that all sustained their parts most admirably, and their costumes were appropriate to the trade…represented.”

Norman’s photographs clarify what the unique costumes looked like. The young lady representing Schwartz and Stewart’s store wore a gown literally covered in chain links, scissors, and hammers, and held a stove door as a shield (see fig. 1.16, p. 186). Representing an unnamed jeweler, a second participant was more fortunate – and more elegant – in a gown that was covered in watches and chains (see fig. 1.17, p. 186). Extended for a second night by popular demand, the event raised nearly $400.

In May 1888, an image in the Natchez Democrat presenting an entirely different gathering won praise for Norman, perhaps even more because of its subject matter than for his growing skill as a photographer. It depicted the Natchez Rifles, assembled in formation near the corner of Broadway and Washington (see fig. 1.18, p. 187). The newspaper especially lauded the image for being clear enough to recognize the faces of the men, and urged people to drop by R.W. Turner’s Bookstore to see it on display.

Organized in about 1887, the Natchez Rifles were only one of several white militias in the city. Older and better known were the Natchez Fencibles (the city’s oldest military company) and the Adams Light Infantry (organized in 1876). By the 1880s, nearly all members of the Natchez Fencibles were the sons of former members; Civil War

80 Natchez Daily Democrat, May 28, 1891.

81 The idea for the Jubilee did not originate in Natchez. The ladies purchased instruction books for putting on such an event from a woman in Ohio who owned the copyright. Ibid., May 29, 31, and June 1, 1891; Gandy and Gandy, Landmarks, 81, 83.

82 Gandy and Gandy, Landmarks, 24-25; Natchez Weekly Democrat, May 15, 1888.
veterans still comprised a majority of the Adams Light Infantry. All three companies regularly participated in drill competitions, but the Natchez Rifles were especially well known for their precision work.\(^{83}\) These and other groups frequently marched in parades, which were especially popular toward the end of the century.\(^{84}\)

Volunteer militias were an outward manifestation of the growing Lost Cause movement that began in earnest in 1880. The Adams Light Infantry was one of the first such organizations in Natchez.\(^{85}\) Norman’s image of the young men standing at attention was a powerful, visual reminder that the spirit of the Old South still lived. Perhaps the image of an “army” of young men standing ready to again defend Mississippi’s rights made it easier to come to terms with visions of the defeated and broken men who returned from battle, or those who did not return at all.

Like many other manifestations of the Lost Cause, Norman’s image demonstrates Alan Trachtenberg’s theory of the importance of photographs as “cultural memory.” During the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, photographs were seen as traces of past experiences, representing both private and public histories. In incremental ways, individual perceptions and memories contributed to the larger whole. Trachtenberg defines cultural memory as the “shared (hence public) conception of the way things were

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\(^{83}\) McCormick, 25.

\(^{84}\) Natchez also had at least one African-American veterans group, although it is unclear whether Henry Norman ever photographed them. Amateur photographer Robert L. Stewart (who also took the earlier-mentioned image of Franklin Street) photographed former members of the “Grand Army of the Republic” standing in a formation similar to that of the Natchez Rifles in Natchez sometime in the 1890s. MDAH, Stewart Photograph Collection, Item Number 133.

\(^{85}\) Kubassek, 160.
that must have brought about the way things are.” Cultural memory thus becomes a tangible, visible part of the social experience.\textsuperscript{86}

In the quest to validate and advance the Lost Cause Movement, visual reminders such as Norman’s photograph of the Natchez Rifles took on added emotional importance. Norman, the photographer-artist, has staged the dramatic moment perfectly, using both the camera angle and lighting to clearly illuminate each man’s face, as well as their unfurled flag. The long line of disciplined figures stretching into the distance adds to the symbolism, making the men the connective tissue between the record of a just-past moment and an idealized vision of more distant past still alive in the collective imprint of cultural memory. The men carry forward into the present, not a vision of the ugliness of war, but of the reason and idealism that prompted it in the first place.

Weather cooperating, Natchezians especially enjoyed their outdoor public spaces. Along with those of their waterborne counterparts, excursions by rail increased during the 1880s and 1890s. Newspapers tracked departures and arrivals; Henry Norman and his camera sometimes did as well.\textsuperscript{87} The number of travelers participating in rail excursions could be large. In September 1894, the \textit{Natchez Evening Banner} reported the return of some six or seven hundred people traveling on a single train from New Orleans.

Carefully separating blacks and whites in both print and in practice, the newspaper


\textsuperscript{87} Gandy and Gandy, \textit{Norman’s Natchez}, 194.
differentiated the crowd into three coaches of whites, and 10-12 coaches of “coloreds.”

Now absent their once-promised freedoms, blacks rode separately in “nigger cars.”

Train service to the Landsdowne picnic grounds, out on Pine Ridge Road, facilitated large excursion parties closer to home. As many as 2,000 passengers could travel to the popular area and enjoy boardwalks, scenic paths, and even a pavilion. People came by wagon as well. Mixing the comforts of home with being out of doors, many brought along parlor rockers and other chairs. The images are a reminder of a different era, when men wore long pants, white shirts, and jackets, and women kept their bodies covered by long sleeves and skirts. Both sexes wore hats against the sun. Modern picnic attire of shorts, tank tops, and bare feet would have been scandalous. The Natchez Rifles image may have been part of a July 4th fundraiser in 1888, when the Adams Light Infantry sponsored an event that began with a parade by all three militia groups through downtown to the railroad depot. There, people boarded trains to the picnic grounds. Many brought along rifles for traditional target competitions. The day ended with a fireworks display.

Norman once photographed a crowd of picnickers watching from variously safe distances the preparations underway for a hot air balloon flight (see fig. 1.19, p. 188). In the image, the partially inflated balloon holds the attention of many onlookers. Young

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89 Weapons are often visible in Norman photographs of this type. In one image (68-69), a large group of men, women, and children holds fishing poles and musical instruments. Two men carry rifles; one of them points the weapon straight at Norman’s camera. Gandy and Gandy, Landmarks, 62-63, 70-73,75; Natchez Weekly Democrat, July 11, 1888.
boys have braved standing near the inflation apparatus at the base. Ghost-like, vapors rise from the partially inflated balloon’s top. Norman has successfully captured the moment of anticipation and interplay between the comfortably watching crowd and a nineteenth-century amusement form imported from elsewhere for their entertainment. 

Landsdowne was not the only sizeable gathering place for recreation. Long before the war, the Pharsalia Racetrack at the edge of town was a particularly popular spot for affluent citizens, who both raced and placed substantial bets on their thoroughbred horses. Those belonging to the aristocratic Bingaman and Minor families were nationally known champions. By the 1840s, however, “commoners” and, sometimes, free blacks were allowed to race their lesser horses and mules after the main races of the day. The Bingamans and Minors abandoned the track, and the imposing grandstand became an increasingly popular gathering place for blacks. During the 1880s and 1890s, Henry Norman photographed the large, crowded grandstand, along with horse and mule races. He photographed, too, the adjacent fairgrounds, which presented everything from circuses to fairs. By 1908, laws against horse racing had virtually legislated Pharsalia out of existence.

Even more important to people than the group activities and amusements linking them as a community were their personal connections with home and family. Norman artfully photographed quiet, shady, residential streets and the houses lining them on either

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90 The occasion may have been a picnic sponsored by the Phoenix Fire Company #7 to raise funds to build a new engine house. *Natchez Evening Banner*, May 4, 1889.

side. He also photographed the people living there, whose enlivening presence and activities helped create the city’s neighborhoods. To a rising middle-class especially, family photographs at home visually connected them with the most tangible symbol of their success. To many in appearance-conscious Natchez, houses were a concrete measure of status. Catering to that mindset, Norman often chose porches and steps to serve as backdrops. By the late-nineteenth-century, porches had become something of an institution in America’s growing suburbs, replacing less comfortable, and often more crowded, front stoops in big cities. As gathering places for family and friends, porches were neighborhood connection points for the exchange of news and gossip.

Norman often posed his own family members at home, possibly trying out new techniques or equipment. At Etania, the Norman family posed on the rear steps of the house with members of the Field family (including Clara’s parents), and a black female servant (see fig. 1.20, p. 189). John Stauffer points to this as one of several Norman images demonstrating late-nineteenth-century, race-based social hierarchies. He calls attention to the Normans’ “loose” family circle, including the children’s pets, but excluding the servant by placing her on the periphery in the background. He also notes that Norman himself is on the periphery, as if, he says, to distance him from his wife’s family. Stauffer believes that, while it apparently conveys a kind of amiably paternalistic interracialism, the image also demonstrates a frequent visual motif among white Southern

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93 Published in both *Norman’s Natchez* (22) and *City Streets* (13), the image is also on permanent display in the Stratton Gallery in Natchez. Clara Norman is in the front row at left, next to her children, Henry C. Norman, Jr., Clara, and Burdette. The boy at right, next to Henry C. Norman, has been reported to be Norman’s nephew, Lonnie Simmons, but he was 23 in 1880, when he was living with the Normans, and would have been too old. It may, in fact, be another nephew, Clifton Field.
elites: status in white families that underscores the spatial separation of blacks from corporate and family circles.94

Race-defined boundaries were a common presence in Norman’s photographs. “Spatial separation,” however, was now based on economics as well as race, since formerly unpaid black slaves were paid employees. Even in Northern households, servants as a group enjoyed only marginal status in family units. Norman’s images, including this one, reflect parallel hierarchies of race and class within the white household. Norman’s own position in the image probably has a more practical reason. What Stauffer perceives as his “slight remove” from his wife’s relatives is probably due less to family relationships than a need to keep himself accessible to the camera.95

Another Norman family image (on Etania’s front steps) seems to contradict both Stauffer’s view of racially motivated marginalization and this author’s view that, if they appeared at all, paid servants would be on the periphery of the family group (see fig. 1.21, p. 190).96 The image suggests that such boundaries may have sometimes been more porous. The family group is smaller and more spread out on the wide steps. Larkin and Omelia Field again sit at the top, along with Clara, who holds a baby (probably Earl). A young man sits on the lowest step with the children. As before, Henry is in the front, on the right. Seemingly contradicting the hierarchies of race and economics, however, a black female sits on a middle step between the young man and Clara Norman.

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94 Stauffer, 247, 252-253.

95 Ibid., 253.

96 The image may have been taken with flash. The shadows from the porch pillars are sharply defined and one-directional, as are the ones cast by the figures on the steps. The steps have a pronounced pool of light in one place, but not in others. Facial shadows are also sharply delineated. The light source is strong enough that the house interior is partially visible through the open front door.
Norman put what he learned from photographing his own family to use elsewhere in and around the city. In these carefully composed images, multiple generations sit comfortably on porches or in their yards. To occupy their hands, some hold a book, a newspaper, or even a child. In bribed cooperation, perhaps, children often hold family pets, toys, or other cherished possessions of the moment. If present, servants or nursemaids are almost always on the periphery or near the youngest child. People are dressed in “Sunday clothes,” suggesting that they knew in advance that Norman and his camera were coming.

In addition to the natural riser effect of posing people on steps and porches, using houses as backdrops gave greater control of background activity, while showcasing the houses themselves. In one image, Norman positioned the unidentified parents on the porch, framing them with the intricate latticework of the railing (see fig. 1.22, p. 191). A vacant rocking chair to the right of the mother suggests that he took at least one other photograph, possibly including a grandparent or nursemaid. The mother holds the baby on her lap. The girls pose demurely on the steps; two of them hold pet cats. Freed from proximity to his female siblings, the family’s heir apparent stands in the yard, proudly showing off his metal tricycle. Only the blurred faces of the father, the boy, and the baby – all of whom moved at the same, inopportune moment – mar what is otherwise a visual statement of middle-class status and respectability.

Not all such images are equally successful. Some raise more questions

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97 To date, no specific evidence has emerged to indicate how Henry Norman made people aware that he was coming, or whether he took his photographs under contract or on speculation. Photographing families at their homes both played to their convenience and showed them what Norman could and was willing to do. A satisfactory photograph there might also draw them into his studio at a later time.
than they answer about why Norman composed them as he did. For one image, he abandoned the controlled background of a house in favor of a small, cleared space amidst the ivy or other vines in the yard (see fig. 1.23, p. 192). Porch pillars and flooring are evident on the left. Family members are dressed stylishly and well. The baby sits quietly, if a bit tentatively, on the grandfather’s knee. Direct gazes, good posture, and stillness from the participants promise a good photograph.

In the background, however, two black women watch interestedly from across the street. They may have been curious about the presence of Norman and his equipment, or simply wanted to be in a photograph. The question is whether Norman was aware of them. If so, why did he allow them to remain in the field of view? Did he take this image for his own amusement, and rely on another attempt – absent the intruders – to produce one the family would buy? Would he have shown this image to his clients?

Norman also took his camera out into some of the outlying areas around Natchez. At what may have been a sharecroppers home, he photographed a group that includes a white man, a young child, and two older females (see fig. 1.24, p. 193). Completing the group, a young black couple stands near the white man’s side. The relationships are unclear, and shadows make it difficult to decipher details, but the body language invites questions. Robert M. Levine’s framework for interpreting the “internal” and “external” information in photographs helps focus the questions that may guide further research.98

Although cropped elsewhere for publication, the image is printed here at full field.99 Visually suggesting an equality of possession, each man leans against a porch post. While a third party may have owned the property, which man had the greater right

98 Levine, 13, 42, 47, 50.
99 Gandy and Gandy, Norman’s Natchez, 160; Gandy and Gandy, Landmarks, 46.
to say, “my house?” Despite their racial differences, did both men share equally in labor and in possession, or did one work for the other? What does the image suggest about sharecropping and race? Did the black woman work the fields with the men, or in and around the house? Was there a mother somewhere inside, or was one of the “girls” in the shade, in literal or practical terms, a mother at an early age? The people here are less well dressed and more casually posed than those in the middle-class neighborhoods closer to town. Did they, too, know that Henry Norman was coming, or did he happen on them? It is unlikely that they could pay for the photograph. What did Norman want to say, then, by photographing this particular group? Which image – one from in town, or this one in the country – tells the more powerful story from the standpoint of history?\(^{100}\)

Other photographs, too, raise questions about the social context of the times. Norman frequently photographed children outdoors at play in an era when toys or games required imagination rather than batteries.\(^{101}\) Although similar in content, two such images leave different impressions. Once again, in the absence of textual information, it is impossible to tell whether they were taken in sequence or even near each other in time or place. Viewed together, however, they demonstrate racial stereotypes. In each image, children in a yard gather around a black man holding a fiddle.

In the first image, three white children stand by the fiddler, who sits in a chair (see fig. 1.25, p. 194). All, including the fiddler, are barefoot. The girls wear light-colored dresses; their hair is parted and relatively neat. Owing to negative damage, the boy’s image is indistinct, but he appears to wear a straw hat. The children pose quietly,

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\(^{100}\) There are comparatively few Norman photographs of people working in the fields or in shacks. Given the number of images that may have been lost, destroyed, or unsalvageable, however, it cannot be said that Norman did not photograph more sharecroppers, field workers, or others in the Natchez area.

\(^{101}\) Gandy and Gandy, *Norman’s Natchez*, 158, 190, 191; Gandy and Gandy, *Victorian Children*, 84.
apparently comfortable with the camera and obedient to the instructions of the man behind it. The fiddler holds his violin and bow carefully at rest on his knee and across his lap, as would someone who knows the value of the instrument and the music it can produce. Whatever activity preceded the photograph has stopped for this moment.

Who are the children with the fiddler? Has the lady of the house delegated him to keep them out from underfoot inside by entertaining them out in the yard? Where did he get the fiddle, and where did he learn how to play it? What is his relationship to the family? He is evidently a trusted adult, or it is unlikely that he and the children would be posing together for the photographer’s camera. Whatever the relationship, the poses, body language, and expressions convey comfortability and curiosity.

Nuanced differences make one photograph the record of a moment in time and the other a caricature devoid of human dignity. A second image reveals some of the characteristically demeaning racial stereotypes of the day that depicted black children as “picanninys” (see fig. 1.26, p. 195). As in the first image, the fiddler is black, but here, the children are black as well. The boy wears a ragged outer shirt knotted high on his waist, and cut-off pants. A cap covers his hair. The girl’s loose-fitting dress is clearly too large, and her hair is “woolly” and “braided in sundry little tails . . .”

The fiddler holds his violin casually and looks toward the camera. The children more nearly face him, and their arrested movements look artificial and wooden. Their hands are thrown into the air as if they are dancing to the fiddler’s music, but their flat-footed stances and neutrally somber expressions contradict that assumption. They look,

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102 The words describe Topsy, a character in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. She was later viewed as a comic figure, rather than as the anti-slavery symbol she was originally intended to be. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (new York: New American Library, 1966), 258, quoted in “The Picanniny Caricature”, [http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/picaninny/](http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/picaninny/). (accessed November 17, 2010).
instead, as if they are reluctantly, minimally, doing what they were told to do. In contrast to the earlier image, the body language here is more clearly – and unsuccessfully – staged. Was this image purposely composed to depict black children at play in a way that visually reinforced negative social attitudes at that time? Other images – including Henry Norman’s studio portraits – appear to contradict that idea.

Studio portraits, both individually and in small groups, were a uniquely personal experience for both the photographer and his subject. Many were created to memorialize public occasions, or to support Natchez’s business and community interests. Others were intended more personally for family and friends. Powerfully and personally, photographs afforded people the opportunity to visually articulate what it was they wanted to say about themselves, but could not always put into words.

Whatever the occasion, Henry Norman directed his efforts toward creating the finest and most artistic image possible for patrons who sat before his camera lens. His reputation as a portrait photographer grew substantially in the decade before Kodak cameras changed photography. In 1880, the Natchez Weekly Democrat praised a “striking” enlarged and tinted image of the newspaper’s late co-founder and editor, Paul A. Botto, and described Norman’s studio as “…now one that cannot be surpassed in the South.” More widespread notice followed in 1881, when Rattray favorably compared Norman’s work to that of two of New York’s most famous “positionists,” Napoleon

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103 The newspaper described “…one of the best life-size pictures of the late Paul A. Botto which we have yet seen.” Botto was a co-founder and editor of The Natchez Democrat. He died in 1879 at 39. Coloring images was practiced as early as 1842. A small amount of pigment, mixed with water, was applied to specific areas of a daguerreotype with a camel’s hair brush. Natchez Weekly Democrat, September 15, 1880. Taft, 44-45; Sexton Records; Power, The Memento, 87.
Sarony and Jeremiah Gurney, and praised his knowledge of photographic science and his artistic approach to making portraits, rather than simply “likenesses.”

However proficient amateur photographers might become, when people wanted quality portrait work, they continued to go to Norman’s studio. There, he used the latest in camera and processing equipment, and offered the then-current techniques of crayon, India ink, water, and oil to produce life-sized portraits even from “ordinary album cards.” Large orders (including one for portraits of Norman’s fellow Masons to hang in their Lodge) could be filled easily and efficiently.

Despite Norman’s skill behind the camera, until the end of the century, the studio experience could be something of an ordeal. A close look at the floor just behind people’s feet in many images reveals the telltale, footed base of the clamping device used to keep heads in position (see fig. 1.27, p. 196). In time, chairs, tables, papier-mâché tree stumps and other props served a similar purpose. For small children, a nearby parental foot or a hand, while visible on the negative, could be cropped from the final print.

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104 Trachtenburg discusses the challenge of producing “not just a likeness but a portrait” (24) in his analysis of the earliest form of portrait photography (the daguerreotype), in the context of the personal and political identity crises leading up to the Civil War. Trachtenburg, Reading, 21-70.

105 In the mid-1860s, cabinet prints (approximately 4x5½ inches), raised demand for larger prints made directly from negatives. By the late 1880s, the development of silver bromide emulsions allowed greater use of artificial light in making photographs, and led to enlargements from negatives. India ink, crayon, and oil were used to retouch finished prints. Prior to the 1871 invention of the gelatin dry plate, photographic enlargements (such as the “Imperials” of the 1850s) were both difficult and expensive to create. Taft 131-132, 324, 356-357; Baldwin, 45-46, 48-49.

106 Norman continued to draw notice for his high-quality portrait work through at least 1884. That August, he made an India ink enlargement of an original photograph of a little boy. He also created life-sized crayon portraits of the family of Natchez businessman and lumber mill owner Rufus F. Learned. According to the newspaper, crayon portraits lasted longer than oil paintings. Natchez Daily Democrat, August 30 and November 23, 1884.

107 The image is an example of a double negative, created using a camera with multiple lens tubes that could take images in close timing to one another or even at once. In this case, the girl moved slightly between one image and the next.
Victorians believed that the face conveyed the presence or absence of character. Facial expressions and posture thus took on added importance in the photographer’s studio. To avoid the appearance of a dissatisfied scowl, handbooks and manuals often admonished people to look away from the camera, and even gave advice on how to discreetly pose the hands. By Norman’s day, shorter exposure times meant more natural expressions, but conveying moral character or social position through one’s face and body language remained a challenge.

Community leaders and businessmen often came to the studio. The publisher Thomas Grafton posed at a small table cluttered with papers (see fig. 1.28, p.197). Standing in front of the same painted background, Rev. Thomas of the Zion Chapel A.M.E. Church wore the robes of his profession and held a Bible (see fig. 1.29, p.197). During Norman’s forty-year career, many people came more than once, creating visual timelines of themselves in the process. That was true of John R. Lynch, who came in his youth and as a still-handsome older man (see figs. 1.30 and 1.31, p.198).

Women from the business world also came. A Gandy file print, with the word “Schatz” on the reverse, suggests that Miriam Schatz (mentioned earlier in connection with her Franklin Street store) was among them (see fig. 1.32, p.199). Cassius Tillman’s wife, Rebecca posed. In one portrait, she wears a long dress with a single gold chain and earrings, and stands next to a table (see. fig. 1.33, p.199). Perhaps linking her to her merchant husband’s world, she holds what seems to be a small purse; a storekeeper’s bell

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108 Focusing on the Daguerreotype, Trachtenberg examines in detail the photographer/sitter relationship within the context of advancing technology and the increasingly emotional atmosphere in America prior to the Civil War. Photographic images, by that time, were considered to be a source of character illustration, as well as inviting inspiration to emulate the “great” figures of the day. Trachtenberg, Reading, 21-70.

109 Gandy and Gandy, Landmarks, 99.
is nearby. When Ricka Tillman died in 1899, the Natchez community widely mourned her loss.\(^\text{110}\)

People sat for the camera singly and in small groups. James H. Miller (the son of a Natchez hackman), who went on to become a successful surgeon, sat for his portrait as a young man (see fig. 1.34, p. 200).\(^\text{111}\) Dr. Stratton, who spoke at Mrs. Tillman’s funeral, posed with his three granddaughters, Lisa, Sydney, and Caroline (see fig. 1.35, p. 200).\(^\text{112}\)

The names of many people are now lost (see figs. 1.36 and 1.37, p. 201). Their visual “presence” is seemingly all that remains to mark their existence in Natchez or, perhaps, anywhere else. Norman stored his glass negatives in paper sleeves. Over time, the paper often degraded, taking with it any information written on it. Sometimes, negatives had last names scratched into them. Even anonymously, however, the portraits convey people’s wish to have a “visual history…a visual sense of their own past.”\(^\text{113}\)

Norman generally made his studio portraits chronologically, as people came to his studio to create personal and collective reminders of what they looked like at a given moment, or to commemorate important events in their lives. The images reveal timelines marking changes in family size and makeup, rising or declining wealth and health, and individual or corporate accomplishments. When considered by subject, rather

\(^\text{110}\) The Rev. Dr, Joseph Stratton, from the First Presbyterian Church, was one of many speakers at her funeral. Also beloved in the Natchez community, Stratton, came to Natchez in 1843 and served as pastor/pastor emeritus until his death. Gandy and Gandy, \textit{Natchez: Landmarks}, 96.

\(^\text{111}\) The Miller family is discussed in greater depth in chapter 3.

\(^\text{112}\) Stratton’s photograph is an example of the problems posed by dry and flaking emulsion.

than chronologically, however, the images often become more intriguing for their represented groups than as evidence of the passage of time.114

African-Americans present one of the more interesting groups. In the comparative privacy of Norman’s studio, race and class were secondary to achieving an image that pleased both the client and the photographer. The words “black” and “white” were more important as terms of physical description than as indicators of racial dividing lines. In posture and expression, these images often contradict contemporary visual stereotypes of blacks as inferior, poor, or uneducated.115 Whatever their dress, these individuals convey a sense of dignity, self-worth, and purpose mirroring that of their white counterparts (see figs. 1.38 and 1.39, p. 202).

John Stauffer maintains that Norman’s African-American portraits are “his finest accomplishment,” and proposes that he created [italics mine] “a range of respectable middle-class types…[who] suggest that ascent [italics his] to the middle-class can narrow the racial divide: in post-bellum Natchez, class could thwart the power of race.”116 The question is whether Norman, in fact, created these “middle-class types” or revealed them. They were an already-extant group in his time, whether or not they saw in themselves the collective identity that historians now apply to them with the benefit of hindsight.

Intriguing – and often unanswered – questions emerge with the images. Why did blacks go to Norman for their portraits?? Was it to mirror the whites who also patronized his studio, or because photographs were an important part of their visual identity as

114 Please see chapter 2 for a study of children’s studio portraits and the Gandys’ approach to them.
115 Connoting their literacy, blacks and whites in many Norman photographs hold books.
116 Stauffer, 256.
blacks instead? For both blacks and whites, clothing was an important indicator of class. Were Stauffer’s “respectable middle-class types,” then, using photographs to “thwart the power of race,” or to distinguish themselves from lower-class blacks? Did blacks and whites alike go to Norman because they wanted a visual reminder of an accomplishment, to show what they did for a living, to associate themselves with family – or simply to preserve a good likeness of themselves as human beings living in a given place at a given time?

Questions arise, too, regarding Norman’s personal feelings about race. He often posed blacks similarly to whites, using the same props and backgrounds. Absent daybooks or other sources that might indicate who came to his studio, it is not possible to say that others knew who was being photographed at any given moment. Did he take his studio portraits knowing that his white customers would be unlikely to realize how similarly he composed African-American and white images? Was he conscious of how many photographs he took – of middle-class blacks, especially? In the relative privacy of his studio, did Henry Norman consciously preference the visual appearance of racial equality over separation, or was he simply intent on creating the best possible images for his clients, whatever the color of their skin?

In June, 1897, the Normans and their four children moved from Etania to a newly-constructed house and connecting studio at 506 Washington Street, behind Trinity

[117]Skin tones made it difficult to photograph blacks without either obscuring or grotesquely accentuating their features. Frederick Douglass, who always supervised his own photographs, recognized the inherent power of photographic images. He wrote in 1849 that, “Negroes can never have impartial portraits, at the hands of white artists.” The idea suggests that, in the hands of a good photographer, blacks could be represented well and fairly. It also suggests that blacks came to Norman because he knew how to produce a good image. Quoted in Joshua Brown, “Historians and Photography,” American Art, 21, No. 3 (2007): 9.
Episcopal Church.\textsuperscript{118} A \textit{Natchez Democrat} reporter toured the premises just before the studio opened. Under the heading, “A Place of Beauty,” he described in detail the spacious (20 by 36 feet) “operating room,” with 216 feet of glass in the side wall, and skylights.\textsuperscript{119} Norman also had a new, top-grade camera lens, and backgrounds painted expressly for him in Chicago and New York. There were dressing rooms for women, and an ample processing room for making and tinting prints.

In his conclusion, the reporter complimented Norman as both a photographer and a citizen of Natchez:

He has been following his profession in our city for many years, and the results of his efforts all bear the stamp of skill and genius in all their details. He has given Natchez a studio that is not only a credit to the city, but which will rank as one of the finest and most completely [sic] equipped and furnished in the whole South, and our citizens – those who still wish fine work – should show their appreciation of his enterprise by patronizing him for all their work in the future.\textsuperscript{120}

All three Norman boys followed in their father’s footsteps. He probably mentored them, just as Henry Gurney had undoubtedly mentored him. After the new studio opened, Henry C. Norman, Jr. ran the old location for a time.\textsuperscript{121} Earl worked with his father as a youngster, and was twenty-five when Norman died. Their work together makes it

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{118} According to the 1900 U.S. Census, Norman’s widowed mother-in-law, Mrs. Omelia Field, his sister-in-law Katie Field, and nephew, Clifton Field also lived at Washington Street. Whether they moved with the Norman family or came later is unclear. Population Census Schedule 1900. Please see also Appendix B.

\textsuperscript{119} The skylight appears on the 1901 edition of the Sanborn-Perris insurance map, but not in the 1904 edition. Sanborn Insurance Maps of Natchez, Mississippi, September 1901 and December 1904, HNF; \textit{Natchez Democrat}, June 27, 1897.

\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Natchez Democrat}, June 27, 1897.

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid. At that time, Norman’s studio was in the Neihysel Building on Main Street.
\end{footnotes}
difficult to definitely credit Henry Norman with images made after 1900. In a notable exception, however, he photographed prominent members of the Jewish community in 1901 for a retrospective edition of the Jewish newspaper, *The OWL*. In it, a quote attributed to Norman lends insight into his work ethic and his feelings about the people who had been his neighbors and fellow businessmen throughout his career: “[Mr. Norman] remarked to us that the Jews of the city had always been among his best friends, and he assisted us as a token of his appreciation of that friendship.”

Henry C. Norman, Sr. died at his Washington Street home on July 3, 1913. Pastors from the Jefferson Street Methodist and First Presbyterian Churches co-officiated at his funeral, held at the house amidst “friends and acquaintances.” A Masonic burial followed in the Natchez City Cemetery. Written in 1901, Norman’s holographic will bequeathed to his wife Clara, “all of my real estate.” There followed a touching, if enigmatic, statement: “Love is a guide for justice. In a mother’s Heart may be found a never ceasing fountain from which flows a stream of love for her children. To this I can trust for equal justice, and motherly care of our children.” In a more practical codicil, dated December 26, 1910, Norman bequeathed various sums of money to his three older

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122 Adding to the difficulty, Henry and Earl Norman’s images have been processed together in the LSU database under the heading of either “Norman Studio” or “Norman Studios.” Images added to the collection by the Gandys are also attributed to the Normans. Gandy and Gandy, *Norman’s Natchez*, 25.


124 The cause of death was listed as “chronic interstitial nephritis.” Certificate of Death, State of Mississippi, Henry C. Norman, Sr. July 3, 1913, Gandy Papers, HNF.

125 The notices indicate that Norman was a member of “Harmony Lodge F. and A. M., the S.S. Prentiss Camp No. 4, Woodmen of the World and Natchez Lodge No. 3 of the Knights of Pythias. The Masons presided at the burial service in the Natchez City Cemetery. H.C. Norman, Sr. Obituary notices, un-credited and undated, Gandy Papers, HNF.

126 Will and Probate, Henry C. Norman, September 21, 1901, Adams County Courthouse.
children, as well as to members of Clara’s family. Earl received “my Photo Studio & Fittings whenever established.” Continuing the Norman Studios presence in Natchez, Earl ran the Earl M. Norman Studio until his own death in 1951.

Henry C. Norman’s visual legacy to Natchez was in the glass negatives that emerged years later from the crates on Mary Kate Foster Norman’s porch. Through his camera lens, he saw people he knew as friends, neighbors, and business associates. He saw strangers, who came because they had heard about him, or who coincidentally happened to be nearby at a given moment. He saw people at work, and relaxing with their families. He saw blacks and whites, the young and the old, the very rich, and the very poor. He saw life in the grand and ordinary activities that made Natchez uniquely what it was at the close of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth.

It is not known whether Norman had time to look at his negatives either comparatively or chronologically. If so, he saw time pass in young-turned-older faces, and in buildings that evolved according to different needs and altered tastes or that disappeared altogether. He saw changing technology in electrical wires and paved streets and, ultimately, in the automobiles that replaced the horse power transporting Natchez when he arrived. Whether he photographed the city with history in mind, or worked instead to make the best possible image at an intersection of time and place is a matter of conjecture. Probably, it was both.

\[127\] Ibid.
CHAPTER 2
THOMAS H. AND JOAN W. GANDY:
PRESERVING PHOTOGRAPHS AS HISTORY

Thomas Howard Gandy had a lifelong passion for history in general and the Lower Mississippi River Valley in particular. Born in Tallulah, Louisiana in 1921, he became interested in history as a child, and had heard stories of Union troops massing nearby in preparation for the siege of Vicksburg across the river. After graduating from the Louisiana State University School of Medicine in 1944, he served in the military overseas, then completed his internship and residency at Shreveport Charity Hospital. He married Sue Buford in May 1950; they settled in Natchez, where he practiced Internal Medicine for the next forty years. At one time, he was Chief of Staff at the public hospital, and was the first physician to serve as Chairman of its Board of Trustees.

Gandy was passionate about local history and historic preservation. He was President of the Natchez Historical Society and was a founding member of the Historic Natchez Foundation in 1974. The latter organization originated in response to


2 Thomas H. Gandy to Dr. John Bennett, Secretary, Homochitta [sic] Valley Medical Society, Natchez, Mississippi. May 5, 1960. Gandy Papers, HNF.


4 Natchez Democrat, February 26, 1995, Gandy Papers, HNF.
community concerns over the increasing loss of Natchez’s historic buildings. Gandy also furnished photographs for, and participated in, local restoration projects that included historic Jefferson Military College in Washington, Mississippi.

People in Thomas Gandy’s Natchez lived surrounded by visual reminders of the city’s eighteenth- and nineteenth-century past. Many homes and commercial buildings Henry Norman and his son, Earl had photographed still stood – albeit often disguised by time and twentieth-century design preferences. By 1950, thanks in part to the popularity of its annual Pilgrimage events, Natchez was well into a rebirth of interest in its ante- and post-bellum architecture and dramatic depictions of a long-vanished way of life. Today, home tours and romanticized reenactments of an elegant, antebellum lifestyle continue to promote a city that is heavily dependent on tourism for its economic survival.

Thomas and Sue Gandy bought a house near downtown in 1957. At the corner of North Pearl and Monroe Streets, Myrtle Bank both reflected and nurtured Dr. Gandy’s growing interest in Natchez history. Standing atop the remains of a brow of land once known as Myrtle Ridge, the house faces the majestic Stanton Hall across the street. The

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5 “Outline History of Historic Natchez Foundation,” n.d., HNF.

6 After something of a trial run in 1931, the ladies of the Natchez Garden Club, led by Katherine Grafton Miller, surprised Depression-era pessimists by organizing a highly successful series of home tours known as the Natchez Spring Pilgrimage. Costumed club members and their families guided fascinated tourists through mansions around the city and nearby countryside. In 1936, procedural skirmishes split the club and spawned a competing group known as the Pilgrimage Garden Club. Until interrupted by World War II, the two clubs conducted separate tours. Afterward, they reconnected as Natchez Pilgrimage Tours, and have functioned as such ever since. Tour profits have financed the restoration and maintenance of several historic Natchez properties, including Longwood and the House on Ellicott’s Hill. For a more in-depth history of the garden clubs of Natchez, please see Susan Thorsten Falck, “The Garden Club Women of Natchez: ‘To Preserve the South We Love,’” (unpublished thesis, California State University, Northridge, 2003). I am indebted to Susan Falck for this and other information used throughout this thesis.

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original structure may have been constructed as early as 1818. Parts of the existing house date from the 1830s, with alterations dating from the 1870s.⁷

One of Dr. Gandy’s patients alerted him to the deteriorating boxes of photographic negatives on Mary Kate Norman’s patio. He had already heard about the visual history they might represent. Older Natchezians remembered having seen Henry Norman’s images on display at Earl’s studio during the Depression.⁸ The Normans had no children, so when Earl died in 1951, the studio closed, and its contents were moved to the partially covered patio of the Norman home.⁹ For years, Mary Kate refused to sell these tangible reminders of Earl and her father-in-law.¹⁰ They represented a personal attachment for her as well, since she had long been a colorist at the studio. About Mary Kate, Earl Norman once said, “Sometimes I say I’m sorry she learned the photographic business. Maybe it’s because she’s so darned good that I get a bit jealous of her. I’ll match Mrs. Norman with anybody on coloring and retouching.”¹¹

⁷ National Register of Historic Places, Nomination form (copy), Gandy papers; Mary Warren Miller and Ronald W. Miller, *The Great Houses of Natchez.* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986), 83. Please see also Appendix B.

⁸ Earl Norman offered to sell some of his father’s 8x10 glass negatives to J.O. Frank for $2.00 each. Joan Gandy, e-mail message to author, August 4, 2007; Earl M. Norman to J.O. Frank (State Teachers College, Oshkosh, Wisconsin), May 23, 1933, Norman (Earl M.) and Family Papers, MDAH.

⁹ Red-haired Mary Kate Foster was born in Natchez. Her grandfather, Allison H. Foster, came to Natchez with the Union Army during the Civil War, married a local girl, and became one of Natchez’ leading citizens. He served as the Adams County Chancery Clerk, and owned Foster’s Funeral Home. Henry Norman photographed Foster and his family in the yard of their home, having no idea that his son Earl and Foster’s granddaughter, Mary Kate, would marry. Gandy and Gandy, *Landmarks,* 21.

¹⁰ Reflecting on their parallel working partnerships with their husbands, Joan Gandy said of Mary Kate: “I think I know something of her reluctance to give up the negatives after Earl died. She and Earl had worked closely together . . . I believe that she thought perhaps one day she would get back to the negatives herself and ‘do something’ with them.” *Natchez Democrat,* June 21, 1951; Joan Gandy, e-mail message to author, August 4, 2007.

¹¹ Cunningham, 215; and Gandy and Gandy, *Landmarks,* 217.
Gandy paid many visits to Mary Kate, patiently letting her get to know about him and his interest in history before offering to buy the boxes.\textsuperscript{12} Late in 1960, she sold him the negatives, a few prints, and some antiquated camera equipment. He never publicly disclosed the terms, but he did later modify their agreement to give Mary Kate a percentage of the gross sales of any prints he might make from the negatives.\textsuperscript{13} Given the boxes’ condition, Gandy expected to find little inside worth saving. Box after box, however, revealed surprisingly well-preserved negatives of portraits, street scenes, and the steamboats that once ubiquitously plied the Mississippi River. Of an estimated 75,000 negatives, some 60,000 were salvageable. Roughly half of them were glass plates, and half were celluloid. Many glass negatives had survived their unprotected storage in better condition than had their more recent celluloid counterparts.\textsuperscript{14} Knowing little about photographic preservation, Gandy sought help from the Eastman Kodak Company. The immediate need was to stabilize the negatives and retard their ongoing deterioration. The emulsion on many thin glass plates was peeling off, leaving a still recognizable, but distorted image no longer supported by a glass base. Dry and flaking emulsion presented an opposite, but no less destructive, problem.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{12} Gandy bought the crates without looking inside, but he was hoping to find images of steamboats or Natchez Under-the-Hill. “I thought if I could salvage 10 good negatives, I might be able to document something that had been lost.” \textit{Natchez Democrat}, June 11, 1978; Gandy and Gandy, \textit{Steamboat}, v; Joan Gandy, e-mail message to author, August 4, 2007.

\textsuperscript{13} Joan Gandy confirmed both the original agreement and its unsigned amendment. A sampling of Thomas Gandy’s net worth statements shows several payments to Mrs Norman. Joan Gandy, interview by author, Natchez, Mississippi, August 11, 2008; Gandy Papers, HNF.

\textsuperscript{14} Henry Norman used wet plates at least through the 1880s, and both wet and dry plates thereafter. Gandy found that the wet plate negatives degraded more slowly than celluloid, and produced especially crisp photographic prints. Negative sizes generally ranged from about 2x3 inches to 11x14 inches. Gandy and Gandy, \textit{Victorian Children of Natchez}, 35. \textit{Natchez Democrat}, February 26, 1995.

\textsuperscript{15} Gandy sometimes received help from unlikely directions. A 1961 letter suggesting ways to separate plates that were stuck together without sacrificing the images was addressed to Sister M. Bartholomew,
Initially, Gandy stored the boxes at Magnolia Vale, the home of his friend, Howard Peabody. There he transferred the negatives into archival boxes before moving them to Myrtle Bank.\textsuperscript{16} When the Gandys divorced in 1970, he kept the house.\textsuperscript{17} With a basement full of negative boxes, equipment, and the beginnings of a substantial darkroom, he also had room for an expanding collection of historical maps and books on Natchez and the Mississippi region.\textsuperscript{18} For the rest of his life, Thomas Gandy’s passion for medicine shared space with the visual history emerging from his basement darkroom.

With modern equipment, he could make larger prints from negatives than was possible in Norman’s time.\textsuperscript{19} By 1967, to support a growing fascination with the details revealed through enlargement and cropping, Gandy was shopping for an enlarger. “I would like,” he said in letters of inquiry, “to . . . enlarge parts of 8x10 negatives. . . . The enlargements would vary from 8x10 up to 16x20. . . . The subject matter will consist of river scenes, street scenes, groups of people, and portraits.”\textsuperscript{20} Occasionally, discovered

\textsuperscript{16} Peabody was Rufus Learnd’s great-grandson. Norman and Gurney each photographed Magnolia Vale and Brown’s Gardens. One of the first boxes Thomas Gandy opened contained images of those places. When he saw them, Peabody became an enthusiastic participant in the process of organizing, identifying, and preserving the images. Joan Gandy, interview by author, August 11, 2008.

\textsuperscript{17} Sue Buford Gandy vs. Thomas Howard Gandy, Chancery Court Records, October 13, 1970.

\textsuperscript{18} Weight makes storing glass negatives safely difficult. The Anniston, Alabama Public Library had a collection of 40,000 glass and nitrate negatives from a local photography studio that also depicted life in a small, nineteenth-century town. Most of the glass negatives were destroyed when their wooden storage shelves collapsed under the weight. Tee Morgan to Thomas Gandy, August 3, 1993, Gandy Papers, HNF.

\textsuperscript{19} Enlarging apparatus did not become readily available until at least the 1880s. Consequently, most prints until then were the same size as their negatives. Wellin, 7.

\textsuperscript{20} Gandy bought a Beseler enlarger in 1972. Thomas Gandy to Simon Omega, Inc. (September 26, 1967) and the Charles Beseler Company (September 27, 1967); Invoice No. 80987 C, Treck PhotoGraphic, Inc., November 2, 1972. All in Gandy Papers, HNF.
details either verified or corrected published history. In 1971, for example, Gandy studied an enlarged print of a steamboat dining-room interior. Identified in one book as being from the *City of Providence*, it was reported elsewhere to be from the *City of St. Louis*. Peering through a magnifying glass at a 16x20 enlargement, Gandy found a table napkin with *City of St. Louis* clearly visible on it.21

Gandy’s enthusiasm for the images was contagious. Pragmatically, he enlisted help from local residents in the identification and organization process. His friend, Howard Peabody, sometimes wrote information on the back of file prints.22 Older families in the Natchez community often recognized faces and places outright, or could furnish verifying images from family albums and elsewhere. Gandy initially assumed that the negatives came only from the studios of Henry or Earl Norman, but ones predating Henry’s 1870 arrival began to surface. Gunboats on the Mississippi River and antebellum-style clothing indicated the work of his predecessor, Henry D. Gurney. Gurney’s distinctive numbering system scratched on negatives affirmed his work.23 At

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22 In addition to their descriptive content, some of the prints at LSU have written on the reverse, “From the Gandy-Peabody Collection of Earl Norman Negatives. From original Glass neg. Property of Howard B. Peabody, Jr. Pls. return,” Peabody’s letter to Eastman Kodak suggests a business partnership between the men. Peabody says that he and Gandy formed Norman Reproductions together as a way to occasionally sell prints. Peabody also said that Gandy had inspired his interest in photography when he purchased the negatives. Joan Gandy affirms the close friendship between the two men, but disputes the existence of any formal partnership. She maintains that, by at least February 1967, the business then known as “Norman Reproductions” was Thomas Gandy’s alone. Gandy and Gandy, *Norman’s Natchez*, 9: Gandy Photograph Collection, LSU; H.B. Peabody, Jr. to Eastman Kodak Stores in New Orleans, Louisiana, February 21, 1967, Gandy Papers, HNF; Joan Gandy, interview by author, Natchez, Mississippi, August 11, 2008.

23 Other Gurney images emerged when *Norman’s Natchez* was published and Natchez resident William Stewart produced negatives marked with Gurney’s numbering system. Stewart inherited them from his father, who was reportedly a friend of Henry C. Norman’s. Eventually, Stewart allowed Thomas Gandy to make a set of prints for the Historic Natchez Foundation. Joan Gandy, interview by author, Natchez, Mississippi, April 5, 2007; Gandy and Gandy, *Norman’s Natchez*, 21.
the other end of the timeline, automobiles and celluloid negatives connected images more with Earl Norman’s era. Earl’s studio registers facilitated that identification process.24

Considered together, photographs by Henry Gurney, Henry Norman, and his son, Earl, covered a time span of nearly a hundred years. Gandy was especially drawn to Henry Norman’s images. Covering about a forty-year period, they pictured the people and daily activities of a hardworking, culturally sophisticated, multi-layered community. Now, in Gandy’s time, families who had posed for Norman on their front porches looked out from photographs at their own descendants – many of them still living in Natchez and gathering on those same porches to visit. In an early letter, Gandy expressed both his ambition for the images and his recognition of their historical significance. “I hope,” he wrote, “to be able to properly catalogue these plates and negatives and to make an effort to preserve and restore them, primarily for the historical value.”25

Working with the images, Thomas Gandy came to know Henry Norman well. Effectively, what Gandy interpreted as late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Natchez in the past tense was the city that Henry Norman lived in and experienced as his own present. This unique relationship continued for the rest of Gandy’s life, simultaneously illuminating Henry Norman’s Natchez while informing Thomas Gandy’s own vision and understanding of that period in the city’s history. What, to Gandy, began as a self-described “awesome task” quickly became an “awesome responsibility.”26

While he would be widely recognized for preserving the images, Gandy also sought

24 Several of Earl M. Norman’s daybooks are at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History in Jackson. Sadly, however, none of Henry Norman’s studio registers have yet come to light.

25 Gandy to Eastman Kodak Company, December 28, 1960. Gandy Papers, HNF.

energetically to promote recognition of their value as visual history, rather than solely as art or anecdotal illustrations. Lectures, exhibits, and books became the primary mechanisms by which he pursued that goal. Those efforts are a focus of this chapter.

Over time, the images became more widely known. Interest from museums and educational institutions in Mississippi and elsewhere added scholarly credibility to them as visual history. Identifying and organizing the photographs took a structured turn in February 1967, when the *Natchez Democrat* began publishing images and challenging readers to identify people and locations. The answer followed in a later issue, along with some background history. Reflecting Gandy’s interest in structural preservation, the paper accompanied early street scenes with more recent views of the sites.27

In 1967, the *Democrat* featured some of Norman’s wedding portraits. Increasingly, people came forward to identify themselves or others, and to request prints.28 Demonstrating the occasional happenstance, in June 1968, the paper published a photograph of a family seated on the porch steps of a house (see fig. 1.20, p. 189). The caption read in part, “[Dr. Gandy] has shown the picture to a number of people in Natchez and this area and no one has been able to identify either the persons in the picture of [sic] the home.” Mary Kate Foster Norman herself stepped forward to identify the Norman and Field families, sitting on the steps of the Norman home, “Etania.”29

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27 Most of the images credited “Norman Reproductions.” Until the early 2000s, varying series titles included “Yesteryear,” “Can You Remember When,” and “Picture from the Past.” *Natchez Democrat* office; Gandy Papers, HNF.

28 *Natchez Democrat*, May 21, 1967 and May 5, 1968; private letters to Thomas Gandy, January 1969 (Danville, VA) and May 1969 (Burlington, IA). All in Gandy papers, HNF.

29 *Natchez Democrat*, June 16 and June 23, 1968.
Sometime after 1974, the *Democrat* published an image of a then-unknown African-American family, dressed in “Sunday clothes,” and seated outdoors at the edge of a field.³⁰ The image contrasted to stereotypical views of impoverished blacks. It was a visual reminder that, despite later being stripped of their embryonic political and economic power by Reconstruction’s failure and the advent of Jim Crow laws, Natchez was once home to a successful, middle-class black population.³¹ Re-emerging into public view during the Civil Rights Era, such thought-provoking images suggested an earlier common ground based on economics as well as race, and human dignity as well as social hierarchy. In Gandy’s twentieth-century time, the images had the potential to re-awaken an awareness of – if not yet an appreciation for – that common ground.

Interest in the images expanded. By 1968, Gandy was regularly presenting slide lectures to various organizations.³² A natural and engaging storyteller, he contextualized the images with historical information and anecdotes. Usually, he used one of two slide series. The first focused on Mississippi River steamboats and Natchez Under-the-Hill, and was popular with groups from beyond the Natchez area. A second series featured “one hundred year comparative scenes of downtown Natchez, locomotives, fire trucks, pictures of people, homes before and after renovation or destruction, and a shorter section on Natchez Under-the-Hill and Mississippi River steamboats.” Gandy often inserted early

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³⁰The Gandys often cut images from the *Natchez Democrat* (most without dates). The mention of Joan Gandy in the caption, however, places it sometime after the Gandys’ marriage in 1974. Identified later as members of the Washington Miller family, the image is discussed further in chapter 3. Gandy Papers, HNF.

³¹Please see Appendix A.

³²A sampling of newspaper clippings and extant letters indicates that, in 1970 alone, Gandy was invited to speak to organizations including the Jackson Exchange Club (January), the Jackson Rotary Club (March), the Pascagoula Rotary Club (April), the Natchez Garden Club (April), the Monroe, LA Rotary Club (July), the Natchez Lions Club (September), and the Louisiana Art and Folk Festival at Monroe (October), Gandy Papers, HNF. He also spoke to many school groups.
garden scenes into the latter series when presenting it to women’s groups. Surviving slide lists indicate that he adapted other presentations as well.

The Natchez Museum (1968) and the Armstrong Public Library (1970) temporarily exhibited selected images. Providing a more permanent venue in 1971, Gandy changed the name of Norman Reproductions to Myrtle Bank Galleries, and opened the first floor of his house to tours. There, visitors examined photographic prints, camera equipment, maps, and documents. In 1979, the gallery moved to a small structure behind the house, where it remained for several years.

In April 1970, the Old Capitol Museum in Jackson presented fifty-two photographs from the Gandy Collection as part of the Mississippi Arts Festival. The exhibit added institutional credibility to the collection’s historical value. Directly and by inference, exhibits in the Old Capitol Museum represented Mississippi history, culture,

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33 Extant slide lists include, “Delta Queen” n.d.; “History of River/Steamboats” (12/15/97); “Jewish Presence in Natchez” (2/8/99); and “Vidalia Chamber of Commerce Talk” (01/09/01). Most trays contain from 60 to 80 slides. Gandy’s notes on steamboats and the history of the river include information on the type and history of individual boats. Thomas Gandy to J.C. Mingledorff, Monroe, LA, June 5, 1970; Gandy to Ethel Holloman, Alexandria, LA, January 19, 1971; slide trays, “Joan’s Extra Slides,” (3-ring binder). All in Gandy Papers, HNF.

34 Clarion Ledger, Jackson, Mississippi, September 2, 1968; See also Thomas Gandy, Subject File; and Elbert Hilliard to Thomas Gandy, March 25, 1970, Series 1377, General Subject Correspondence, 1960-1970, both at MDAH.

35 Thomas Gandy to Robert A. Cook and others, April 20 1971, Gandy papers, HNF; Natchez Democrat, October 21, 1979 and March 17, 1985; Thomas Gandy, Jr., interview by author, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, May 5, 2011. Thomas Gandy, Jr. recalls spending many of his weekends as a teenager, guiding visitors through the exhibits. He and his father also spent time sanding down and refinishing the damaged wood and polishing the brass lens housings on Henry Norman’s weathered cameras. I am deeply grateful to Mr. Gandy for graciously sharing memories of and insights about his father, as well as his own contagious enthusiasm for his father’s work on the photographs and in coloring maps.

36 Gandy’s association with the Old Capitol Museum and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History began at least as early as 1969, when he donated some of Earl Norman’s photographs to the MDAH. MDAH Director Dr. R.A. McLemore described the donation as “…one of the most valuable photographic collections in the Department.” Appealing to Gandy the historian, McLemore also invited him to join the Mississippi Historical Society. Gandy accepted. R.A. McLemore to T. Gandy, October 20 and 22, 1969; T. Gandy to R.A. McLemore, October 28, 1969. All in Gandy papers, HNF; Jackson Daily News, April 15, 1970.
and art. During the Civil Rights Era, the rest of the country frequently viewed Mississippi only through the harsh lenses of its nineteenth-century role in slavery and often-violent twentieth century attitudes toward segregation. State museums and other institutions were challenged to find ways to balance those perceptions. While Henry Norman’s images could not refute history, in their subject matter and variety, they had the potential to broaden and enhance the perspectives of Mississippians and tourists alike.

The 1970 exhibit provided a brief, intriguing look at life in late-nineteenth-century Natchez. Images of store-lined dirt streets, mule-drawn cotton wagons, and riverside attractions like the manicured paths of Brown’s Gardens were visual reminders of a time now past. A handful of prints introduced Thomas Gandy’s experiments with the tinting methods once used in Norman’s studio and elsewhere. To help people understand early photographic processes, Gandy provided a nineteenth-century camera and some glass negative plates. At his suggestion, the museum positioned the camera so that visitors could look through the lens and see the photographic process at work. When the popular exhibit closed, Gandy modestly expressed his hope that the “photographs have served to stimulate some additional interest in Mississippi history.”

37 Specific information about the images exhibited is unavailable. Thomas Gandy hoped to someday produce “a book all in color and properly executed [that] might provide an attraction that is lacking in some books of old photographs.” Jackson Daily News, April 15, 1970; The Clarion Ledger, April 13, 1970; See also T. Gandy to Byrle Kynerd [Director, State Historical Museum], June 30, 1970, General Subject Correspondence, Series 1373, MDAH.

38 Hilliard’s July 7 letter illustrates one of the inherent dangers in handling fragile glass negatives, even for experienced professionals: “I hated so much breaking the Bishop Elder negative, and I hope that it is still usable.” Elbert Hilliard [curator of History, and later Director of the Division of Historic Sites and Archaeology] to T. Gandy, March 25, 1970 and July 7, 1970; Jackson Daily News, April 15, 1970; R.A. McLemore (Director, Mississippi Department of Archives and History) to T. Gandy, April 13, 1970; Byrle Kynerd [Director, State Historical Museum] to T. Gandy, June 11, 1970. All in Gandy papers, HNF.
The exhibit was the first of several at the Old Capitol Museum, and may have been the only one Gandy worked on with his friend, Howard Peabody. Gandy was soon to receive help from another direction. In 1973, the Natchez Historical Society elected him President. Second Vice-President Joan Warren McRaney was a Natchez native, who had returned to the city in 1970 with her daughters Melissa and Nancy after her marriage ended. Mutual interests in Natchez history and preservation soon converged on a more personal level, and Gandy and McRaney married in 1974. Throughout their thirty-year marriage, the Gandys collaborated on lectures, exhibits, and books to present the images and to emphasize their value as visual history. Joan Gandy’s newspaper and publishing experience added significantly to these efforts. Freeing her husband to balance his full-time medical practice with a love of the visual history emerging from his darkroom, she managed collection-based correspondence, including frequent requests to purchase prints or to use Norman photographs in publications and exhibits. She also researched historical background on Natchez and photography. A skilled writer, she created the informative text for exhibits and books, and was largely responsible for the organization of major exhibits using photographs from the Gandy collection.

The Gandys presented their first collaborative effort at the Old Capitol Museum near the close of Bicentennial celebrations in 1976. At that time, towns and cities across America had lately experienced, if not a greater passion for their past, at least more


40 Joan W. Gandy, interview by author, Natchez, Mississippi, August 11, 2008.

41 Ibid. For several years, Joan Gandy and others ran Myrtle Bank Publishers, which reprinted several small history books on Natchez. They included Natchez, Historical and Picturesque (1983), Natchez: On Top Not, ‘Under the Hill’ (1983), and The Memento: Old and New Natchez, 1700-1897 (1984). Over time, Gandy was also a journalist, Managing Editor, and Community Editor for the Natchez Democrat.
curiosity about it. In the national sensory overload, photographs could often show the past more quickly than text might verbally explain it. Catching the eye, images could also catch the mind, perhaps even long enough for questions to form: “Who are these people?” “What happened here?” “What does this mean?” These and other questions often led to further research on how the past and present fit together.

With 165 images, the exhibit was over three times larger than the one in 1970. As before, Thomas Gandy chose the images and created the prints. Joan Gandy wrote the accompanying text. Arranged topically in categories including Rural Life, Faces and Fashions, City Scenes, Children, Diversions, The River, and Historic Moments, the images circled the Old Capitol Building’s second floor rotunda. They provided an overview of the material culture and social fabric of a small, hard-working, late-nineteenth-century Southern city, cosmopolitan in its activities, and eclectic in its interests. Planning began in mid-1975, under the leadership of then-State Historical Museum Director Dr. Byrle Kynerd. Patti Carr Black assumed the Directorship when Kynerd resigned in 1976.

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44Ibid. Unfortunately, existing records do not indicate the specific images that were exhibited.

45Peter Burke maintains that images play an important role in studies of material culture, in part, because they communicate detail more quickly, and often more clearly, than textual descriptions. They show how things worked, who used them, and where they were used. They bring out details that were often taken for granted and are thus not included in written texts. Late-nineteenth-century advertising methods are one form of material culture that appear often in Henry Norman’s photographs of downtown Natchez stores. Peter Burke, Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008; repr., London: Reakton Books, 2001), 81-102.

46After early, informal discussions, Joan Gandy wrote to Kynerd, who then extended a formal invitation. Kynerd estimated that the exhibit, set to run from October 24, 1976 to January 3, 1977, would attract more than 10,000 people. J. Gandy to Byrle Kynerd, August 27, 1975; Kynerd to Mrs. Thomas H. Gandy, n.d.; Kynerd to T. Gandy, January 21, 1976. All in Series 1514, Museum Exhibit Files 1958-2004, MDAH.
As museum director, Black focused mainly on the cultural aspects of Mississippi history, including art, music, and writing. In composition and content, images in the Gandy collection blended photographic art and history. During the selection process, images were often considered first on their artistic merits, and then their intrinsic cultural and social history. The collection was, said Black, “Important because of the documentation of the physical features of Natchez and the Mississippi River and actual events in the history of Natchez. Rare because of the size of the collection and condition of the glass plates. Beautiful because of the quality of the photography, [and] the talent of Henry Norman, both aesthetically and technically.” She believed that it fully demonstrated the professional skill and eclectic interests of both Henry and Earl Norman. The images documented the look and feel of the city in photographs of architecture, river activity, and community life. At the same time, the Normans’ portrait work memorialized the people who had lived some of the city’s history.

Black also believed that the photographs were an excellent way to educate Mississippians about their state’s abundant, diverse heritage. To that end, she asked the Gandys to permit their use in a new, traveling exhibit program that would insert them

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47 Patti Carr Black, interview by author, MDAH, May 11, 2011. In a 1993 Review Essay, historian John E. Carter examined a dozen books that either used, or studied the use of, photographs as historical evidence. He attempted to develop a methodological structure for using images to examine and contextualize both the art and history implicit in them. In Carter’s view, art and history can and do co-exist in photographic images. They also locate people and places in space and time, giving them a past, validating them and translating the social history in the images. John E. Carter, “The Trained Eye: Photographs and Historical Context,” The Public Historian, Vol 15, No. 1 (Winter 1993), copyright 1993 by the Regents of the University of California and the National Council on Public History, 55-66.

48 Patti Carr Black, e-mail message to author, January 25, 2011; Black, interview by author, May 11, 2011, MDAH.

more directly into the educational realm. Mississippi-related exhibits were then in demand by other museums in the state, as well as by libraries and schools.\textsuperscript{50} The 1976-77 “Norman Photographs” exhibit was the first in a long series of traveling exhibits created and managed by the Mississippi State Historical Museum.\textsuperscript{51}

Between 1978 and 1982, three Old Capitol Museum exhibits presented photographs from among Henry Norman’s many studio portraits of Victorian children.\textsuperscript{52} A number of those images later became part of Mississippi’s Traveling Exhibits Program, and proved to be especially popular with the viewing public. “Natchez Victorian Children” toured the state for an unprecedented nine years before being retired in 1990.\textsuperscript{53} While a timeline could be traced in many of the faces, fashions, and props, the exhibited images were generally selected more with art than history in mind. Years later, however, Patty Carr Black suggested that the reasons for the popularity of the images went beyond their surface charm to more historically representative values. She said, “[The images] captured so vividly a way of life in Natchez not shared by most of the state: opulence and fashion in an era in which most of the state was still suffering from the Civil War’s aftermath, particularly the black population. . . . They were beautifully composed and appealing portraits of fellow-Mississippians – children, moreover!”\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{50}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{51}Patti Carr Black, e-mail message to author, January 25, 2011.


\textsuperscript{54}Black, e-mail message to author, January 25, 2011.
In observance of Black History Month in February 1983, the Old Capitol Museum again featured images from the collection. Co-presented with an exhibit on the career of opera star (and Mississippi native), Leontyne Price, “Portraits of Black Natchez” revealed a previously under-recognized African-American presence in Natchez between the end of the Civil War and the early 1900s. As was the case in Henry Norman’s time, blacks in the 1980s were still widely regarded as poor, uneducated, lazy, and inferior to whites. Circling the museum’s Rotunda, Norman’s studio portraits presented a decidedly different view.

They also contradicted some of the most deeply embedded stereotypes in American history, and intentionally so. Patti Carr Black described it as a “shaking-up sort of exhibit.” Norman’s images challenged the conventional view that African-Americans were second-class citizens by revealing instead a “culture of prosperous, educated, middle-class Natchez citizens who were black.” Except for those with known identities, the images were presented without captions. In Black’s view, any additional information where none was available would have been “gratuitous.” Ultimately, she believed, the images “spoke for themselves.”

The Gandys shared Black’s view of the portraits. Thomas Gandy had discovered the images during the turbulent years of the Civil Rights Movement. Joan Gandy


56 At the time of the “Portraits of Black Natchez” exhibit, Carr was at work on a presentation about the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s – the first such exhibit in the South. Official Records – Printed Finding Aids, Vol. RD 31 and Series 1514; Series 1620 “Portraits of Black Natchez”; Black, e-mail message to author, January 25, 2011.
maintained that her husband was determined to make known “the beauty in this people.”

In time, the Gandys did publish and exhibit images:

...where African-Americans are picking the cotton, and they are obviously sharecroppers, or...working for someone who owns the property probably...[T]here are some pictures where they are in subservient roles – obviously, they were the low, working class in that time, but...we kept coming across these beautiful people – handsome, beautifully dressed....[W]e did as much research as we could and...found out about this class of people that we had here who were just amazing. So, [Thomas Gandy] had a real desire to promote that.57

Thomas Gandy was quoted as having said that the “Portraits of Black Natchez” exhibit was intended to show that not all blacks were “ragged and poor” after the Civil War. “The people photographed show a great deal of intelligence and character, and could have become leaders,” he said. Joan Gandy extended the thought, “We may decide to call the exhibit ‘Lost Opportunities,’ because blacks of that time period were stifled. Many black people left the South because of the attitude of the time, and it was the community’s loss.”58

In dress and demeanor, Norman’s portraits of blacks reveal a population both able and willing to afford a trip to the photographer’s studio. “Annie Toler” drew attention for her elegant dress, with its pleats and heavy beadwork, and accessorized by a hat, leather gloves, and folded parasol (see fig. 2.1, p. 203). In clothing, pose, and expression, her portrait mirrored those of her white counterparts who visited Norman’s studio in the late 1880s.59 Whether identified or not, people’s direct gazes and composure convey an

57 Joan Gandy, interview by author, Natchez, Mississippi, August 11, 2008.


59 “Annie Toler” may, in fact, be Natchez resident Annie Toles, whose occupation is listed as “sewing” in the 1892 Natchez City Directory. Toles would have been twenty years old in 1888, when it is believed the portrait was made. If true, it is likely that Annie Toler, or Annie Toles, made the magnificent dress she wears in her portrait. Gandy and Gandy, Natchez: Landmarks, 104; HNF, Natchez, MS. I am indebted to CSUN graduate and Natchez resident Cynthia Parker for the following additional information on Annie
eloquence and dignity that moves beyond race or class (see fig. 2.2, p. 203 and figs. 2.3, and 2.4, p. 204). They reveal something about both their subjects’ character and Henry Norman’s ability to put people at ease in front of his camera. Clothing and props might evidence status, family, literacy, or occupation. Independent of race or class, wealth, or poverty, however, visual identity was (and is), important to both blacks and whites.

Many Norman portraits served business purposes, while others were intended for more personal exchange, as tokens of feeling or to remember important occasions. Norman’s studio portraits enabled blacks and whites alike to look at the face they saw in the mirror and see the face they wished to present to the world.

Portraits are important components of individual and community histories. In addition to personal identities, fashions, poses, props, and other studio equipment help to connect people generically with their times. Interestingly, however, studio portraits do not necessarily connect people to place. Lacking identifiable props or surroundings (such as Lowenburg’s store or Henry Norman’s distinctively painted backgrounds), studio portraits generally depend on their photographers’ names and studio addresses stamped on prints or mounting cards to identify their places of origin. Sadly, absent that information, many portraits today exist anonymously in both human and geographic terms.

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Toles: She was born to Lloyd Toles and Mariah (or Maria) Vessels in 1868. Her parents were domestics and former slaves associated with the Monmouth estate.

60 As used here, Figure 2.1 is reproduced from the negative on file at LSU. It appeared with Figures 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4 in the “Portraits of Black Natchez Exhibit” at the MDAH. Here, the latter three images were reproduced from a set of prints Thomas Gandy donated to the MDAH at the close of the exhibit. “Portraits of Black Natchez,” Series 1620, Box 88, MDAH.

61 Henry Norman generally imprinted both his name and studio address on the back of his studio portraits. Gandy Papers, HNF.
Images from the “Portraits of Black Natchez” exhibit later traveled with the Southern Arts Federation series. Today, many hang in the Natchez Association for the Preservation of African-American Culture in downtown Natchez. Opened in 1991, that museum is dedicated to the collection, exhibition, preservation, and interpretation of “the cultural and historical contributions of African-Americans in the growth of Natchez and the nation.” The original “Portraits of Black Natchez” exhibit no doubt provoked reaction and discussion among Mississippi’s white and black populations. Whether it immediately changed prevailing white and black perceptions sufficiently to inspire meaningful dialogue between the races, however, cannot be determined.

The African-American portraits in the Old Capitol Museum exhibit had greater impact because they were presented as a group, rather than as individual portraits interspersed among images of Natchez and its white population. “Portraits of Black Natchez” represented only a small minority of the total black population at the time. Countering modern doubters, however, Norman’s images showed that they did exist. The exhibit did not deny that many blacks lived and worked in poverty and subservient roles. It did, however, raise awareness of another facet of Natchez’ racial history.

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63 The Natchez Democrat quoted the Curator of Exhibits at the Old Capitol Museum, Cavett Taff, as having said that museum directors from facilities hosting the traveling exhibits sometimes called the Old Capitol Museum to verify that the portraits were not fakes. Joan Gandy related that one caller said, “These can’t be real. These must be people who are dressed up and these are modern photographs made to look old. They can’t possibly be real. They’re too beautiful.” Joan Gandy, interview by author, Natchez, Mississippi, August 11, 2008; http://visitnapac.net/ (accessed January 24, 2012); Natchez Democrat, February 16, 1986, “Portraits of Pride.”
Exhibits at the Old Capitol Museum unofficially augmented publicity for the Gandys’ books. In theme, composition, and purpose, the 1976 exhibit mirrored work already underway on *Norman’s Natchez*, which was released by the University Press of Mississippi in 1978. Thomas Gandy created high-quality images for use in printing. He cropped some if them for emphasis, clarity, or layout requirements, but minimal retouching assured that some evidence of peeling emulsion, cracks, or other negative damage remained to show age. Joan Gandy researched early newspapers, books, contemporary periodicals, city directories, and courthouse records for background information, and wrote the text.

Like the 1976 exhibit, the book was organized into themes. Textual descriptions drew the connections between separate images and topics. An introductory chapter provided an overview of Natchez, a short history of photography as practiced there when Henry Norman arrived in 1870, and a brief description of his early experiences. Subsequent chapters visually explored Natchez On-Top, Natchez Under-the-Hill, and the nearby countryside. Two more chapters presented the pastimes and portraits of people who lived and worked in the city during Henry Norman’s era. Reaching forward in time, an epilogue used Earl Norman’s photographs of antebellum mansions to visually introduce ladies of the Natchez Garden Club who, beginning in the 1930s, organized the

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64 The original chapter headings for *Norman’s Natchez* were the same as those in the 1976 Old Capitol Museum exhibit, “Notes from meeting with Joan and Tom Gandy 1/28/77,” Gandy papers, HNF. Gandy to Kynard, June 30, 1970, Series 1377, State Historical Museum, General Subject Correspondence, MDAH.”

65 Negative damage is visible on pages 28, 29, 56, 77, 94, 111, and 198 in *Norman’s Natchez*. Although sometimes criticized for retouching prints, Thomas Gandy did so purposely, in an effort to create images free enough of distracting damage to approximate what Norman and his clients would have originally seen. Gandy and Gandy, *Norman’s Natchez*, 10.

66 Joan Gandy inadvertently sent two shoeboxes of 3x5” cards to LSU with the rest of the collection. At the time of the interview, it was still her intention to retrieve them. Joan Gandy, interview by author, Natchez, Mississippi, April 5, 2007.
Natchez Pilgrimage home tours that, along with the Historic Natchez Pageant, have attracted tourists to the city ever since.

Sadly, poor image quality in the first edition obscured details and other visual information that would have increased the book’s value as a historical resource. Norman’s print of the Natchez Rifles is a case in point (see fig. 1.18, p. 187). The Natchez Democrat had particularly praised the clarity of Henry Norman’s original print. Recognizing the ability of photographs to connect viewers with the people and events represented in them, Thomas Gandy, too, had created a clear print in an attempt to engage modern readers in much the same way as the nineteenth-century print had moved its viewers. Poor contrast muted that shared experience. Unfortunately, printing deadlines limited corrections. The first edition sold well, but even subsequent improvements could not overcome the damage to long-term sales. By comparison, the second edition (1979) sold poorly. 67

Despite the problems with print quality, historian Charles W. Crawford positively reviewed Norman’s Natchez in the Journal of Mississippi History. In particular, he said that it demonstrated the strengths in using photography to study a community, and that Henry Norman’s composition skills and “immaculate accuracy” would allow even traditional historians to rely on the images as primary sources. Despite the absence of an index and substantiating footnotes (not uncommon, then, in largely photographic books),

67 The First Edition sold 2454 copies between July 1, 1978 (presales) and December 31, 1978, resulting in “by far the largest royalty payment we have ever made” from the University Press of Mississippi. In January 1980, the Gandys received a royalty payment from the sale of only 88 copies of the book’s second edition (July 1 – December 31, 1979). Small payments continued through February 1982, when the Mississippi Department of Archives and History notified University Press of Mississippi that it could no longer store books at the MDAH facility in Jackson. The Gandys purchased the remaining 1,470 copies in about January 1983. McKee to J. and T. Gandy, September 12, 1978; J. Gandy to McKee, September 17, 1978; McKee to Gandys, September 28, 1978; McKee to J. Gandy, January 9, 1979; McKee to Gandys, January 18, 1980, May 10, 1982, and January 11, 1983. All in Gandy papers, HNF.
Joan Gandy received high marks for her careful research and clear writing. There were, however, weaknesses in balance. Most of the chosen images came from the late-nineteenth century. Additionally, Crawford felt that the book did not adequately represent the poverty and hardship that so defined Reconstruction and its aftermath.68

The Gandys’ approach to Norman’s Natchez reflected their growing personal interest in visual history. They reversed the view of many historians that photographs ought to illustrate text, and instead, highlighted the images themselves. Minimal text identified people and places, added historical context, or called attention to pertinent details.69 Joan Gandy later described the couple’s perspective on the Natchez represented in Henry Norman’s photographs, and how that era was at least partly reflected again in the twentieth-century Natchez community:

As the pictures [in the collection] began to mix in our minds as images, it just became apparent [that] this was a way to show this era of history. . . . It was one era of our history when things really were multi-layered in the most complete sense and . . . you have all these many kinds of people. . . . They’re on different levels but they’re all integrated. . . . You’ve got people from all walks, all backgrounds – the planters, and the merchants; you’ve got the Jewish people, the black people now free and getting into the commerce of the town and on a totally different level from the pre-Civil War times . . . and there is this wonderful photographer who comes along and captures it all. So what [Henry Norman] did in that era in getting all of that captured for us to see is just show us the genesis of what we see today. Now true, we have been through many things, and we have divided once again. We did this dichotomy again. But now we are coming back together again. We have . . . such a multi-layered community, but much the way it was then. . . . It’s just history at its best; in a way, repeating itself.70


69 Norman’s Natchez contains 225 images, most of them by Henry Norman. Notes from an early meeting with the publishers called for 200 photographs and 50 manuscript pages. As published, chapter introductions feature a page or two of background text; most images have only a line or two of text, if any. “Notes from meeting with Joan and Tom Gandy 1/28/77,” Gandy papers, HNF.

70 Joan Gandy, interview by author, Natchez, Mississippi, April 5, 2007.
The book’s epilogue mirrors Joan Gandy’s view that Natchez is living out “history at it’s best; in a way, repeating itself.” Like his father, Earl Norman photographed the exteriors and interiors of the elegant, now-restored, antebellum structures in and around Natchez. Earl’s images in Norman’s Natchez often feature hoop-skirted women standing on the front steps, ready to welcome visitors to the past.\footnote{Interestingly, although the detail can only be seen clearly through a magnifying glass, an image of Arlington has, instead, a black, male servant standing on the steps.} Generally left unsaid is the fact that slave labor was instrumental to the building process. The Epilogue focuses, instead, on the 1932 birth of the Pilgrimage home tours and tableaux that placed Natchez on the national stage in the twentieth century and continue today. Genteel hospitality is fundamentally important to Natchez’s vision of itself. “Where the Old South still lives” is more than an early Pilgrimage motto. For the Natchezian whites who continue to embrace a romantic view of their past, the words remain a fact of life.

Published in late 1981, the Gandy’s second – and last hardcover – book was Natchez Victorian Children: Photographic Portraits, 1865-1915.\footnote{The timing coincided with the December 1981 to January 1982 Old Capitol Museum exhibit, and the book was also available in the museum. Probably influenced by their earlier experience, the Gandys published Natchez Victorian Children themselves, through the Myrtle Bank Press. See Thomas Gandy Subject File, and Series 1514, Museum Exhibit Files, both at MDAH; Clarion Ledger, January 4, 1982.} Beginning in the mid-1860s with a small number of images by Henry Gurney, the book was organized chronologically by decade. A closing chapter, titled “Celebrations,” included some of the community and family occasions that mainly middle-to-upper-class children enjoyed. While there were some exterior images, the majority of the photographs focused on Henry Norman’s studio portrait work with children.
Studied chronologically, image details reveal nuanced differences in social and technological history. Changing clothing styles over time present a brief, visual history of fashions. Different props and backgrounds attest to evolving photographic equipment and studio decor. Into the 1880s, many images still evidenced the telltale base of the clamp used to immobilize squirming heads for the necessary exposure time. By the 1890s, faster film speeds all but eliminated the need for such devices, freeing people to steady themselves instead with props or on one another. Favorite toys, bicycles, and even a surprisingly patient family pet or two became popular. At the same time, the arrival of the Kodak camera dissipated much of the intimidating aura of photography.

Henry Norman clearly knew how to coax good photographs from children. His studio may, in fact, have been one of the few places where they were encouraged to stand on the furniture while wearing shoes.\(^73\) Despite his persuasive powers, however, it might take many attempts to produce a satisfactory image. One former subject recalled that, “He would just pose you and pose you until he thought it was perfect.”\(^74\) Another anecdote suggests that Norman wasn’t eager to be entirely responsible for the results. In 1898, he reportedly replied to a parental request for a “pretty picture” with, “Madam, if the child is pretty, the picture will be pretty.”\(^75\)

Joan Gandy’s opening essay (“Victorian Childhood: an overview”) described an era shaped in the South by efforts to recover emotionally and physically from the war, and to adjust to a world now propelled rapidly forward by changes in technology and

\(^{73}\) Gandy and Gandy, *Natchez Victorian Children*, 84, 170.

\(^{74}\) Ibid., 126.

\(^{75}\) Gandy and Gandy, *Images of America: Victorian Children of Natchez*, 61.
transportation. Seeking to create a better world for their offspring, adults looked backward nostalgically to an idealized vision of childhood. In addition to reading, writing, and arithmetic, schools now emphasized moral values, hard work, and good behavior. Public and private schools multiplied; in the South, carefully separating black children from white. Entertainments grew in number and variety, as communities and individuals now enjoyed everything from dramatic tableaux to vaudeville shows, parlor games to baseball, and local gatherings as well as excursions farther afield.

In 1885, Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *Little Lord Fauntleroy* captivated Victorian mothers with its virtuous child hero. It also condemned many little boys to pose at least once for Norman in dresses, lace-trimmed suits, or masses of curly hair. At first look, many children pictured in *Natchez Victorian Children* seem to belong to Fauntleroy’s perfect world. Clothes ironed, hair combed and curled, they sit or stand for the camera. Siblings pose peacefully together, and like siblings often dress alike.

Henry Norman took many photographs of children at play in the outside world. Images from inside the studio, however, generally evidence a curiously static, artificial world; one largely absent the energy and spontaneity one associates with childhood (see fig. 2.5, p. 205). Whether they were intended to visually represent the parentally constructed Victorian world Joan Gandy described, or to demonstrate parental affluence

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77 Ibid., 19, 22-23, 38-9, 40, 41, 46-47.
78 Ibid., 88, 142, 151, 156, 164.
79 In addition to the children at group gatherings such as the balloon ascension mentioned in chapter 1, the Gandys occasionally published Norman photographs of children playing outside with both store-bought and homemade toys. Norman once photographed some boys hanging from vines as they climbed the face of a steep, dirt cliff. Interestingly, the boys wear caps, jackets, Fauntleroy collars, and shoes. Gandy and Gandy, *Victorian Children of Natchez*, 84.
and indulgence is not clear. The end result, however, is that the children in Norman’s studio portraits often appear to be miniature representations of their parents. Girls model the hats, fans, and parasols so popular with their Victorian mothers. Mirroring their fathers, young boys carry walking sticks, have hats, or even wear watch chains.

Some studio images do reveal more animated, even amusing, moments. The Gandys believed that they evidenced Norman’s sense of humor as much as his professional eye. In one image, four of riverboat captain Charles D. Shaw’s children pose together sometime around 1893 (see fig. 2.6, p. 205). The three older children appear to be wearing costumes. Standing in the front of the group, garbed only in his underwear and bare feet, is young Lyman Aldrich Shaw. The Gandys speculated that he may never have been intended for inclusion in the photograph, but that would not explain the lack of clothing he would have worn when arriving at the studio. One can speculate, too, about the occasion that brought the other children to the studio in the first place.

Taken in about 1900, an image of a young Ruth Audley Wheeler suggests that, like boys, Victorian girls had limited patience with sitting for photographs (see fig. 2.7, p. 206). Wheeler’s posture, facial expression, and disheveled curls contradict the femininity of her frilly dress and patent leather shoes. Was this her look throughout, or was she bribed into other poses with the promise that she could do as she liked at the end? What activity did she have to abandon to spend time smiling for the camera?

Curiously, although there are many studio portraits of African-American children in the collection, only seven are included among the more than one hundred and thirty book images that can be attributed to Henry Norman. Similarly, there are no photographs of black children with their parents, although they, too, existed (see fig. 1.39, p. 202). Is

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80 Ibid., 18.
the ratio in portraits of black children to whites a commentary on the Jim Crow atmosphere of the early 1900s, or does it represent a deferential view of racial attitudes in the early 1980s?

Two images of white infants, each with what the text describes as a black “nursemaid,” also suggest something more. In Norman’s day, nursemaids enjoyed special status in the family, and were generally referred to as “Mammy.” In upper-class households especially, they were considered a status symbol that evidenced both wealth and a benevolent white view of paternalism. Photographed in 1902 with her infant charge, Gaillard Conner, Lucinda Sharp was a beloved presence in the Lemuel P. Conner, Jr. household. The image in *Natchez Victorian Children* (163) presents her wearing a white apron and lacy white collar, and sitting in a rocking chair looking down at her young charge, who lies in a cradle softened by its ruffled detail. She gazes down at him, while he is turned toward the camera. Sharp appears in several snapshots in one of Mary Britton Conner’s scrapbooks, notably self-titled, “M.M.B. Conner, her book: ‘The White Man’s Burden’ and other things – 1907.” The fact that the Conner family and others had Henry Norman photograph mammys with their white charges speaks to the particular regard for one class of black servants in a white household. Comments in Mrs. Conner’s handwriting illustrate the curious duality of racial separation and deep, personal affection that Lucinda Sharp and other mammys enjoyed in some white families.

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81 Both Mary Britton (later Conner) and E. Brandon Stanton wrote in laudatory terms about the mammys in their lives. Taken in 1908 (possibly by Earl Norman), young Edward Allee, his mother, Liza Schwartz Allee and an anonymous nursemaid were in the other image in *Natchez Victorian Children*. Again, the child looks toward the camera, while the women look at him (171). Mary Britton, *A Southern Character Sketch* (Natchez: M.M. Black’s Job Print, 1882), MDAH; E. Brandon Stanton, *Our Mammy*, (undated manuscript), Gandy papers, HNF; Gandy and Gandy, *Natchez Victorian Children*, 163, 171.

82 One of Mary Britton Conner’s albums (“Scrapbook”) includes no fewer than ten images (pgs. 3,4,5,10,11,22 ) of Sharp, who is usually identified only as “Mammy.” There are also photographs of
Henry Norman photographed other black women with the white children they cared for, although most are presented more simply than the two images in *Natchez Victorian Children*. In one, the nursemaid, who wears a white dress, sits in a chair and appears to be holding a rose or other flower on her lap (see fig. 2.8, p. 206). The younger of her two charges sits comfortably on her lap while an older girl leans against the woman’s leg. Depending on the length of her service with the family, the children may or may not have remembered her presence in their lives when they grew older. Norman’s photograph, however, has created a timeless, visual association between them.\(^{83}\)

Norman photographed children in his Natchez studio throughout his career. For some, return visits measured growth.\(^{84}\) For others, the trip to the studio might have been the only such experience they would ever have. He may have been unaware of the insular world the images would appear to represent when assembled together in book form. Their clothing, toys, and family pets generally speak of wealth rather than poverty, and family prominence rather than obscurity.

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\(^{83}\)The peeling emulsion along one edge of the image was a common problem with Norman’s negatives.

\(^{84}\)Two photographs of Charles Patterson provide a striking timeline. He is pictured first in about 1895, in Fauntleroy-esque curls and holding a flower. He appears on the opposite page five years later, wearing a stiff collar and suit coat. Gandy and Gandy, *Natchez Victorian Children*, 156, 157.
The images preserved individual moments in time. Viewed today, they seem also to present a corporate vision of the past, both real and idealized. That corporate vision has some modern parallels. Natchez’s yearly Pilgrimage events, while they celebrate an earlier time period, often reflect an idealized vision of the past that appears in Norman’s portraits of Victorian Era children. Many of those parents reached back for inspiration to childhoods that occurred prior to the Civil War. Institutionalized back then by the power of the Lost Cause Movement, that mythical Natchez world is today reaffirmed in the music and tableaux of the Historic Natchez Pageant, where costumed young people of all ages bring a community vision of antebellum Natchez to life for twenty-first century audiences. In something of a visual time warp, little boys in velvet suits and white collars, and little girls in petticoats and pantaloons, dance around a maypole on the auditorium floor. Whatever parent/child battles might rage behind the scenes, for a moment, at least, there is the appearance of obedient perfection, much like the moments evidenced in Henry Norman’s studio in Victorian Natchez.

The Gandys’ third book, *The Mississippi Steamboat Era in Historic Photographs: Natchez to New Orleans, 1870-1920* came out in 1987. The paperback volume is part of the Dover Books on Americana Series. Still in print today, it is a rich, visual history of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Natchez’s dependent relationship with the river before railroads trumped water in transportation supremacy. Unlike the earlier books, it incorporated images from both the Gandy Collection and elsewhere.  

85 Most of the images were the work of Henry Norman or his son, Earl. Some were used by permission from a connection with the University of Wisconsin at LaCrosse. A few others, by unknown photographers, were also used. The lack of source information in early images was not unusual. Until Thomas Gandy acquired the negatives, Henry Norman’s work was sometimes attributed to other
often gave images to the Gandys. Correspondence indicates that they may have purchased negatives and prints as well. In another departure, more abundant text provided background history, statistics, and anecdotal information about specific boats, the river, and the people who lived near or worked on it.

There is little, now, to remind visitors of what Natchez Under-the-Hill looked like in Henry Norman’s day. Time, economics, and the river itself have seen to that. A small cluster of nineteenth century buildings still climbs partway up the bluff side of a now-paved Silver Street. At the water’s edge, people board a “steamboat” for dockside gambling and entertainment. Distinctive steamboat whistles more rarely announce arrivals and departures, or bring out laborers to “muscle” cargo.  The small ferries that once crisscrossed the river carrying people and cargo have given way to a massive bridge connecting Mississippi and Louisiana. Even the bluff itself is different – now covered in places with shotcrete to stave off erosion. Just south of Natchez Under-the-Hill proper, and up the hill a little, a Visitors’ Center overlooks the river that seemed to be the center of existence back in Henry Norman’s day.

photographers. That was the case in 1992, when MDAH Curator of Exhibits Cavett Taff chided the editors of the Egregious Steamboat Journal for wrongly attributing a Norman photograph to the “Murphy Library.” The library, said Taff, should have stated where the image came from, and that the negative was in the Gandy collection. Ibid, vi; Cavett Taff to Editors, Egregious Steamboat Journal, January 7, 1992, Gandy Papers, HNF.

In one exchange, Charles East says he knows of a Gurney carte-de-visite coming up for auction; Joan Gandy suggests an opening bid, and inquires whether East ever sells glass negatives Charles East to Thomas and Joan Gandy, September 10, 1985; Joan Gandy to Charles East, September 10, 1985. Both in Gandy papers, HNF.

For years, tourists could board modern steamboats to sail the Mississippi River. They often stopped at Natchez to enjoy a day in town. The Gandys occasionally traveled and lectured on board. Many passengers who came ashore went to see the Norman Photographs at the Stratton Gallery. Both Gandys also lectured there. Cruising became intermittent and then stopped sometime after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, but it has resumed once again, with several companies advertising on the internet. Delta Queen cruise documents, March 17-22, 1976; Charles R. Kolb, Delta Queen Guest Lecturer, to Thomas Gandy, April 17, 1978; Joan Gandy to Thomas K. Cline, Mississippi Queen, February 1985. All in Gandy papers, HNF.
The photographs in *The Mississippi Steamboat Era in Historic Photographs*, then, have added importance for historians. Mark Twain and others described life on the river in words. Photographs give it dimension. Studied in sequence, the images capture change over time and in natural topography. They recall man-made presences like the wood frame and brick buildings that came and went according to need and the river itself. They make understandable verbal descriptions of the Bluff City Railroad’s massive, flatbed structure and tracks that lifted cargo vertically to the top of the bluff and back (see fig. 2.9, p. 207). Photographs mark the seasons of the year with the cotton products and other supplies that flowed through the place, and the coal heaps and other supplies that kept the boats running. They drive home a sense of scale as cotton bales dwarf massive boats and humans alike. Photographs are visual proof of the river’s power over the land, alternating floods with low water according to the calendar year.

Photographs also present the people who made Natchez Under-the-Hill a lively place indeed. As was life back then, *The Mississippi Steamboat Era* is organized around the river, tracing the last great surge of water traffic before railroads took over. Beginning with the cover photograph of excursionists eagerly crowding the railings, steamboats dominate. There was a romance to the water-borne behemoths that drew people to sail and work on them if possible, or to just watch their comings and goings. The end is there, too, in images of once-graceful steamboats half sunk at shore-side, and river flooding that destroyed both topography and lifestyles. Images of steamboats were among Thomas Gandy’s favorites, and *The Mississippi Steamboat Era* reflects that.

His fascination with details is also evident. Careful study of enlarged images reveals the small nuances of individual human actions, attitudes, and priorities within a

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88 Please see fig. 1.10, on p. 180; fig. 1.11, on p. 181 and fig. 1.12, on p. 182.
larger social structure. Like his photographs of the Natchez-On-Top business sector, images of the Natchez Under-the-Hill area show the purposeful intentions of Norman, the professional photographer, as well as the man with a camera who was also fascinated by what he saw. Officers and crew are frequently gathered along boat rails. Their attention when passengers are also present advertises competence and professionalism.

Absent passengers, however, officers and crew sometimes evidence a more proprietary, hierarchical view. Images of the Charles Rebstock in port present the case. She made the Natchez to St. Joseph run three times a week during the 1880s (see fig. 2.10, p. 208). Laborers stand in the shadows below decks. One deck up, the look is different in posture and dress, as officers relax comfortably on or near the deck railings in their dark jackets and hats. Trachtenburg described Civil War photographs of military officers posed out in the field as “staged informality.” Norman’s images of the Rebstock officers leave a similar impression. Because the boat is in port, it may be argued that the men are off duty. Their relaxed postures, however, connote a sense of proprietorship toward the boat itself, and the men’s position within a working hierarchy.

Gandy’s close-up print of a second negative reveals interesting details. Two figures stand in an opening near the stern. The original image is too small to identify them, but a Gandy close-up reveals that they are chambermaids (see fig. 2.11, p. 209). In both images, unlike the men who relax elsewhere on the same deck, the women appear only to have paused long enough in their work to look curiously at the camera. Were

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89 Prominent Natchez businessman Joseph N. Carpenter owned the boat. His family is briefly profiled in chapter 3. Gandy and Gandy, Steamboat, 43.

90 Trachtenburg devoted a chapter to Civil War images, noting the self-conscious attempts of photographers and their subjects to somehow offset gruesome battlefield images by imparting a more heroic, orderly vision as well. Trachtenburg believed that these “staged compositions” in fact revealed contrasting feelings and motives. The event here is decidedly different, but the principle, as evidenced by images of the Charles Rebstock, is the same. Trachtenburg, Reading American Photographs, 84.
these women intentionally included? If so, why were they not more posed? What does their presence say about a working shipboard hierarchy in which female workers were, at best, unrecognized and unrewarded for their efforts and, at worst, subjected to indignities and even attack?

The Mississippi Steamboat Era makes visual the supremacy of the river itself. It is about human attempts to, if not successfully harness the river, at least coexist with it as peacefully and productively as possible. In good times, the river was a magnificent place – a perfect showcase for floating palaces and workboats alike. Ultimately, however, magnificence was no match for the railroads, or for the river itself. Texts describe the river story in words. Statistics give an idea of the massive number of goods that traveled by water for many years. Photographs and their details however, drive the story home.

Early in the 1980s, the Gandys began discussing what to do with the collection after one or both of them had gone. Both believed that it should go to an institution, where the images would receive optimum care and remain available for study. The Mississippi Department of Archives and History had neither space nor the personnel to process and maintain such a large collection. Looking elsewhere, the Gandys considered the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Mississippi Center for the Study of Southern Culture, and the Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections at Louisiana State University. Ultimately, they chose Thomas Gandy’s alma mater, LSU. They hoped to be able to also work for the university in some capacity that would allow
them to continue working with the collection. Efforts to structure and fund such a position continued intermittently until at least 1990, but were unsuccessful.91

The decision to give up the collection was especially difficult for Thomas Gandy. In May 1984, he confided to a friend: “I’ve become so attached to some of these glass negatives that it is much like giving away one’s children. I think I will rest better in my grave knowing that they are all together in a safe, permanent place and won’t be scattered through an auction. It is an extremely valuable collection from a historical standpoint and will evidently be used as a research tool also.” The transfer process began in 1983, with about 15,000 negatives, and continued intermittently until 2005, a year after Gandy’s death.92 Gandy made file prints to accompany the negatives. The Gandys continued to use materials in publishing and exhibits, so some of the more historically important images in the collection did not go to LSU until 2005.93


92 Negatives for the images photographed directly from the Gandys’ books, or for the prints used in the Black Natchez Exhibit at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History in Jackson in 1983 were sent to LSU during the collection transfer process.

93 Mark Martin (Gandy Collection Processing Archivist at LSU) states that the collection came to LSU “in two parts.” The first part essentially contained “the cast offs and consist[ed] largely of studio portraits, most of which are unidentified. The second part contain[ed] the richest images and consist[ed] of many different series as arranged by the Gandys.” Mark E. Martin e-mail message to author, March 17, 2008. The Gandys’ early donations triggered an IRS audit in the mid-1980s. Before a later donation of 4,237 vintage negatives and 5,106 vintage and modern contact positive prints, they requested an audit by vintage photograph appraiser Clifford Krainik. That replacement value was estimated to be $57,250.50. According to Krainik, there were no comparative figures to substantiate the value of such a large collection, so it had to be based on a combination of materials and a “somewhat nebulous ‘historical value’ factor.” There was, he maintained, a research value in a collection of portraits from a specific community over a long period of time. T. Gandy to M. Stone Miller, May 3, 1984; “Grants Received,” Louisiana Archives and Manuscripts
The 1990s continued to bring recognition to the photographs, and to the Gandys as well. After Dr. Gandy retired from his medical practice in December 1990, the couple maintained a busy schedule of exhibits, lecturing, and writing. Exhibits in the Hill Library at LSU, the Barbican Centre in London, and at California State University, Northridge drew attention, not only to the visual history in Norman’s images, but to the city of Natchez itself. In 1995, Natchez acquired its own, permanent exhibit in Stratton Chapel, at the First Presbyterian Church of Natchez.

The Hill Library exhibit at LSU in 1991 was the first of several exhibits there, and the first to be held in a university setting. “Victorian Natchez: Contemporary Views from the Gurney Norman Collection and Major Steve Power’s Memento” used photographic prints to illuminate contemporary written descriptions. Artifacts and other manuscript materials added to this in-depth view of Natchez through the late 1890s. Thomas Gandy produced the prints and tinted many of them, and also loaned camera equipment for display. The Gandys were guest curators for the photographic portion of the exhibit.94

In May 1993, an exhibit of some 220 variously sized prints opened for one month at the Barbican Performing Arts Centre in London. It was the largest such exhibit from the collection to that time, and the first to be held overseas. The Centre’s Head of Visual Arts and Special Events, Rosalyn Wilder, proposed it after seeing one of the Gandys’ books.95 The exhibit took two years to prepare, and filled the Centre’s massive concourse

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94 Exhibit program, “Victorian Natchez: Contemporary Views from the Gurney Norman Collection and Major Steve Power’s Memento.” Gandy Papers, HNF.

95 Most written communications were transmitted via FAX. Wilder learned about the collection from a cousin of Joan Gandy’s then living in London, who also loaned her the book. The description suggests that she was referring to Norman’s Natchez. Opened by Queen Elizabeth in 1982, the Barbican was the largest
gallery. Extant correspondence reveals the collaborative effort and difficulties involved in the complex undertaking. Organized along the lines of Norman’s Natchez, “Natchez on the Mississippi” presented “a microcosm of Victorian life in a small Southern town.”

The Gandys viewed the exhibit as an opportunity to introduce the photographs on an international stage. Thomas Gandy believed that the images would provide a view of Natchez in the past, while raising awareness that the city was still very much alive in the present. Joan Gandy described the exhibit as an “outstanding opportunity to provide a positive view of our beautiful state.” More personally, she also viewed it as “the opportunity of a lifetime for Tom to display his work and to share the genius of Henry Norman.” She was especially grateful for the credit being given to her husband, “whose lifetime avocation in preserving these historic images certainly deserves the generous recognition that now is becoming international in scope.”

Funding the large-scale project was problematic from the outset. Exhibit dates changed at least twice to allow more time to search for outside sponsorship that would provide wider publicity and help defray expenses. Both the United States and the United Kingdom were just emerging from a recession, as well as feeling the impact of rising oil prices and the effects of the 1990 Gulf War. While Wilder sought sponsors on

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96 The outer wall alone of the concourse was 320 feet long.

97 J. Gandy to Wilder, June 9, 1991, Gandy Papers, HNF.

98 Tupelo, MS Daily Journal, September 13, 1992; J. Gandy to U.S. Senator Thad Cochran, October 6, 1992; J. Gandy to Wilder, June 25, 1993. All in Gandy Papers, HNF.

99 Wilder to J. Gandy, November 8, 1991, Gandy Papers, HNF.
her side of the Atlantic, the Gandys approached state and federal agencies and private
companies at home. Through friends, they asked Mississippi Governor Kirk Fordice
for help in securing state financial assistance. Along with book copies, they sent exhibit
information and an invitation to attend the May 1993 opening. Fordice could not attend,
but did forward the information to Mississippi’s Department of Economic and
Community Development. There is no known record of a response. Recognizing the
Gandys’ efforts, however, Fordice issued a Resolution by the Governor, commending
them for their “outstanding contributions to the preservation of the history of Natchez and
. . . serving as goodwill ambassadors for the City of Natchez and the State of Mississippi
by exhibiting the Gandy Collection in London.”

The Gandys also contacted United States Senators Trent Lott and Thad Cochran,
and United States Congressman Mike Parker. Lott and Parker forwarded the requests to
the United States Information Agency. Both the U.S.I.A. and the U.S. Department of
Commerce attempted to help. While the former agency had no program to assist
financially with such a documentary exhibit type, the Cultural Affairs Officer in London,
Edward McBride, did contact embassies in Europe in an effort to interest other countries
in an exhibit. Galleries in the United Kingdom either did not have the necessary funds
for such a sizeable undertaking or were unable to accommodate the timing.

100 A copy of the invitation to the May 27, 1993 Barbican Centre Private View of the exhibit indicates
that it “. . . received generous support” from the Southern Comfort Corporation. “The Chairman of the
Barbican Centre Committee requests the pleasure of your company . . .”, Gandy Papers, HNF.

101 J. and T. Gandy to Governor Kirk Fordice, December 1, 1992; Fordice to Claibrone P. Hollis April
12, 1993; Fordice to “Mr. and Mrs. Gandy,” April 27, 1993; State of Mississippi, Office of the Governor,
“A Resolution by the Governor,” signed May 24, 1993. All in Gandy Papers, HNF.

102 J. Gandy to U.S. Senator Thad Cochran, October 6, 1992; U.S. Senator Trent Lott to J. Gandy, July
10, 1992; U.S. Representative Mike Parker to J. and T. Gandy, July 14, 1992; Cochran to J. Gandy, July
Back in North America, the Gandys did enjoy one major exhibit success. In 1992, Live Entertainment of Canada was planning a revival of the musical, “Showboat” at the still-under-construction North York Performing Arts Centre in Toronto. The owner, Garth Drabinsky, wanted images from the Barbican to complement the show’s 1993 opening. After closing in 1994, the exhibit and production went on to Broadway. There, in a smaller incarnation, the images guided theatergoers to their seats. Famously, both venues used as their stage curtains the Henry Norman view up Silver Street, with the sign, “D. Moses and Sons, Cheap Cash Store” (see fig. 1.10, p. 180). A number of the images later traveled to the National Maritime Museum in Sydney, Australia.104

Thomas Gandy prepared all but the largest prints for the Barbican exhibit. To facilitate the culling process, he actually worked up some 300 images. Although time-consuming, the task of preparing high quality prints was one he enjoyed.105 While he liked the end result, Gandy was less enthusiastic about “charting,” a layout process he sometimes shared with his wife. Describing both their teamwork and separate interests,

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103 Extant correspondence indicates that a shopping mall in northern England was interested in exhibiting at least some of the prints, but scheduling could not be arranged. Wilder arranged to store the exhibit for two weeks after it closed, while attempts were underway to arrange a tour. Wilder to T. and J. Gandy, May 1, 1991; Wilder to J. Gandy, November 8, 1991, January 6, 1992; and December 18, 1992; Wilder to T and J. Gandy, June 25, 1993 and September 27, 1993. All in Gandy Papers, HNF.

104 Joan Gandy attended the Toronto opening, but neither of the Gandys went to Australia. J. Gandy to Wilder, n.d. (July or August 1992); Murray Chusid, Q.C., Chairman, Board of Directors, North York Performing Arts Centre, Toronto to T. and J. Gandy, September 9, 1993; J. Gandy to Wilder, October 4, 1993 and October 25, 1993; Wilder to T. and J. Gandy, November 18, 1993; Envelope: “Tom Gandy - Report, publicity, and photos from your exhibit when it was loaned to the National Maritime Museum in Sydney, NSW, Australia,” March 12 – May 31, 1998.” All in Gandy Papers, HNF.

105 A Gandy update to Robert S. Martin at LSU lists print sizes: 11x14 (39), 16x20 (146), 30x40 (20), and 40x60 (1). The two largest sizes were printed in Atlanta. Tinted prints were 20x24. LSU was the eventual recipient of the negatives, so the Gandys kept Martin informed. Thomas Gandy to Robert S. Martin, Assistant Dean of Libraries for Special Collections, January 7, 1993, Gandy papers, HNF.
Joan Gandy wrote in September 1992 that they had completed charting “…about 60-75 feet of the outer wall. It has been a delightful task for me but grueling for Tom. He does enjoy the outcome of the hours of standing over a large space and arranging and rearranging, but he is entirely too impatient to enjoy this kind of ‘art work.’”

As Thomas Gandy worked in his darkroom, Joan Gandy worked with Wilder and her staff on organizational details. She also composed the introductory header panels and cutlines that gave historical context to the times in general, and to Natchez in particular. The Barbican wanted text kept to a minimum, citing “the incredible amount of information in the photographs themselves.” The Gandys were happy to comply.

In May 1993, wearing his full regalia and accompanied by his “shrieval team,” the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Francis McWilliams, opened the exhibit. From the other side of the Atlantic, Natchez Mayor Larry L. “Butch” Brown also attended, along with “at least several dozen” people from his own city. The Lord Mayor described the exhibit as “. . . a stunning first-hand account of the long-lost way of life in the American deep south.” The Economist later reported that Henry C. Norman’s “curiosity about the American South equaled that of Mark Twain, who saw in Natchez both the ‘drinking,

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106 Joan Gandy used graph paper to produce scale drawings of each image and its placement on exhibit walls Thomas Gandy to Robert S. Martin, Assistant Dean of Libraries for Special Collections, January 7, 1993, Gandy papers, HNF. Wilder to J. Gandy, September 11, 1992; J. Gandy to Wilder, September 19, 1992. All in Gandy Papers, HNF.

107 Cutlines are the descriptive text that appears below image captions. Wilder once pointed out to Joan Gandy the need for some amplifying information for people from other countries and cultures. What was obvious to Natchezians (for example, historical background on the houses and their owners) was not necessarily clear to others. “Dinah” (R. Wilder’s office) to Joan Gandy, January 12, 1993; Wilder to J. Gandy, February 2, 1993; J. Gandy to Wilder, March 1, 1993. All in Gandy Papers, HNF.

108 Wilder to J. Gandy, January 4, 1993; J. Gandy to Wilder, January 5, 1993; Natchez Democrat, May 28, 1993. All in Gandy Papers, HNF.
carousing, fisticuffing . . . riff-raff of the river’ and the agreeable life of the cotton-rich people who lived in Natchez-on-the-hill [sic].”

Visual flow was key to guiding viewers on a journey through the Gandys’ interpreted vision of the cultural and economic history of the Natchez community during Henry Norman’s era. The opening image was a massive, 30x40-inch print of Norman’s panoramic photograph looking down Main Street toward the river from the top of St. Mary’s Cathedral (see fig. 1.4, p. 174). A second large image (of the steamboat Natchez) linked the city with the river. Visitors moved past prints of Natchez Under-the-Hill, steamboats and the river, cotton culture, downtown, houses, the countryside, and studio portraits. Thirty-seven steamboat images and forty-one portraits comprised the largest groups.

Early on, Joan Gandy expressed the hope that Dover Books might publish a soft-cover book (similar to a catalog) based on the exhibit. She also envisioned a soft-cover edition of Natchez Victorian Children, which was then virtually out of print. There is no known record of an exchange between Gandy and the publisher, but as the exhibit grew more popular, Wilder’s office contacted the Gandys to see if any books might be available so for the Barbican to sell. Joan Gandy replied that only the Mississippi River book was available – through Dover Publishers, and lamented, “How I wish there had been money for a catalog of this exhibition; it certainly would have paid for itself.”

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109 The Economist, May 29, 1993, “The Times, Friday May 28, 1993” (no page number), with additional typed information at bottom, Wilder to J. and T. Gandy. All in Gandy Papers, HNF.


111 Wilder to J. Gandy, September 7, 1992 and September 11, 1992; “Dinah” to J. Gandy, January 12, 1993; Lisa Collins, Barbican Press Office to J. Gandy, February 25, 1993: “Page 4 to Rosalyn Wilder” (with Joan Gandy’s handwriting), n.d. All in Gandy Papers, HNF.
Display brochures and leaflets describing present-day Natchez had to be restocked every day and were gone within two weeks of the opening. ¹¹²

Comments in the visitor’s book indicate that the photographs engaged and intrigued viewers. ¹¹³ Many were fascinated by the details revealed in the larger images. Others reacted positively to the composition in Henry Norman’s photographs and to the quality of Thomas Gandy’s reproductions. Several made comments like, “They help put history in perspective,” and “Extremely interesting – a history lesson in pictures.” One wrote, “I warmed to this exhibition – the photographer somehow involves us.”¹¹⁴

Other comments were more analytical, and occasionally argumentative, as people consciously and unconsciously compared their own perceptions of Southern history to what they saw represented. “Fascinating and excellent quality photos,” said one, “[b]ut could be more rounded to show all aspects of life, i.e., the blacks and their poverty and lifestyle. . . .” And another: “Very beautiful portraits but there is no representation of the exploitation and lack of privilege of Afro-Americans in this area which still remained after slavery had been officially abolished.” A third was even more blunt: “All this wealth is built on the blood and suffering of black people. This wealth is therefore a sin against humanity.”¹¹⁵

¹¹² J. Gandy to Wilder, November 4, 1991; “Samantha” for Wilder to J. and T. Gandy, June 3, 1993; Wilder to Natchez Democrat (open letter), July 27, 1993. All in Gandy Papers, HNF.

¹¹³ No fewer than 619 people signed the 31 guest book pages that were presented to the Gandys in July 1993. How many people attended without signing the book, or whether there were more pages is not known. Barbican Centre, Natchez Exhibition Visitors Book pages, not paginated, Gandy Papers, HNF.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.
Some comments provoked lively “interactions” between visitors. One wrote, “Brings the nature of the past alive and gives insight into the personalities behind the eye – but cannot show horror and barbarity of slavery and injustice; and cannot seem to ignore [the] fact that all wealth, etc. [was] due to profits from the greatest unpunished crime against humanity.” Several pages later, someone else wrote, “V[ery] interesting. Agree with [the previous] comments – not enough info on social history and therefore perpetuates notion of a romantic past – doesn’t really show the poverty and social injustice which existed then, partic[ularly] for non-whites.”

The comment about perpetuating “the notion of a romantic past” has merit. “Natchez on the Mississippi” presented Henry Norman’s vision of the city as a sophisticated, cosmopolitan, and attractive place in which to live and work. As noted earlier, his photographs occasionally revealed intriguingly different views, but he also had a vested interest in publicly portraying the Natchez community in a positive light. In their choice of images and manner of presentation, the Gandys revealed their own, interpreted vision of the past. In addition to their efforts to raise awareness of a unique visual history, they, too, wanted to present Natchez more positively. The exhibit focused peripherally, rather than primarily, on the race-based caste system and poverty that, in Henry Norman’s era, functioned in place of the institution of slavery that begat them.

At a time when many viewed the city’s history only through the lens of its association with slavery (and Mississippi, generally, in terms of racism and poverty), the Gandys raised awareness of facets of late-nineteenth-century daily life in Natchez that were often obscured by more stereotypical views. Attempting to attract visitors and business, the modern Natchez community, too, has a vested interest in presenting a more

116 Ibid.
positive vision of the past through its abundant architecture and re-enactments of antebellum life. Henry Norman’s photographs, and the Gandys’ interpreted vision of them, did much to help present the city in that positive – if romanticized – light.

No single source, whether visual or textual, can fully represent a specific time in history. Inherently, too, sources reveal the conscious and unconscious perspectives and biases of their creators. The exhibited photographs engaged their viewers with the past in ways that made them consciously examine what they saw, and moved them to react to, and raise questions about, what they did not see. Historical perspective begins there. In that sense, then, the Barbican Centre exhibit succeeded in its intention.

In late 1995, the opportunity to raise awareness of the photographs took a more academic turn when more than four hundred images from the Gandy Collection went on exhibit simultaneously at three different sites in the Los Angeles, California area. California State University, Northridge exhibited some 218 images, along with camera equipment and historical documents, in its geodesic “Art Dome.” The California Afro-American Museum in Los Angeles and the University of Judaism each presented smaller, more individual exhibits tailored to their own emphasis.

The ambitious undertaking was the brainchild of CSUN History Professor Dr. Ronald L.F. Davis. The CSUN association with Natchez began in 1991, when Davis

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117 The Art Dome temporarily replaced the CSUN Art Gallery, which was destroyed in the 1994 Northridge earthquake. Many images came from the London exhibit. “Cutlines for Exhibit at CSU-Northridge,” and “Text Blocks for CSUN-Northridge[sic] Exhibit,” “CSUN Exhibit Information: folder, from Dr. Joyce L. Broussard to this author.

started bringing students to the city to conduct individual research and to process thousands of old legal records from the Adams County Courthouse basement. CSUN’s association with the Gandys also began then, when Thomas and Joan Gandy invited students to their home to see and hear about the collection. Davis wrote about the experience: “All the research that the students had done, in local documents [and elsewhere] now stood revealed and personified.”\(^{119}\) Knowing that he himself was interpreting Henry Norman’s view of Natchez, Gandy would point out details that interested him, and say, “Look at that! . . . Now, if you think about it, what else do you see that’s there? And now, let’s try and figure out why it’s there, and let’s try to think about what it means.”\(^{120}\) He did not, said Davis, try to persuade students to accept his point of view. Instead, he pushed them to discover for themselves what the images revealed and omitted about the past. The informal seminars with Gandy produced lively discussions afterward. In addition to seeing photographs differently, students often analyzed Gandy’s own fascination with the images. Said Davis, “[Those exchanges] just generated tremendous discussion about, ‘What’s inside this image, and what we can take out of it?’”\(^{121}\) Interacting with Gandy, the students visually connected with the time, the place, and the people they were studying. The photographs, and the history in them, came alive.

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\(^{119}\) Ronald L.F. Davis and Joyce L. Broussard, eds. *Natchez on the Mississippi*, 4-5.

\(^{120}\) According to Davis, Gandy believed that photographs are often staged to reflect their cultural setting, and that they reveal the individual human dignity that was present at the time. Ronald L.F. Davis, interview by author, California State University, Northridge, July 29, 2008.

\(^{121}\) Ibid.
The Gandys’ ongoing relationship with CSUN students led them to agree to the first major stateside exhibit outside of Mississippi. It was no ordinary experience. The contagiously enthusiastic Dr. Davis already had the support of CSUN Dean Ralph Vicero, who knew Gandy, and who also recognized the value of visual literacy in student research. Davis wanted the exhibit to involve the Los Angeles community; hence, the additional venues. He envisioned it as an educational experience for elementary through high school students, as well as those from CSUN.

Davis also wanted to bring the collection to the attention of the J.Paul Getty Museum, which has an extensive photographic archive, but had not exhibited anything quite like the Gandy Collection before. To that end, he asked CSUN President Blenda J. Wilson (who was on the Board of Trustees) to approach the museum about sponsoring an exhibit and lectures based on the photographs. He believed that involving the Getty would add credibility to the collection from a highly respected source. The collection was already becoming better known popularly through the London and Toronto exhibits and “Showboat” on Broadway. Dr. Wilson enthusiastically cleared the way.

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122 Joan Gandy was the point person for the exhibit layouts at each venue. Visiting them before setup, she brought with her to scale drawings of image placements. She also wrote all of the text block and cutline material. Lewis recalled that the layout information was so complete that few, if any, changes were necessary. Davis to Dr. Blenda J. Wilson, CSUN President, November 14, 1994; “CSUN Exhibit Records” loaned to this author by Ronald L.F. Davis; Dr. Ronald L.F. Davis, Dr. Joyce Broussard, Jim Sweeters, and former Art Gallery Director Louise Lewis, interview by author, California State University, Northridge, June 8, 2010.

123 Vicero was the Dean of CSUN’s College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, which oversees the History Department.

124 Davis, interview by author, California State University, Northridge, July 29, 2008.
Ultimately, the Getty hosted an evening reception and tri-part lecture for invited guests from CSUN and Natchez at its elegant Malibu facility.\textsuperscript{125}

The relationship between CSUN and the Natchez community was reciprocal. In addition to their processing work in Natchez, students had access to records at the courthouse and the Historic Natchez Foundation. Often, they stayed in local homes. CSUN’s work brought attention to the historic city, in terms of both scholarship and tourism. The university wanted to highlight efforts by the Historic Natchez Foundation to preserve the city’s material culture. With help from CSUN, the Foundation organized a trip to California for a sizeable group from Natchez, including the city’s mayor. In addition to exhibit receptions, they enjoyed sightseeing activities during their weeklong stay. Davis also arranged to bring out members of the Holy Family Gospel Choir from Natchez to perform at the exhibit sites. That group annually presents Natchez history from a black perspective in its performances of “Southern Road to Freedom.”\textsuperscript{126}

As planning continued, other CSUN people with Mississippi contacts stepped forward. D.G. “Gray” Mounger, the Director of Alumni Relations, was a Mississippian himself, and knew the Gandys, as well as many transplanted Mississippians in the Los Angeles area. Scheduled to coincide with the opening of the exhibit in the Art Gallery

\textsuperscript{125} Dr. Davis, Dr. Gandy, and Natchez architectural historian Ron Miller were the speakers. The reception did not appear on the Getty calendar of events, because it was attended mainly by CSUN invitees. The Getty’s involvement, then, was limited. Davis, interview by author, California State University, Northridge, July 29, 2008; Art Gallery Exhibit Records; Memorandum from Ann Friedman of the J.Paul Getty Museum to Diane Brigham, Andrea Leonard, Ron Davis, and Louise Lewis.

\textsuperscript{126} R. Vicero to B. Wilson, June 18, 1995, “CSUN Exhibit Records” from Dr. Davis.
Dome, the 25th Annual Mississippi Picnic was held on the CSUN campus for the first time. The event drew more than twice as many attendees as in the prior year.\footnote{Wilson to Davis, December 13, 1994; Gray Mounger to Michael Hammerschmidt (CSUN Director of University Development); Davis, “CSUN Exhibit Records.”}

Education remained the central focus of CSUN’s efforts. Art Gallery Director Louise Lewis suggested an exhibit catalogue combining photographic images with student historical essays on Natchez.\footnote{Lewis suggested the catalogue, and Dean Vicero underwrote it. Davis and Broussard, eds., \textit{Natchez on the Mississippi}, 2, 4-5; Louise Lewis to Dr. Ralph Vicero, November 6, 1995; CSUN Art Galleries, “CSUN Exhibit Records” folder.} CSUN kept the focus on the photographs mainly through Thomas Gandy himself. He gave seminars to CSUN photography students, and delivered prepared lectures on and off campus on subjects including “The Mississippi Steamboat Era,” “The Photograph as Artifact,” and “The Henry C. Norman Collection.” Both Gandys lectured on “Researching Southern History,” and Joan Gandy spoke on “Using Photography as a Cultural Teaching Experience: The Natchez Example.”

Architectural historian Ron Miller and his wife, Mimi (then a historic preservationist at the Historic Natchez Foundation, and later, its Director), also lectured.\footnote{A “slide list” found in the Gandy papers may have been used in a seminar with a CSUN photography class. It lists not only some of the old photographs, but images of many types of camera equipment, as well as negative and print types “Lecture Schedule,” CSUN Art Galleries, “CSUN Exhibit Records” folder; Slide List, “California State U. – Northridge, Students,” Gandy papers, HNF.}

Student visitors to the exhibit received special attention. Prior to the opening, Thomas Gandy met with the Art Gallery docents who would act as guides. Following his pattern with CSUN students, he pointed out image details that might inspire further discussion.\footnote{Louise Lewis, Dr. Ronald L.F. Davis, Dr. Joyce Broussard, and Jim Sweeters, interview by author, CSUN Art Gallery, June 8, 2010; Broussard to this author: “CSUN Exhibit Information Folder,” “Cutlines for Exhibit at CSU-Northridge,” folder, and “Text Blocks for CSUN-Northridge[sic] Exhibit,” folder.} Joan Gandy’s cutlines and text blocks generally identified places, events,
people, and their backstory, rather than image details. Thomas Gandy, then, might suggest that docents point out to younger children the ubiquitous head clamp stands in studio portraits, or ask about their clothing. Older students might be asked why women did not appear in images of downtown streets. Tours emphasized looking beyond the obvious, and relating the images to what was present in, or absent from, modern life.

The university bussed in local students from all grades to see the photographs; CSUN students attended individually and in class groups. Guest book pages are not available, but one report indicates a total of 3,574 attendees at CSUN. Writing later to the Gandys, Dr. Davis estimated that “another several thousand” attended without signing the guest book. Figures for the other two exhibit sites are not available, but the California Afro-American Museum was known to have drawn great interest from the local African American community. The Jewish museum exhibit, which ran for a shorter time and had less space, was less successful. Perhaps CSUN Art Gallery Director Louise Lewis summarized the entire experience best in a letter to the Gandys: “This effort to provide a lasting cultural perspective of a moment in American history to the campus and surrounding communities reflects one of our university’s major missions, and it meshes perfectly with your whole approach to the history of Natchez, and specifically to the collection of Henry Norman’s photographs.”

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131 Students from ten elementary schools, two middle schools, seventeen high schools, and eight CSUN classes formally toured the exhibit “Art Galleries, California State University, Northridge, ‘Natchez on the Mississippi: A Photographic Journey Through Southern History 1870-1920, October 16 – November 17, 1995,” CSUN Art Galleries, “CSUN Exhibit Records” folder.

132 Davis to Joan and Tom Gandy, December 1, 1995, Gandy Papers, HNF; Davis, interview by author, California State University, Northridge, July 28, 2008.

133 Louise Lewis to Joan and Tom Gandy, November 22, 1995, “CSUN Exhibit Records” from CSUN Art Gallery.
Chronologically, the London and Los Angeles exhibit locations were bookends to one closer to the Gandys’ hearts. The London experience, especially, drove home to them the need for a permanent exhibit in Natchez itself.\textsuperscript{134} Sixteen months after their return (with planning underway for the California exhibit), “Natchez in Historic Photographs” opened in the Stratton Chapel Gallery at the First Presbyterian Church. Completed in 1900, Stratton Chapel is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Joseph “Buck” Stratton, who was minister/Minister Emeritus from 1843 to 1903. Henry Norman photographed the much-beloved Stratton, and took several panoramic views of Natchez from the church’s bell tower. He also photographed the chapel itself. Thomas Gandy once cropped a print from that badly damaged negative and did some minor restoration work on it to reveal the chapel as it looked soon after its dedication.\textsuperscript{135}

It had been suggested before that the Chapel’s upstairs rooms would make a good “home” for the photographs. Joan Gandy, who had gone to Sunday School there, found the leap from religious education to exhibit space hard to accept. When the pastor again suggested it after London, she went with him to see the rooms. As she recalled it, “The light was streaming in all those windows up there. It was perfectly beautiful. The walls were perfect, the floors were perfect. . . I walked to the top of the steps, and I just said, ‘Oh, this is the place!’” Coming later to see, Thomas Gandy agreed, “This is perfect! It’s divided into rooms. We can do kinds of themes. It’s well-lighted – the natural light.”\textsuperscript{136}

\textsuperscript{134} The Stratton Chapel Gallery opened in March, 1995. Joan Gandy, interview by author, Natchez, Mississippi, August 11, 2008.

\textsuperscript{135} Gandy and Gandy, \textit{City Streets}, 24.

\textsuperscript{136} Joan Gandy, interview by author, Natchez, Mississippi, August 11, 2008.
The Church Session approved, and by agreement, the Gandys provided the prints and captions on a long-term loan. Proceeds would go to upkeep. Should the exhibit need to be closed, the photographs would revert to the Gandys or to their family. The original exhibit began with three rooms: Victorian children, the hallway outside, and the “River Room.” Other rooms were added over the course of a year. “It has,” said Joan Gandy, “fulfilled everything we could possibly have imagined. . . .”

For Thomas Gandy, the Stratton Chapel exhibit would always be an organic place. He sometimes lectured on the collection, and acted as a gallery guide to visiting tourists. Joan Gandy smilingly related how he would grow tired of an image and want to change it out. For her, that sometimes meant significant work in changing captions and rearranging placements. Early on, he did it often, and it was hard for her to keep up. She would tell him, “You may be bored, but remember, there are people coming who have never seen any of this before.” For Thomas Gandy, however, there was always something new to share. Ten years after failing health first curtailed his visits to the gallery, and a lifetime since the world became defined by digital photography, it is interesting to contemplate what images he might want to change out now.

The building’s age and architecture add to the ambience. Modern-day excursionists can stroll around the Stratton Gallery and see a focused vision of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Natchez. The images are some of Thomas and Joan Gandy’s favorites, and represent, in number and organization, their gift to the city of Natchez. Themed rooms present images of ladies’ fashions, Victorian children, antebellum homes, and people enjoying leisure time together. In the largest room,

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137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
steamboats and the river dominate, along with camera equipment and negatives that visually make the photographic process more understandable. Elsewhere are images of the stores and other businesses that once supplied people’s needs. People in nineteenth-century portraits gaze back at the twenty-first century visitors studying them.

By definition, however, themed presentations can be exclusive as well as inclusive. That is true of the room that blends Earl Norman’s work with that of his father’s in photographs of the antebellum homes for which Natchez is famous. Absent, however, are images of the smaller houses and shacks that were home to working-class people in and around the city. Norman’s church-top views showed that poverty and wealth co-existed in close proximity back then. The same is true today.

The room is a departure, too, because many of the mansions are described both in terms of their nineteenth-century history and architecture, and their twentieth-century association with the Pilgrimage tours featuring many of those same houses. The past and present seem purposefully mixed. Does that mixed focus lessen the images’ value as visual history? No, because they contain abundant, detailed information about what homes in and around Natchez looked like in Henry Norman’s era, and their change over time in Earl’s. Photographs of their interiors and exteriors – and occupants – reveal social, cultural and architectural details that might otherwise have been lost.

At the same time, however, the insertion of textual information about modern tourism more than suggests the Gandys’ active contribution to a romanticized vision of Natchez history as it is represented in the home tours and other events surrounding Pilgrimage. In truth, Henry Norman and the Gandys each took an active interest in the growth and wellbeing of Natchez, and wanted to represent it in ways that might attract
people to visit, work, and live there. For Henry Norman, that interest took the form of creating photographs to show others what Natchez had to offer in the way of business, transportation, and the culture and entertainments its inhabitants enjoyed. For the Gandys, it involved raising awareness of Natchez as both a reflection of nineteenth-century history and a viable twentieth-century presence.

With the Natchez community in mind, the Gandys published their final three books in 1998 and 1999. *Victorian Children in Natchez* (1998), *Natchez: City Streets Revisited* (1999), and *Natchez: Landmarks, Lifestyles, and Leisure* (1999) were part of Arcadia Publishing’s *Images of America* Series, which began in 1993. The soft-cover books use photographs and text to produce short, often anecdotal, “community histories” in regions across the United States. They are especially popular with tourists, and are usually readily available in the communities they represent.

Compiled rather formulaically by local historians and other authors, the books often use images from historical societies, local archives, and private collections. Textual information generally augments the visual.  

Historian John E. Carter calls them “history-as-celebration” books, and maintains that, by extension, they engender a sense of community pride. They reveal the sameness and cumulative change-over-time that help to define a community’s social history and cultural memory. They are a reminder of how things once looked, and how people interacted with their environment.  

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The Gandys recognized the potential benefits to Natchez tourism in the *Images of America* Series. They also wanted to continue making the images available to the widest possible audience, and both *Norman’s Natchez* and *Natchez Victorian Children* were out of print. As people learned about the images, they continued to express interest in seeing them in book form. The series’ affordable, accessible format would answer that need. The three volumes – all still in print - proved the Gandys right.\(^{141}\)

*Victorian Children of Natchez* included many studio portraits from the original book. The shorter format often mandated three or four images to a page, rather than the single-page portraits used previously. As arranged, the images visually emphasized similarities in pose, dress, and props. On one page, three of four well-dressed boys struck virtually identical poses. “Young Mr. Banks” was one of eleven African-American children’s portraits from among the approximately one hundred and forty-nine studio images generally attributed to Henry Norman.\(^{142}\)

Expanded, updated text revealed what happened to some of the children as they grew older. Ruth Audley Wheeler (see fig. 2.7, p. 206), eventually ran a successful clothing store in Natchez, and was a co-founder of the Natchez Pilgrimage. The earlier volume reported in her photo caption that Kate Schwartz had accidentally drowned at age 21 with two friends. Sadly, *Victorian Children in Natchez* revealed that one of the other people was her fiance. They are buried side-by-side in the Natchez City Cemetery.\(^{143}\)

\(^{141}\) Joan Gandy, interview by author, Natchez, Mississippi, August 11, 2008.

\(^{142}\) Gandy and Gandy, *Victorian Children of Natchez*, 67.

\(^{143}\) Ibid., 96, 97.
The Gandys grew closer to the collection as they worked intimately with it. New images and revelations constantly informed their research. Searches for material to augment and improve exhibits, lectures, and books enhanced their understanding of the images themselves. The *Images of America* books presented an expanded, clarified vision of the Henry Norman’s city.\(^{144}\) *Natchez: City Streets Revisited* and *Natchez: Landmarks, Lifestyles, and Leisure* combined images from *Norman’s Natchez* with ones that had emerged later. Gandy’s fascination with visual details brought everyday life into greater focus, and also traced change over time downtown. Dirt streets and horse-drawn wagons gave way to pavement and motorized traffic. Buildings changed in look and number. *Natchez: Landmarks, Lifestyles, and Leisure* focused more on the recreations and enjoyments that bound people together as a community. Included, too, were some of Henry Norman’s studio portraits that personalized the city. As in *Norman’s Natchez*, that volume also contained images from Earl’s era, when the Natchez Pilgrimage first translated the past into the romanticized version that is celebrated today.

The Gandys’ collaborative efforts were especially evident in the panoramic images presented in *Natchez: City Streets Revisited*. *Norman’s Natchez* had utilized fewer church-top views, and furnished less textual information about each one. In the later book, Joan Gandy’s text identified rooftops, signage, and building facades. Thomas Gandy’s close-up of a building on Market Street revealed that it was, in fact, a saloon. Bedding draped from an upstairs window in one image and absent in another revealed that Norman clicked his camera shutter not just once, but at least twice.\(^{145}\)

\(^{144}\) Joan Gandy, interview by author, Natchez, Mississippi, August 11, 2008.

\(^{145}\) Ibid., 26-36, 39.
Since 1999, visitors and residents alike have used the photographs in *Natchez: City Streets Revisited* and *Natchez: Landmarks, Lifestyles, and Leisure* to visually compare the past with the present. Today, visual comparisons have been re-invigorated through the Natchez Trails Project, which began in early 2010. Walking trails now follow city streets, travel along the bluff, and down Silver Street to Natchez Under-the-Hill. The expanding project builds on the Gandys’ earlier work, and has engaged the Natchez community as well as visitors to the city. Along with informative text, sidewalk signs present photographic images showing how particular buildings and street corners once looked. Many of the images have been reproduced from Henry C. Norman’s negatives.

Thomas Gandy was often honored for his work as a preservationist and local historian. In February 1995, *The Natchez Democrat* named him Citizen of the Year. The scope of his involvements is perhaps best represented in letters nominating him for the 1999 National Humanities Medal (presented by the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington, D.C.). While he did not win, the letters make clear the high regard in which he was held.

That year, the medal was awarded to those who had “enabled people to see the past more clearly and be touched by it more closely.” Charles E. Bartley (President and CEO of the Natchez Association for the Preservation of Afro-American Culture) saluted Gandy’s “interpretation of ‘Black Portraits of Natchez’ . . . which has added significantly

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147 *The Natchez Democrat*, February 26, 1995, Gandy Papers, HNF.

to the ability of the African-American community [to have] an opportunity, particularly our youth, to see their ancestors in a new light.” Elbert R. Hilliard (State Historic Preservation Officer for the MDAH) nominated Gandy for “his leadership in the state’s preservation movement,” pointing out that Gandy had “helped preserve and expand Americans’ access to a rare and extremely valuable resource in the humanities.” Carolyn Vance Smith (National Consultant, Special Elderhostel Programs and Founder and Co-Chairman of the Natchez Literary Celebration) saluted his engaging abilities as a popular speaker. Ronald W. Miller (then Executive Director of the Historic Natchez Foundation) praised the Gandys’ work to preserve, restore, expand, and make available the photographs to many different interests. CSUN Professor Dr. Ronald L.F. Davis described Gandy as a “uniquely skilled individual whose eye for historical detail and the visual nuances of the historic past are unequaled among contemporary humanists.” Macy B. Hart (Executive Director of the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience) explained how Gandy’s efforts to restore and identify the images “brought together Natchez’s diverse community in a shared appreciation for a past that comprises much more than antebellum mansions and planter elites. Before his work began, few people fully realized the importance that Jews and blacks played in the city’s history.”

The letters speak to both the man and his accomplishments. Thomas Gandy cared passionately about people, about Natchez, and about the visual history that embraced and influenced both. He put his considerable energy into the photographs and their directions of influence until 1996, when a bout with cancer slowed him down. He never recovered from a major stroke he suffered more than a year before he died. He is buried in the

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149 All of the letters were written between May 27 and June 3, 1999. All in Gandy Papers, HNF.
Natchez City Cemetery, in a plot that, appropriately, fronts Steamboat Lane.  

His headstone inscription reads in part, “Physician, Historian, Preservationist.” The order of the words (which he approved) is interesting. Although many thought of him as a preservationist, had Thomas H. Gandy not been a historian first, he would probably never have recognized the historical importance of the glass negatives he found in the decaying crates on Mary Kate Foster Norman’s patio. His headstone inscription concludes with a quotation: “He led a useful life.” Intriguingly, it echoes, in part, a line from one of Henry C. Norman’s newspaper obituaries: “He lived a good and useful life, leaving a name that was a synonym for honor and justice to all.”

Although she was not as widely recognized for her own considerable work with the photographs, Joan Gandy was nevertheless instrumental to her husband’s success, and to achieving recognition of the importance of the photographs in their collection as historical documents in their own right. Throughout their marriage, the Gandys were, in every sense, a team. Despite their busy lives, they focused their interests on Natchez and the people who lived there, both past and present. A few years after Thomas Gandy died in 2004, Joan Gandy sold Myrtle Bank, went back to school, and became a Presbyterian minister. She will live elsewhere during the remainder of her lifetime, but a part of her heart will always be in Natchez, just as was Thomas Gandy’s.

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150 Thomas H. Gandy obituary, www.natchezdemocrat.com/articles/2004/03/23/obituaries/obits72.txt (accessed June 7, 2007); Eulogy, Dr. Thomas Gandy’s Funeral Service (undated), given to author by Mimi and Ron Miller, who wrote and delivered it, respectively.

151 Unidentified newspaper clipping, July 4, 1913, Gandy Papers, HNF.
CHAPTER 3

INTERPRETING PHOTOGRAPHS ACROSS TIME

Images become history, more than traces of a specific event in the past, when they are used to interpret the present in light of the past, when they are presented and received as explanatory accounts of collective reality. They become history when they are conceived as symbolic events in a shared culture.

Alan Trachtenberg, Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans, p. 6

Photographs connect the past and present on both emotional and informational levels. Thomas Gandy connected deeply enough with the faces he saw in the negatives to make identifying them and preserving as much of their information as possible a priority. Images of places and events in and around Natchez have connected students with the location and informed searches for information about what Natchez was once like. But photographs, like texts, cannot tell the whole story. The photographer’s vision and intention, as well as available technology, naturally limit perspectives. Cropping may reveal otherwise-hidden details, but it may also alter perceptions of past reality. Tentative visual identifications may change as further information emerges. Staging, body language, proximity, and expression can visually reveal conditions of class or race but, absent other information, can lead to general conclusions not always based on fact. Similarly, textual descriptions may be inadequate or outright misleading. The Gandys’ experiences demonstrated all of these situations.

Henry Norman and Thomas Gandy experienced and interpreted Natchez from different time frames and perspectives, and with different intentions. Photography was Norman’s livelihood and evident passion. In variety and number, the images attest to his
interest. His portrait work earned him both praise and continuing business, even after Kodak cameras burst onto the scene. Taking his camera outside of his studio, he infused photography as a livelihood with an appreciation for the everyday in his surroundings. In so doing, he chronicled the look and feel of his adopted city.

If photography was Norman’s passion, the images he left behind quickly became Thomas Gandy’s. They visually reinvigorated and personalized the past. Gandy acquired the images at a time when Natchezians were increasingly undecided about how, or even whether, to physically preserve the look of that past while living in the present. The early Natchez Democrat series that featured many Norman images helped to focus public awareness on the city’s disappearing historic architecture.

Founded in 1974, through the efforts of the Gandys and others, the Historic Natchez Foundation continues to provide ongoing expertise and direction in efforts to initiate and maintain revitalization and historic preservation activities in commercial and residential neighborhoods. The Foundation has been instrumental, too, in efforts to research and promote the city’s African-American and other ethnic heritages. For more than thirty years, it has supported efforts to restore, preserve, and engender pride in Natchez and its very visible past. Photographs from the Gandy Collection have been especially helpful in this work.

Thomas Gandy was also on the advisory committee that worked with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History to restore Historic Jefferson College in

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1 Located since 1990 in the Natchez Institute Building, the Foundation has assisted individuals and organizations in obtaining state and federal grant funds, and in the National Register of Historic Places program. The Foundation maintains an extensive collection of local history books for scholarly use, and houses early records connected with the CSUN Courthouse Records Project mentioned in chapter 2. “Outline History of Historic Natchez Foundation,” (circa 2008). I am indebted to Mimi Miller for the information.
nearby Washington, Mississippi. It was the first educational institution in the Mississippi Territory. Henry Norman’s photographs helped to document the look of, and changes in, many campus buildings over time. Thomas Gandy’s enlarged and cropped prints brought out essential details.² Back in Natchez, that same restoration technique has provided valuable visual information that is lacking in existing texts. Specifics on relative sizes, proximities, and decorative details have contributed significantly to historical accuracy.

The Gandys’ interpreted prints have expanded an understanding of daily life in late-nineteenth-century Natchez. Using modern technology, he could enhance images in ways that Henry Norman could not.³ Enlarged or reframed prints, however, may lead to different perceptions of what was present in or intended by the original image. When compared, differently cropped prints sometimes tell very different stories.

Three cropped prints of a single image make the point. Each leaves a different impression – and creates different questions about – what was happening at a given time and place. In Norman’s Natchez (1978), the accompanying text for the full-page image is carefully vague: “Norman flavored his photographs of the river with the many people who brought it to life, such as this potential customer stopping by an Under-the-Hill saloon (see fig. 3.1, p. 210).”⁴ Signage indicates that the saloon is just beyond the tall doors of the brick building behind him. Part of a wheel at the left edge of the image suggests that a wagon or cart is just out of view. Whether the man holds the horse’s bit

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²Elbert R. Hilliard, [Mississippi] State Historic Preservation Officer to Chairperson, National Humanities Medal, National Endowment for the Humanities, June 3, 1999, Gandy Papers, HNF.
³Beyond efforts to preserve them, Thomas Gandy never made changes to original negatives. To create a print that was as close as possible to the original ones, he often touched up white spots left by damaged emulsion. Joan Gandy, lecture to tourists, First Presbyterian Church of Natchez, April 2, 2007.
⁴Gandy and Gandy, Norman’s Natchez, 88.
for safety, or because he is the driver, is not clear. In the background, the figure sitting at the edge of the walk appears to be female. At least, “she” wears a skirt and some kind of head covering for shade. But no real lady in Norman’s time would sit with knees spread so far apart, or on the sidewalk in front of a saloon. Which person, then, is the saloon’s “potential customer?”

One of Thomas Gandy’s hand-tinted, cropped prints tells a different story (see fig. 3.2, p. 210). Here, the upper story and the sign, “Boat Stores” indicate the building’s mixed usage. The name on the anchor attached to the balcony railing identifies the saloon’s owner as “Robert Emmett.” Gandy’s tinting work, and a clearer print, have brought out a face beneath the shading “hat” worn by the figure sitting in front of the saloon, along with faint ruffles on the blouse front and collar. To the left, the edge of a cart is now clearly visible. A woman in a pink hat sits in the cart, holding the horse’s reins. Will she driving the cart back up Silver Street? What brought her to Natchez Under-the-Hill? Is the man with her? Is their presence in front of the saloon accidental to Norman’s photograph? The woman in the cart is turned slightly away from the saloon and toward the camera, but does she even realize that another female – one possibly connected with the saloon – is sitting nearby?

A third print adds to the unanswered questions (see fig. 3.3, p. 211). The published caption is interesting: “Typical of a Mississippi River landing establishment, the saloon sold boat supplies right along with beer and whiskey. The gentleman with his family perhaps came to meet a friend or relative expected on the arriving boat. If the occupants of his cart were departing passengers, however, he may have had visions of returning to the saloon rather shortly.” More image at the left reveals that there are two

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5 Item Number 37780404403p, Thomas H. and Joan W. Gandy Photograph Collection, LSU.
small children sitting next to the woman in the cart. Is her body turned sideways to block their view of the figure on the saloon step?

Do differently cropped images negate their usefulness as historical sources? The value in these three prints is partly in the questions they evoke. Who was Robert Emmett? Did unescorted women take horse carts down Silver Street and back up again? Did children routinely come along? Was the man, in fact, one of the many hackmen who made a living transporting passengers and freight to and from the top of the bluff? Was the woman sitting at the edge of the walk a customer, or an employee of the saloon?

Why were the images edited in these ways? Was the one that appeared in 1978 changed for layout purposes, or was it thought to project a more refined view of Natchez Under-the-Hill? The third, and most complete, image appears in the Mississippi Steamboat Era volume, which intentionally focused on the co-existing, eclectic mix of people and purposes that defined life in and around Natchez Under-the-Hill. Was that the reason for presenting a more complete image there?

Different treatments of another image, taken in about 1890, highlight a different problem. The first version appears in full-page form in Norman’s Natchez (see fig. 3.4, p. 212). Norman positioned his camera along the sidewalk to capture a long row of signs hanging over store entrances and extending into the distance. Men in shirtsleeves, ties, and hats (probably storeowners and/or their employees) lean against the storefronts at intervals moving away from the camera. As printed in Norman’s Natchez, the image was enlarged and cropped in, presumably to better see the faces of the men and make more readable the store signs themselves. Unfortunately, the printing problems that generally detracted from the book obscured these and other details. Cropping also accentuated the
natural foreshortening. As a result, store signs cascaded away from the camera in close, crowded order, leaving the impression of small, bunched-up stores contesting with one another for sidewalk space. The published image was the visual antithesis the inviting, spacious businesses Natchez proudly promoted in the late nineteenth century.

Although necessarily smaller because of the book’s format, a second image, in *Natchez: City Streets Revisited* (1999) is more complete, and significantly clearer (see fig. 3.5, p. 212). As used in this thesis, the image actually presents the complete negative. Cropping lines indicate the portion that appeared in *Natchez: City Streets Revisited*. Revealing more of the curbing, the image suggests that the reason for positioning the camera on the sidewalk and not in the street may have had to do with the chinaberry trees, which would have blocked sight lines of the businesses and the people outside. The more complete image also shows the curbside clutter that drew occasional complaints in *The Natchez Democrat*.

Foreshortening is less pronounced in both versions of the latter image, in part because there is more foreground area. The stores appear more comfortably spaced and, by extension, larger. As discussed in chapter 1, contemporary writings depicted late-nineteenth-century Natchez as a city with a shopping district that was not only inviting but, as the store signs indicated, ready to provide a variety of goods and services. By more closely representing Norman’s original framing in *Natchez: City Streets Revisited*, the Gandys better conveyed the photographer’s original intentions.

Attempting to more accurately interpret Henry Norman’s vision of Natchez while exploring their own, the Gandys often focused on the details that evidence small nuances and interactions in daily life. Combining Norman’s vision with their own methods of
study in the final books, the Gandys revealed a clearer, more analytical view of the city during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Students of Natchez history have benefitted from those changes.

The approach is frequently evident in *Natchez: City Streets Revisited*, which combines Henry Norman’s interest in landscape and panoramic views with Thomas Gandy’s passion for detail. Norman’s church-top panoramas especially intrigued Gandy. Most created the impression of a relatively modern, small city and its spacious surroundings, dotted with the antebellum mansions of the upper class. Conveniently, the high bluff hid the ramshackle appearance of Natchez Under-the-Hill.

Two images in *Norman’s Natchez* and *Natchez: City Streets Revisited*, however, created a different impression.⁶ Taken from St. Mary’s Cathedral, the sight line of the first image ran north along Union Street (see fig 3.6, p. 213). Joan Gandy identified many landmarks, beginning with the Phoenix No. 7 firehouse just behind the church, and the Jefferson Hotel on Franklin. Moving to the middle distance, she pointed out the rooftops of the Methodist Church and the Union School (established in 1871 for black children). In the distance, the cupola of the old Marine Hospital was one of many visible through the trees, along with Stanton Hall. The white façade and cupola of Elmo mansion stood in the far distance beyond the dark trees. Thomas Gandy once enlarged the 3x4-inch negative many times to produce a fuzzy, but recognizable, image of the

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⁶ Slightly cropped and sometimes enlarged, the images appear in both books, along with Joan Gandy’s identifications. For purposes of clarity, the images are reprinted in this thesis from the negatives at LSU. Gandy and Gandy, *Norman’s Natchez*, 28-29 and *City Streets*, 28-29.
mansion, which burned in 1930. The second panoramic image extended farther east to include D’Evereaux, the Catholic orphanage for boys (see fig. 3.7, p. 214).

The foreground in both images caught Thomas Gandy’s eye. There, connecting a frame building to the left with a brick one to the right, an elongated shack created a small courtyard. The text in Norman’s Natchez did not mention the area. In Natchez: City Streets Revisited, however, Thomas Gandy had enlarged both images to reveal that at least part of the shack was apparently home to one or more people. Joan Gandy compared some of the details. In the first image, smoke rose from the chimney, perhaps indicating a cooking stove inside. In the doorway, a man sat with an elbow on one knee and a hand to his face, apparently watching a small, ghost-like figure at a nearby tub. The Gandys speculated that it may have been a child stooping over to wash (see fig. 3.8, p. 215). Behind the man, a ghost image hinted at another person inside. By the second image, the man and the figure at the tub were gone, and smoke no longer rose from the chimney (see fig. 3.9, p. 216). Curiously, the apparent ghost image in the doorway where the man had been sitting remained, and was unchanged in shape. Except for differences visible inside the room through the window to the right of the man, and a blurred white object in the courtyard in front of the doorway, the area itself appeared as it had in the first image.

The two enlarged images reveal a poignantly humanizing glimpse of the poverty that contrasted sharply to the comparative luxury of many homes in and around the city.

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7 At the time it burned, Elmo was part of Natchez College, which provided upper-level education to blacks Gandy and Gandy, City Streets, 28; David G. Sansing, Sim C. Callon, and Carolyn Vance Smith, Natchez: An Illustrated History, (Natchez: Plantation Publishing Company, 1992), 147, 149.

8 Ghost figures, which fascinated Gandy, evidenced movement too fast for the shutter speeds of Henry Norman’s day. Please see chapter 1 for further discussion. Gandy, City Streets, 28.
Attempting to fully capture the panorama around him, Norman had to include what was most immediately below him, yet the squalor contradicted the city’s image of itself. Norman photographed it twice, so it is difficult to imagine that he was unaware of the courtyard. Intriguing, too, is the question of whether or not the disappearance of both the smoke and the figures in the courtyard indicates the amount of time needed to take one photograph, then re-prepare the camera and take another.

As noted earlier, the Gandys’ perceptions of, and attitudes toward, the images changed as they learned more about them and the history they reflected. What was undefined or unimportant early in their efforts often became more significant later. In the courtyard images, change over time was not only apparent in the two photographs that, intentionally or by chance, reflected a glimpse of life in a small, cluttered courtyard. It was apparent, too, in the Gandys’ decision to include the enlarged details of the scene in one of their final books.

Identifying information sometimes changed after images were published or exhibited. Henry Norman had the advantage of knowing his subjects’ names when he took their photographs. His daybooks would have helped him to recall names over time, as would notes on negative sleeves or elsewhere. Not so for the Gandys, who had to contend with absent daybooks and the ravages of time on unprotected negative sleeves, as well as additional, sometimes contradictory information coming in as more people saw the photographs. The Gandys made every effort to correctly identify people and places

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9 People who saw the images often passed along information about them, or even other Norman photographs. When it became known that the Gandys were planning to publish *Norman’s Natchez*, members of the Carpenter family came forward to give them an entire box of Henry Norman’s negatives of Carpenter family members. Gandy and Gandy, *Norman’s Natchez*, 8.
before publishing or exhibiting the images. Nevertheless, presumed identities could, and sometimes did, change with additional information.

A photograph of one African-American family group illustrates how elusive the identification process could be (see fig. 3.10, p. 217). In it, a black man, a woman, and four variously aged children (two boys and two girls) sit outside on straight chairs. All are in “Sunday clothes,” and those with visible feet are wearing shoes. Behind them stretches a fenced-in field. Probably to indicate her literacy, the oldest girl (at left) holds a book. The woman at right wears a white apron over her striped dress. The youngest girl leans against her, holding what may be a small rag doll. The youngest boy wears knickers, a white shirt with ruffled “Fauntleroy” collar, and a tie. The older boy wears a suit and vest. In the center of the group, the man wears a white shirt, vest, necktie, jacket, and striped pants. A watch chain stretches across his vest. All but the woman and the youngest girl are looking at the camera. All are taking the photographer’s visit seriously.

The image appeared in *Norman’s Natchez* (160). Few family photographs in that volume were identified by name, and the caption (continued from a previous page) said only “. . . and in their yards.” The CSUN exhibit cutline for the 16x20-inch print read, “Washington Miller poses with his family. An enterprising business owner who operated a carriage service for many years, Miller advertised in 1874 three first-class carriages, a furniture wagon and a baggage wagon available for hire to transport people and freight from the landing to any part of town.”

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10 The same qualifying language was used in the cutline for the photograph at the Stratton Gallery in Natchez. The image also appears in an exhibit at the Natchez Association for the Preservation of African American Culture, and is identified only as “The Washington Miller Family.” It is credited to the Collection of Thomas and Joan Gandy, but they were not directly connected with mounting the exhibit. Dr. Joyce Broussard, “CSUN/Natchez Project File.”
The text was truthful, but when the image later appeared in *Natchez: Landmarks, Lifestyles, and Leisure* (34), the identification was less positive: “A group believed to be members of the Washington Miller family [italics mine] sits for a portrait. Miller ran a successful hack business in the late 19th century. The 1880 census shows that he and his wife, Emily, had three sons: James, 13; William 11; and Lloyd, 7. A daughter, Rachel Stanton, who was a schoolteacher, and her sons, aged 9 and 8, and a daughter, age 4, also lived with the Miller family.” The census information was correct. The identity of the people in the photograph was now in question.

Other textual information about Washington Miller and his family is surprisingly varied. Knit together, the pieces bring the family to life more than a hundred years later. Additional census information indicates that Miller was born in Kentucky, and his wife, Emily (a mulatto), was born in Virginia. He could read and write, but she could not. Depending on the census, they were as little as one year or as much as eight years apart in age. They did indeed have the four children named in the preceding paragraph. Both Washington and Emily had been slaves. Washington Miller reportedly bought his freedom while in California with his master, Colonel Lewis Sanders, Jr., a Mississippian. Sanders’ daughter married a man named Lloyd Tevis, who became the head of Wells, Fargo and Co. after he went to California in 1850. The circumstances are not entirely clear, but Sanders may have gone to California then as well, and taken Washington Miller with him. Later, the Millers named a son after Lloyd Tevis. He was one of two boys who became doctors; a third son became a pharmacist. Miller was involved in the Natchez

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11 Gandy and Gandy, *Landmarks*, 34.

12 Gurney Disc,” HNF; Natchez City Census 1886, Shumway, [http://www.natchezbelle.org/adams-ind/cs_1886.htm](http://www.natchezbelle.org/adams-ind/cs_1886.htm); Oscar Tully Schuck, *Bench and Bar in California: History, Anecdotes, Reminiscences*
community. He was elected to the board of the Union School in 1891, and was active in the local Republican Party. Additionally, he and his wife were founding members of the Mount Zion Chapel.\textsuperscript{13}

Miller ran his hack business in the Natchez community for about thirty years. In 1871, he had a hack stand on Broadway, “in full view of the river.” Ten years later, he advertised his “. . . facilities for transporting Baggage and Furniture superior to any person in the city.” Kept at his stables on the bluff were a baggage wagon and “three fine hacks,” which he made available to arriving boat passengers. By 1891, his place at 503 Broadway was connected to the Telephone Exchange (No. 54), and he readily provided general furniture hauling, including pianos, as well as “nice carriages and rockaways.”\textsuperscript{14}

After a short illness, Washington Miller died in Natchez on July 7, 1898. His obituary in the \textit{Natchez Daily Democrat} described him as “an old-favorite ‘grandpa’ with the majority of the leading people of this city,” and “an old landmark in this city,” who “comported himself in such a manner as to gain the respect, esteem and high regard of the people in this community.”\textsuperscript{15} Clearly, Natchezians thought highly of him, but the


\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Natchez Tri-Weekly Democrat} February 14, 1871, October 12, 1871, and April 20, 1872; \textit{Natchez Democrat}, June 18, 1881; \textit{Natchez Evening Banner}, September 4, 1891.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Natchez Daily Democrat}, July 8, 1898.
final phrase of the obituary also drives home the presence of the caste system that made deferential behavior a requirement because of his race.

Was the textual Washington Miller the man in the photograph? If so, were the people with him indeed his wife and some of the children and grandchildren listed in the 1880 census? The Gandys apparently could not fully verify the connection between the written and visual history, so the textual information in *Natchez: Landmarks, Lifestyles, and Leisure* was qualified, and rightly so. Absent other photographs or verifiable information, the identity of the people in Henry Norman’s image apparently remained elusive during Thomas Gandy’s lifetime. The negative (now at LSU) does not identify the Washington Miller family. Adding something to the mystery, four portraits of “Miller Son[s]” do appear in the LSU database, but none look definitively like the boys in the photograph.¹⁶

Valerie Irene Jackson Jones, Washington Miller’s great-great-granddaughter (and the family historian), maintains that the man in the family portrait is indeed Washington Miller, but that the woman in the hat is his sister, Miami. Jones provided a photograph of Emily Miller (“Emily McMurrian Miller, 1830-1899”) that reveals a light-skinned, mulatto woman. Jones said that Emily Miller was a cook at the Melrose plantation, as was her daughter, Rachel. Jones’s cousin, Thelma Wallace Williams, of Natchez, who has seen the image and remembers it well, substantiates the belief that Washington Miller is the man in the photograph. The young man standing behind Miller, in the dark suit, is

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¹⁶ The Miller family image (Item Number 37780402932) has a glass negative (GR-76-5x7G), and is titled only “Elite. 16x20. Negro. Image notes say, “Picture of a group (family) of black people sitting and standing in a field.” Item Numbers 377804080037 “Jim Miller” [this is verified]; 377804080038 “Miller Son”; 377804080039 “Miller Son”; 377804080040 “Miller Son.” All images from Gandy Photograph collection, LSU.
Valerie Irene Jackson Jones’s great-grandfather, James Hagen Miller (1856-1926) (see fig. 1.34, p. 200).^{17}

Do photographs that cannot be conclusively identified through textual sources have historical value in and of themselves? The Gandys thought so. They voiced the essential cautions, but they also made the images available for studies of group dynamics, clothing, surroundings, or other information. The people in the photograph were all dressed well, and had shoes on. Miller also wore a watch chain, which indicated that he could both afford it and tell time.^{18} The young woman to the left held a book – a valued indicator of literacy in those days. Visual curiosities also prompt questions that may lead elsewhere in the search to understand the past. Did the woman in the hat wear her apron in order to indicate that she, too, was employed? Since Washington Miller owned a house, why was the family photographed in front of a field? Was taking the photograph in that time and place planned in advance? In this case, it is the photograph itself that prompts further study.

The next image has been described at least once as “the quintessential photograph of Southern women (see fig. 3.11, p. 218).”^{19} On a different (and unrelated) occasion, it prompted the exclamation, “It really shows you what slavery was like!”^{20} In fact, Henry

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^{17}Thelma Wallace Williams, via telephone to author, May 10, 2011; Valerie Irene Jackson Jones, e-mail messages to author, June 9, 2011 and February 23, 2012.

^{18}Miller did indeed own a watch. Adams County Personal Property Tax Information for 1876 indicates that, in addition to 9 horses (value, $675) and 4 wheeled vehicles (value, $600), Miller owned one watch (value, $50), MDAH, microfilm roll 1064.

^{19}Joan Gandy, interview by author, Natchez, Mississippi, April 2, 2007.

^{20}Unidentified attendee to Janet Bruce, presenter, Biennial Historic Natchez Conference, October 8, 2010 Natchez, Mississippi.
C. Norman took it (and several others) one day in the mid-1890s, at “Dunleith,” the Natchez home of the Joseph N. Carpenter family. Further distancing the image from any taken before or during the Civil War, the Carpenters did not buy Dunleith until 1886.\textsuperscript{21}

Three of the four white females are identified. Seated at left on the bench, wearing the fox stole, is the Carpenters’ youngest child, Estelle Camille. To her left is her mother, Zipporah Russell Carpenter. Leaning familiarly against Zipporah, and looking straight at the camera, is her daughter-in-law, Amelia Roper Young Carpenter.\textsuperscript{22} The identity of the young girl seated on the ground is unknown.

In contrast, the black women all remain unidentified at this time. Textual information, such as that found in censes or city directories, is not helpful. The 1886 Natchez Census is listed in alphabetical order, not by household, so any live-in servants with a different last name would not be listed with their employers.\textsuperscript{23} The 1890 United States Census burned, taking with it any textual information about households and their makeup. The October 1892 \textit{Directory of the City of Natchez} lists several blacks living on Homochitto Street, but none with the Carpenters’ numerical address.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{21}Item Numbers 37780402802, 37780402829, and 37780402840, Gandy Photograph Collection, LSU.

\textsuperscript{22}Born in Louisiana in 1847, Zipporah Russell married Joseph Neibert Carpenter in 1868. Carpenter was born in 1846, to Nathaniel Loomis Carpenter, a Natchez builder, and his wife, Julia. The Joseph Carpenters had three children: Agnes Zipporah (1869-1934), Nathaniel Leslie (1870-1931), and Estelle Camille (1874-1906). Nathaniel Leslie married Natchezian Amelia Roper Young in 1892. Their only child, Joseph N. Carpenter II was born in 1893; it his presence in one of the other photographs from that day that helps date the image under discussion. Agnes Carpenter papers, unprocessed, MDAH; Deed Book 3A, p.357-359.

\textsuperscript{23} There are errors in the first names and initials, but apparently Joseph Carpenter’s father was living with the family at that time Natchez Census 1886, Shumway. \url{http://www.natchezbelle.org/adams-ind/cs_1886.htm}.

\textsuperscript{24} After the war, domestic service was the most frequent employment available to black women in urban areas. \textit{Directory of the City of Natchez, October 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1892} (Natchez: Banner Publishing Company, 1892); Julia Huston Nguyen, “Laying the Foundations: Domestic Service in Natchez, 1862-1877, \textit{The Journal of Mississippi History}, v. 63, No. 1, (2001): 51.
Contrary to the earlier comment about the image showing “what slavery was like,” most, if not all, of the black women pictured would have been paid employees. Their wages would have been small, but it is likely that most, if not all, lived elsewhere in the city.\textsuperscript{25} Absent textual information, Henry Norman’s photograph is presently the only known form of personal history existing for these four women. Despite the fact that the image has been published and exhibited many times – and that a 16x20 print of it is on permanent exhibit at the Stratton Chapel in Natchez, no one has yet come forward to publicly identify them. They exist, for now, only visually.

To the twenty-first century viewer, the photograph is heavy with economic, social, and racial symbolism. Norman photographed the wealthy, philanthropic Carpenter family many times, both in his studio and at their home.\textsuperscript{26} Joseph Neibert Carpenter was prominent in Natchez business circles, first with his father, Nathaniel Loomis Carpenter, and later, alone or in various partnerships.\textsuperscript{27} When he died in 1925, \textit{The Natchez


\textsuperscript{26} Henry Norman understandably gave his greatest attention to photographing people who could pay him. The large number of Carpenter photographs attributed to Norman indicates both his reasoning and, by inference, some of their wealth. Mimi Miller, interview by author, Natchez, Mississippi, November 1, 2007.

\textsuperscript{27} Carpenter’s parents moved to Natchez from New York in 1833. Many Natchez elites retained ties (and Union leanings) both before and after the Civil War. It was not unusual for children of the upper classes to be sent east to finish their schooling. Joseph’s son, Nathaniel Leslie Carpenter, went to school in the east and lived there occasionally as an adult. Nathaniel Loomis Carpenter turned to cotton ginning and then cottonseed oil manufacturing during and after the war. Born in 1846, Joseph joined his father at N.L. Carpenter and Son’s cotton ginning and factorage in 1867, and continued the firm after his father died in 1892. Joseph had diversified business interests throughout his life, and was prominent in some of the larger industries in Natchez, including the Natchez Oil Company, the Natchez Cotton Exchange, the Natchez and Vicksburg Packet Company, the Mallery Grocery Company, and the Natchez Cotton Mills. He was a
Democrat grieved his death even more for his philanthropic efforts than for his business investments. Apparently, most contributions to the city’s welfare were anonymously made, but in 1909 and 1913, the family gifted the city with funds to build two schools for white children, in memory of their youngest child, Camille Carpenter Henderson. They also provided funds for the construction of a separate school for black children.\(^{28}\)

The family was socially prominent as well. Despite a covert atmosphere of separation, churches were an important and accepted place of institutionalized social contact for both whites and blacks during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Natchez, Mississippi: On Top, Not “Under the Hill” listed Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopal, and Baptist churches, and took care to note that, “colored Methodists have a brick church of their own.” The Carpenters belonged to Trinity Episcopal Church, where Joseph Carpenter was a vestryman from 1879 to 1895. The church altar is consecrated in his memory. Of the Carpenter children, Agnes Zipporah and Nathaniel Leslie were baptized in the sanctuary in 1873, and Estelle Camille in 1874. By contrast, baptisms during Advent in 1887 took place “in the basement for colored people.”\(^{29}\) How actively Zipporah Carpenter and her children were involved in church life is unknown, but

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\(^{28}\) The schools were for the use of white children only. If black children were allowed to attend as well, the schools were to be closed. Natchez Democrat, March 3, 1925 and Carpenter Schools Vertical File, Armstrong Public Library, Natchez, Mississippi.

\(^{29}\) C.N. McCormick, ed., Natchez, Mississippi: On Top, Not “Under The Hill, Adams County and The Neighboring Territory” (Natchez: Daily Democrat Steam Press, 1892), 13. Also see “Memorials, Gifts: Trinity Episcopal Church, Natchez, Miss,” (compiled by Mrs. Joseph Kuehle, 1977); Parish Register, June 1873-1888, 154 and 164; Parish Register, Book Two, (no date), 238, all at Parish House Office, Trinity Church, Natchez, Mississippi.
Nathaniel Leslie married Amelia Roper Young there in 1892, and the church’s former pastor presided at Camille Carpenter’s first marriage at Dunleith, in 1899.\textsuperscript{30}

The names of the senior Carpenters sometimes appeared in the newspapers, usually when they sponsored some social event on behalf of one or more of their children. A notable exception occurred in April 1918, when \textit{The Natchez Democrat} gave front-page space and more to extensive coverage of their Golden Wedding Anniversary celebration. Henry Norman’s studio portraits of the couple headlined the article.\textsuperscript{31}

The Carpenter girls appeared in the newspapers far more often. In the late 1880s and 1890s, society columns reported on dances, weddings, parties, and the travels of those popular in Natchez society. Over time, newspapers assumed an institutionalized importance, with the power to establish and reinforce sub-sets of social rankings. One could determine popularity and preferred social groupings by following invitee and attendee lists. The regular use of “Miss” and “Mrs.” was a public indicator of success in a well-established, much-sought-after progression to marriage.

Newspapers mentioned Agnes Carpenter with some frequency, but it was her younger sister, Camille, who dominated the society columns. While their five-year age difference probably played a part, Agnes’s unsmiling face in many images suggests that she may have been either jealous of her sister, uncomfortable in the social spotlight, or both. Whatever the reasons, Camille was evidently more popular, in print, at any rate. Her first wedding, to John W. Humphries in 1899, appeared on the front page of the \textit{Natchez Daily Democrat}. Her family’s social power may have been what kept her 1903 divorce from appearing in print as well. Her second marriage, in 1905, to the

\textsuperscript{30}\textit{Natchez Weekly Democrat, October 12, 1892 and October 19, 1899.}

\textsuperscript{31}\textit{Natchez Democrat, April 14, 1918.}
newly-minted Natchezian, Edwin Henderson, was recounted more modestly in print. Her illness and death barely a year later in New Orleans returned her name prominently to the society columns, but for a sadder reason.\textsuperscript{32}

It is doubtful that the white women gathered on the lawn at Dunleith on the day of the photograph were consciously thinking of the family’s social position. Amelia Carpenter occasionally visited from the family home in Bessemer, Alabama, so it is possible that either her arrival or impending return home prompted the family to request a visit from Norman and his camera. Other photographs, both inside the house and on the Dunleith grounds, indicate that Norman had frequent access. An image of young Joseph N. Carpenter II, taken on the same day as the one of the Carpenter women and the servants, includes his mother, his Aunt Camille, and the unidentified girl. There appears to be no image of him with his grandmother, but since not all of the negatives survive, it cannot be said that Norman did not at some point pose the boy with her.

The group dynamics and body language in the image of the Carpenter women and the servants raise both curiosity and questions. How is the girl seated on the lawn related to the group? Camille herself is the only woman wearing a fur. Did she do so for warmth, or to stylishly show it off? It is difficult to tell from her facial expression whether she is attempting to look sophisticated, or is bothered by something. She gazes

\textsuperscript{32} Camille Carpenter was the youngest child and first of the immediate family to die. Joseph N. Carpenter died in March 1925, Nathaniel Leslie in February 1931, Zipporah in May 1931, and Agnes in January 1934. Mrs. Estelle Camille Carpenter vs. John W. Humphries, Divorce, 1901, Chancery Court Records; \textit{Natchez Daily Democrat}, October 19, 1899, June 20, 1905, June 10, 14, 19, 24, 27, 28, and 29, 1906.
away from her mother and the young girl. In other images, Camille often seems to play either to, or with, the photographer and his camera.\textsuperscript{33}

Mirroring a frequent pose of her generation, Zipporah Carpenter smiles into the indeterminate distance. She poses formally, but not stiffly, projecting the attitude that she is the mistress of both her wealthy, socially prominent household and the scene. Amelia Carpenter looks directly at the camera as she poses informally on the arm of the bench. In contrast to her sister-in-law, she is married and has produced a son and heir. Is hers the posture of one who has fulfilled Zipporah’s hopes for the family? She is not disrespectful of her mother-in-law; just familiar in the way she leans toward her.

The women in the back row are also intriguing. Why were they called to be in the photograph? For white women, having household servants was considered a mark of social position.\textsuperscript{34} Are all four black women from Dunleith, or did some travel with Amelia Carpenter and her child? Zipporah Carpenter holds a bouquet of flowers – a bit awkwardly keeping them upright and away from her dress. The black woman at the left holds a small nosegay. Who presented the flowers to the women? Is the black woman in charge of something in Zipporah’s household? Is she on a lesser-but-parallel household plane with her employer? The bouquet and nosegay visually connect the two women and their worlds. Servants and their mistresses worked in close contact with one another, so

\textsuperscript{33}Among the images are two photographs taken at Mardi Gras; possibly taken in 1898, when Camille was Queen of the Masquerade Ball on one night and a maid of honor to the Queen of the Carnival the next. In one image, she sits on a bed with two friends. Her mother sits behind them. To the right is a dressing table with photographs stuck into the mirror frame. In the second image, the girls are seated on the floor in front of an oriental screen. Camille is propped on one elbow. In her free hand, she holds one of the photographs – of a young man. She looks at the camera with a smile edging toward a smirk, as if she had the photograph in her hand and raised it up just as Henry Norman took the picture. Given the probable date of the image, it is possible that the young man is John Humphries, since Camille married him the next year. Item Numbers 37780408233 and 37780402834, Gandy Photograph Collection, LSU.

\textsuperscript{34}Nguyen, 53.
are the flowers, perhaps, acknowledging that (however-carefully-circumscribed) bond? Even small favors toward servants suggested some affection, although the lines of demarcation were always to be respected and preserved.\textsuperscript{35}

The woman who is second from the left presents an interesting enigma. She appears to be blind in one eye, or nearly so. Is she a beloved former slave – a mammy? If so, did she, as a freedwoman, care for Camille?\textsuperscript{36} Michael Wayne posits that, after the Civil War ended, many former owners no longer felt an obligation to take care of servants when they were sick or elderly.\textsuperscript{37} Norman took the photograph a generation and a half after the war’s end, however, and the woman clearly has status within the group, if for no other reason than that she is present in it. So, who was she?

All of the black women except the one with the apparently blind eye wear white aprons. Do these connote employment in the Carpenter household? The Gandys never speculated in print about the possibility that someone identified in one image might be the same person who appeared in another. There is, however, a similarity between the black woman who is second from the right and one who appears in Figure 3.12 (p. 219). She would be older then. The similarity is intriguing to consider.

Interestingly, the posture of the young woman at right in the back row mimics that of Amelia Carpenter. Her outstretched right arm reaches far enough to be resting on the corner of the back of the bench, and she has bent her other elbow behind her so that she just misses replicating Amelia’s upper body pose. Did she do it purposely and, if so, was

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., 54, 55. For background on some of the inherent control mechanisms of paternalism as evidenced in white households during slavery, please see Ronald L.F. Davis, \textit{Black Experience}, 109-111.

\textsuperscript{36} Joseph Carpenter and Zipporah Russell did not marry until after the war, but both would have experienced slavery and its paternalistic system as young people.

\textsuperscript{37} Wayne, \textit{The Reshaping of Plantation Society}, 141-2.
it to identify herself with Amelia, or a silent assertion of equality that black women
sometimes used to demonstrate their right to be treated as dignified human beings?

Perhaps it is not surprising that the unidentified Historic Natchez Conference
attendee thought the photograph was taken during slavery. For her, and almost certainly
for others, the image reinforces a form of race-based collective memory. It visually
legitimates the deeply ingrained view that blacks should be subservient to whites, if only
because they “always have been.” Although the photograph was taken long after the
war, the unchanged racial dividing line remained. The black women stand deferentially
behind the seated white women. They are included in the photograph, but it is an
interesting question whether any of them received a copy.

A second photograph that also includes some of the Carpenter women inverts the
previous dynamics (see fig. 3.12, p. 219). The distinctive railing at Dunleith is again in
the background. Seated toward the top of the slope are, from left to right, Camille
Carpenter, two unidentified white women, Agnes Carpenter and, at the far right, her
mother, Zipporah. Two black men sit in front of a smiling Camille. Wearing a
boutonniere, a third black man leans back on one elbow. To his left is a black woman
wearing a hat. To her left sits another black woman in a plaid dress.

It is possible that the “whites-over-blacks” composition intentionally
demonstrates racial superiority in a different way. Even more intriguing is the informal

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38 For more on collective memory and historical memory, please see Renee Christine Romano,
Associate Professor of History, Wesleyan University, “Commemorating the Past: An Introduction to the
Study of Historical Memory,” http://www.wesleyan.edu/afam/faculty/rromano/index.htm, (accessed
September 4, 2011).

39 The image is ascribed to Henry Norman. It has no glass negative, but Norman was present at that
occasion and taking photographs, because the other two known images to be discussed do have glass
negatives (Item Numbers 37780402848 and 3778040040068, LSU) Mark Martin, the Processing Archivist
in charge of the collection at LSU, has cautioned that photographs without glass negatives may have come
from elsewhere. In this case, the other photographs make it more likely that Norman took all three images.
posture of the participants. The white women appear to sit directly on the ground with the others. Everyone is well dressed; the men wear coats and ties. The two men at the far left appear uncomfortable, perhaps from sitting on the ground in what must have been “good” clothes, or from being photographed with that combination of people in the first place. Of the white women, however, only Agnes looks out of sorts.\textsuperscript{40}

What does the image demonstrate about the relationship between the races? If the gathering is intended to fete some or all of the blacks, why are the other white women also present? Are they Carpenter relatives? Henry Norman photographed singly the man with the boutonniere and the woman in the hat. Scratched at the edge of the damaged negative of the man is, “Carpenter’s Butler at Dunleith.” In the group image, the man wears the same coat and tie, but has no boutonniere – or, perhaps, has not yet put it on. In her individual portrait, the woman wears a coat. Because these two were photographed apart from the others, was this a wedding, perhaps? Employers (and former masters) sometimes did that for favored servants.\textsuperscript{41} If so, did the woman, too, work at Dunleith? Was she in the earlier photograph of the Carpenter women with the servants? She appears older in this second image, but so do Zipporah and Camille Carpenter. It is an intriguing and, for now, unanswered, question.

\textsuperscript{40}A file disc of photographs titled “Carpenter Photos”, at the HNF contains several snapshots and more formal images, some of which may have been Henry Norman’s. At least two of them, identified as “Agnes & Camille Carepenter[sic] in front of Dunleith,” and “Agnes and Camille Carpenter, 1897” were taken at the same time. In the first, Agnes and Camille stand in the back row with one other woman, three others sit in front of them on chairs, and a seventh is on the ground at their feet. Agnes appears taller than the others, but because some are seated, it is difficult to gauge height relationships. In the second image, all are standing in a line, although some lean over on one another. Agnes, however, stands straight up and appears to be nearly a head taller than the rest. She is not smiling in either photograph. Neither is she smiling in a photograph in the same file, when she is dressed as the Mardi Gras Queen in 1900. A rare photograph of her smiling appears on page 193 of Norman’s Natchez.

\textsuperscript{41}Ronald L.F. Davis, \textit{The Black Experience}, 110-111.
Although they were not always successful, Thomas and Joan Gandy attempted throughout their work with the images to identify the people in them.\textsuperscript{42} Thomas Gandy tried especially to preserve as much information as possible from even the most heavily damaged negatives. Joan Gandy recalled him saying, “This . . . is someone’s relative. It may be someone’s grandmother, and if we can show just this part of her face, or if the face has a crack through it, you know, one day, they’ll be able to put that gelatin back together and mend that negative, and then there may be a perfect picture of her.”\textsuperscript{43} To him, photographs importantly represented both collective and personal memory.

In the case of the image of the Carpenter women in front of Dunleith and the one taken on the slope, there are currently no known written documents that might reveal who the black people were, where they came from, the names of their family members, or when and where they died. For now, only the photographs tie them to a past time and place, and bring that past forward into the present for examination. Their visual existence in Henry Norman’s photographs has thus become that much more important.

\textsuperscript{42}Identifying people and places in photographs challenges archival institutions. Asked whether all of the glass negatives in the Gandy Collection had been entered into the LSU database, Processing Archivist Mark E. Martin told this author: “I can’t guarantee that EVERY glass negative we received is in the database, but I’m reasonably sure that NEARLY all of them are. What we have not, and probably will not, put in the database is a fairly large group of unidentified studio portraits. We probably won’t enter these due to the fact that having a few thousand records whose only index point is “unidentified woman” / “unidentified man” / :unidentified [sic] child” isn’t much help and takes an inordinate amount of time with very little return on the time investment.” Mark E. Martin, e-mail message to author, July 15, 2010.

\textsuperscript{43}Joan Gandy, interview by author, Natchez, Mississippi, August 11, 2008.
CONCLUSION

Henry Norman spent forty years photographing the people, places, and events in and around his adopted home. It is difficult to be certain about what he did and did not photograph, because not all of his negatives survived. Certainly, his vision, intentions, interests, and the need to support his large family would have helped to guide his decisions about where and how he used his camera. The images that remain, however, reveal both Norman’s skill as a photographer, and a surprising mix of individual and collective moments in the daily life of a diverse, energetic community.

After the Civil War, Natchez struggled to come to terms with the diminished wealth that built its antebellum mansions, and to overcome the absence of the free labor system that fueled such wealth in the first place. A strong merchant class was willing and able to spend the money needed to reshape, rather than simply restart, the local economy. It did so with a new labor system that ultimately continued to benefit the rich at the expense of the poor, and to preference whites over blacks. Ambitious whites in Natchez were especially anxious to regain and expand on their city’s former prominence in cotton-related agriculture, industry and transportation.

To make his living as a photographer, Henry Norman had to offer goods and services that would visually support and help grow Natchez’s self-image as an economically strong, culturally sophisticated city at the edge of the Mississippi River. To that end, he courted the patronage of the city’s businessmen, the river industry, and the individuals and families who brought the city to life on a daily basis. In the course of his work, he sometimes photographed individuals or his surroundings for more personal,
even enigmatic, reasons. These images reveal something about Henry Norman the man, as well as Henry Norman, the photographer.

It is not clear whether Norman consciously or unconsciously visually minimized the existence of a level of continuing poverty known as sharecropping, or the presence of the largely tacit, racial boundaries that governed caste and class in a still-patriarchal world. As present as the blurry ghosts in many of his photographs are the anomalies that raise questions like, “Why did he photograph that?” “What was he trying to say?” Blacks quietly observing in the background of a family photograph, watching the photographer from the deck of a ship, or their positions and body language within a group – all seem to speak of something more. Intriguing, too, is the apparent absence of businesswomen in the plentiful images of stores and their owners, or even women shoppers at the downtown stores that catered (in print, at least) to their shopping tastes.

Photography was still something of a mystery to most people when Henry Norman arrived in Natchez. That mystique disappeared during the 1880s and 1890s, when technology roared forward with faster camera speeds, better lenses, and inventions like the dry plate process. Although not universally popular with professionals, dry plates were a more versatile alternative to messy, wet plates. Thankfully for historians, Henry Norman continued to use wet plates often. Thomas Gandy later mined their crisp images for details.

When Kodak put cameras into amateur hands at the end of the 1880s, it was a crushing blow to many professionals, who railed against both the results, and at members of their own craft who used low prices to undercut competition. By the early 1890s,

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commercial photographers also had to contend with amateur camera clubs, whose members enjoyed darkroom privileges and the chance to exchange ideas. People began to stay away from portrait studios in droves.

Henry Norman weathered the challenges because he knew how to both work the system and to work within it. Taking his camera outside of his studio, he brought professional photography to the two places that mattered most to Natchezians: their businesses and their homes. Coaxing merchants to show off their stores by assembling them outside with their staffs was a good business move, for both the merchants and for Norman. Persuading families to congregate on porches and in yards that would show others both how they looked and what they possessed was another very effective move.

Norman also knew how to work within the largely unspoken and unwritten rules of Natchez society. The image of the Carpenter women and their servants (see fig. 3.11, p. 218) exemplifies the racial demarcations that, however politely or respectfully observed outwardly, still chafed at blacks’ consciousness while falsely reassuring white denial. The photograph would not be as intriguing had Norman featured only the front row of the white women. Moreover, as mistress of her household, Zipporah Carpenter would almost certainly have prevented him from photographing only the back row of the black women that day. Clearly, how to employ racial boundaries artistically, as well as pragmatically, mattered to Norman.

The studio portraits are also revealing. It is an interesting question whether whites ever saw the portraits Norman took of fashionably dressed, middle-class blacks. Certainly, blacks themselves were unlikely to show them around indiscriminately. In his studio, Norman enjoyed the particular freedom of his own domain. Comparable

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2 Ibid., 260.
photographs depicting blacks and whites using the same props might have caused consternation to some whites, but Norman apparently felt comfortable or, at least justified, doing it in his own place of business. If nothing else, his studio portraits illuminate the democratic quality of the camera lens, and perhaps, of the man himself when in the privacy of his own world. What drove him to do so remains speculation – artist versus capitalist, social arbiter versus historian of time and place . . . for now, at least, it is a question without an answer.

Despite his changing world, Henry Norman continued to be a photographer of note in Natchez. In the course of his work, he preserved the personalities, daily subtleties, and larger events of his time. We are the ones who apply the term “history.” While he had to have known, sometimes, that history was in the making – as when Natchez turned itself inside out for President Taft’s visit in 1909 – for the most part, Norman’s view appears to have been more personal. He greeted many of his subjects on the street as friends, and watched their children grow up with his own. He patronized their stores, and attended church with them. Members of the Jewish community in Natchez, who asked him to take their studio portraits for a congregational celebration in the early 1900s, did so because of their dual relationship with Norman, the photographer, and Norman, their friend. His printed thanks make it clear that he reciprocated the feeling.³

Norman’s images describe the process of the city, and particularly, its overarching dependence on cotton. In all its forms, from fields to finished products, the Natchez community relied on cotton to provide jobs as well as the goods themselves for sale, trade, and shipping. Norman photographed masses of it, still loose from the fields in the surrounding countryside, coming to town for weighing and bailing, for use in the

³ Please see chapter 1, “The Owl.”
mills, and for export. Until the fatal intrusiveness of railroads, he also photographed the steamboats that dominated cotton transport as they hauled bales so massive and numerous as to dwarf their river carriers. Ancillary to the river activity, he photographed the hardscrabble appearance of stores, lumberyards, supply depots, bars, and small houses in Natchez Under-the-Hill. Opposite in look and tone, he photographed the world of Natchez-On-Top, and the sense of permanence in its civic buildings, businesses catering to both luxury and necessity, churches, cultural institutions, and substantial residential neighborhoods. A common thread to both Natchez Under-the-Hill and Natchez On-Top was the people themselves. Unique in their individual circumstances of economics, race, culture, class, and education, they blended together with varying degrees of physical dependence on, and fealty to, a city that both encouraged individuality and structured it to fit within a greater whole.

Thomas and Joan Gandy spent forty years working to preserve, identify, interpret, and make widely available the visual past as they observed and interpreted it in Norman’s photographs. Thomas Gandy went farther still, by enlarging and focusing in on details that were otherwise overlooked or obscured in the busy-ness of the whole. For many who study Natchez history today, those revealed details awaken a visual awareness that makes it difficult to ever look at photographs in the same way again.

While Thomas Gandy worked on the images, Joan Gandy researched local records and other texts to support, verify, identify, and expand on what the images revealed. Whether studied by themselves, or supplemented by written text, Norman’s photographs are powerful historical documents in their own right. The Gandys’ interpretations of those photographs enhance their significance and value to historical
study. In choosing to regard the images as history more than art, and working to raise awareness of their importance through lectures, exhibits, and books, the Gandys served historians and the Natchez community alike.

Natchez is steeped in the celebration of its collective historical memory. People live surrounded by a famously visual past. Pragmatically, the city at once embraces a kind of relentless romanticism and, as a whole, also seeks to come to terms with its more infamous associations with slavery and racism. Textual history, too, is abundant in court records and private papers that attract historians and others interested in researching the past. Even though it must sometimes contend with scholars who are eager to turn the city into something of a historian’s petri dish, Natchez continues to search out ways to own its past without being overwhelmed by it.

Today, photographs are increasingly recognized as historical documents in their own right, but do they expand and clarify history in ways that written texts alone cannot? This thesis would argue, “Yes.” Henry Norman’s photographs reveal the nuanced details and clues to the community’s physical and cultural makeup that are often so taken for granted that they escape awareness or description. For example, although photographers may compose group images with a particular purpose in mind, details in individual body language and position often reveal much about personal dynamics, socio-economic position, and racial boundaries. Two people sitting next to, but turned away from, each other in a group image project a very different impression than if they are turned toward one another or even touching. The questions that arise may say something about both the individuals and the construct of the group itself. More concretely, architectural and decorative details, as well as clothing, can reveal timelines. Buildings and signage
indicate not only design periods and preferences, but also the availability of materials in a given place at a given time. Comparative photographs reveal appearances that have sometimes even slipped from local memory. For example, the Gandys found an early image of the original Masonic Hall (1827), which was torn down in 1890 in favor of a new and taller structure that Norman also photographed. The images added meaning to a third one, of the Masonic cornerstone-raising ceremony held in 1890.  

Most of all, photographs bring the past, both spontaneous and purposefully staged, to life. We see things before we mentally or verbally articulate them. Photographs connect us, often in undefined, emotional ways, with the past. Alan Trachtenberg expanded on this when he said that the purpose of “... pictures [was] to open a path from the present to the past, to bring the past into our present lives with the vividness, immediacy, and gripping concreteness that photographs make possible.” Bringing the “past into our present lives,” we can begin to understand what it is that makes us who we are. A fascination with the “past as present” was one of the driving forces behind the Gandys’ work.

“A good historian,” says now-retired California State University, Northridge History Professor Dr. Ronald L.F. Davis, “always follows his sources, and Thomas Gandy followed his sources.” Those sources were the photographs that introduced Gandy to Natchez and to its people from an earlier time. The Gandys were often honored for their work in preserving both the negatives and the architectural history of Natchez,

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4 Gandy and Gandy, Norman’s Natchez, 50 and 51.
5 Exhibitions staff, Office of Educational Programs, National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration, The American Image: Photographs from the National Archives, 1860-1960, Introduction by Alan Trachtenberg (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), xii.
6 Ronald L.F. Davis, interview by author, California State University, Northridge, July 29, 2008.
but their interest in the photographs went far beyond any value to preservationists. The decision to regard them as history, rather than as anecdotal illustrations, had far-reaching benefits to Natchez and to Mississippi. As noted before, early exhibits at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History during the turbulent Civil Rights era helped to expand perceptions of Mississippi’s past. The Gandys’ decision to organize the images by subject groups also drew attention to many separate parts of the nineteenth-century Natchez community making up the whole. Fashions, technology, river activity, businesses, leisure activities, and family units were all revealed in clearer detail. Images of middle-class blacks, posed in Norman’s studio in ways similar to their white counterparts, illuminated a part of Mississippi history that was virtually unknown elsewhere at the time.

Historians, preservationists, students, and Natchezians themselves owe a debt of gratitude to Henry Norman. For two generations, he formally and informally photographed the people, places, and events in his adopted city. What he saw in the present became the captured past as soon as he opened and closed the shutter of his ubiquitous camera. Thomas and Joan Gandy deserve similar thanks for preserving the images with history in mind, and then making them available to others so that they, too, can better understand how the past influences and shapes the present.
EPILOGUE

In a world that now photographs and broadcasts itself at every opportunity, it is difficult to understand just how much early photographic images impacted the lives of their creators and recipients. Henry Norman came to Natchez at a time when photography was advancing rapidly in capability, popularity, and availability. He quickly became proficient in the medium. He also understood the importance of using it to document and promote the accomplishments of (and opportunities in), his adopted home. On a personal level, he connected with the people who lived and worked there, and he used his camera to capture their visual identity in ways that were meaningful to them.

In both overview and detail, the visual wealth in the images surviving today reveals many facets of the Natchez, Mississippi that existed during the closing decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Throughout his career, Norman willingly contributed to sustaining the positive self-image Natchez wanted to present to the world. The ambitious, appearance-conscious city used his photographs to visually promote itself in pamphlets and other advertising materials that were intended to grow its business and residential sectors. The relationship was reciprocal. The more Norman could actively promote Natchez’s accomplishments and ambitions, the larger and more prosperous it might become, and the more individuals and groups would be likely to come to him to memorialize them and the important events in their lives.

Photographs represent a photographer’s naturally selective view of the world he sees through his camera lens, as well as the collaborative relationship between himself and his clients. Norman composed many images of the Natchez business sector in
uniform ways, so as to represent their individual offerings within the context of the larger community. His studio portraits reflected the self-image people wanted to present to others. He also took many photographs that represent his more personal vision of Natchez; in the process, apparently including or omitting from them what did or did not interest him.

The images that survive today do not document everything about life in Natchez during Henry Norman’s era. History is informed by many points of view, so no single source can do that. In their variety and number, however, the photographs visually describe significant portions of daily life in Natchez at a given point in time. Thomas and Joan Gandy’s presentations reflect both Norman’s views and their own interpretations of the Natchez he documented with his camera lens. In making the images widely available, the Gandys enabled others to visually connect with, and to reflect on, the past and its importance to studies of the present. Today, the images continue to play an important part in efforts to understand the complex history of the Natchez community they represent.

Along with their passion to raise awareness of Norman’s photographs as sources of historical information about Natchez, the Gandys had a passion to preserve the city’s history in its physical form. Modern Natchez regularly and publicly presents a dramatized, communal vision of its history; relying on the money brought in through tourism to help maintain the physical evidence of its very visible past. With its romanticized tours and re-enactments of antebellum life, the city has selectively mythologized a period in its past, and now presents it as a form of entertainment.

While never diminishing their emphasis on the importance of the Norman photographs as historical sources, the Gandys did recognize their usefulness in Natchez’s
efforts to maintain its physical history through promoting the yearly pageants and tours that contribute to the city’s economic wellbeing. The Stratton Gallery exhibit room that was discussed in chapter 2 is evidence of the Gandys having embraced the connection between past information and present need. The images provide historical details that inform and augment home tours. Earl Norman’s photographs have contributed a visual history of the early years of Pilgrimage activities. Additionally, the images have been widely used in restoring homes and storefronts. Effectively, then, the visual collaboration-across-time between Henry Norman and Thomas and Joan Gandy is a collaboration that also includes the city of Natchez itself. The end result is a unique and important visual history that connects them all.
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APPENDIX A

NATCHEZ POPULATION, 1870 TO 1990

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>5,087</td>
<td>6,700</td>
<td>4 (nationality/race unknown)</td>
<td>11,791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>5,803</td>
<td>6,801</td>
<td>4 (nationality/race unknown)</td>
<td>12,608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>6,258</td>
<td>7,159</td>
<td>5 (nationality/race unknown)</td>
<td>13,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>7,287</td>
<td>8,001</td>
<td>8 (nationality/race unknown)</td>
<td>15,296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>12,782</td>
<td>9,958</td>
<td>(includes all non-whites)</td>
<td>22,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>11,437</td>
<td>12,343</td>
<td>11 (nationality/race unknown)</td>
<td>23,791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>9,733</td>
<td>9,959</td>
<td>12 (nationality/race unknown)</td>
<td>19,704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>10,514</td>
<td>11,447</td>
<td>(includes all non-whites)</td>
<td>21,961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>9,596</td>
<td>9,796</td>
<td>(no other races included in total)</td>
<td>19,460</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Original Sources: U.S. Census 1810-1990.
APPENDIX B

NATCHEZ CITY MAP

1. Dualeith
2. Etania
3. First Presbyterian Church
4. Myrtle Bank (Gandy house)
5. St. Mary's Cathedral
6. Norman's Original Studio
7. Norman's Union Street House
8. Norman's Washington Street House and Studio
Figure 1.3. View southwest from St. Mary's Cathedral. Thomas H. and Joan W. Gandy Photograph Collection, LLMVC, LSU. Item Number 377804065027.
Figure 1.7. Franklin Street, north side. Thomas H. and Joan W. Gandy Photograph Collection, Mss.3778, LLMVC, LSU. Item Number 37780408506.
Figure 1.8. Franklin Street, south side. Thomas H. and Joan W. Gandy Photograph Collection, Mss.3778, LLMVC, LSU. Item Number 37780404605.
Figure 1.12. Natchez Under-the-Hill Thomas H. and Joan W. Gandy Photograph Collection, Mss.3778, LLMVC, LSU. Item Number 37780404412.
Figure 1.14. The *Guiding Star*. Thomas H. and Joan W. Gandy Photograph Collection, Mss.3778, LLMVC, LSU. Item Number 377804105118.
Figure 1.22. Unidentified family on porch steps. Joan W. Gandy and Thomas H. Gandy, Images of America, Natchez: Landmarks, Lifestyles, and Leisure. Charleston: Arcadia, 1999, 35.
Figure 2.3. Anna Lewis and daughter. “Portraits of Black Natchez” Exhibit (1983), Series 1620, Courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

Figure 2.4. Unidentified black woman. “Portraits of Black Natchez” Exhibit (1983), Series 1620, Courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

Figure 2.8. Unidentified black nursemaid with white children. Thomas H. and Joan W. Gandy Photograph Collection, Mss. 3778, LLMVC, LSU. Item Number 37780403016.
Figure 3.11. Carpenter women and servants at Dunleith. Thomas H. and Joan W. Gandy Photograph Collection, Mss. 3778, LLMVC, LSU. Item Number 37780402802.