

## Melrose

As you travel down the long gravel road it is as if going back in time, to an era in which legend and history are intertwined as deeply as the roots of magnolias and live oaks.

You have arrived at Melrose, a unit of Natchez National Historical Park, a site whose story is that of antebellum Natchez. Wealthy cotton planters resided in mansions on spacious parcels of land surrounding Natchez.

Natchez planters controlled vast cotton plantations in areas such as Louisiana and the Mississippi Delta. Thousands of slaves worked these plantations, some of whom were sold in Natchez at the second largest slave market in the region.

Ultimately, this lifestyle was built upon the buying and selling of human beings for property and the use of that property to cultivate cotton for profit.

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*In November we went south and spent the winter alternately in plantations and at Melrose, the residence of John's father, two and one half miles from Natchez, Mississippi, and one of the most beautiful places of the many beautiful ones in the vicinity of Natchez.*

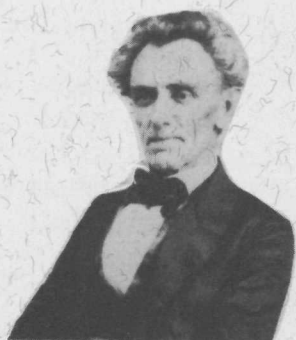
*Alice Austen-McMurran 1856*



John McMurrans's story is typical of other planters in Natchez. Born in Pennsylvania in 1801, John relocated to Ohio to study law. While in Chillicothe, Ohio, McMurrans made the acquaintance of fellow law student and future law partner, John Quitman. Prior to 1823, McMurrans made his way to the southwest frontier of Mississippi. By late 1826, John was practicing law with his friend Quitman who had arrived in Natchez in 1821.

In 1845 the McMurrans moved from their downtown residence to a tract of land east of town. They named their estate Melrose.

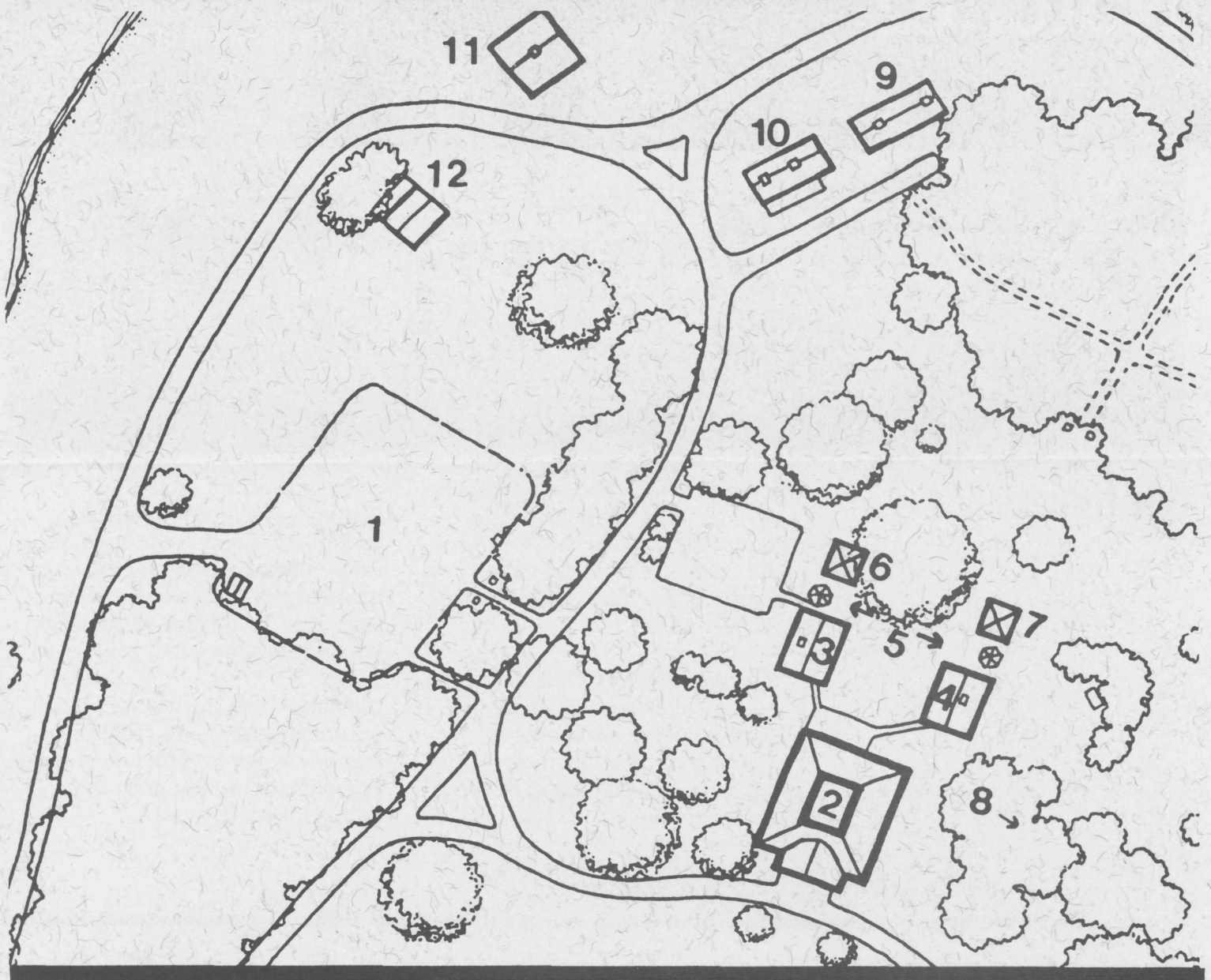
The lifestyle enjoyed by the McMurrans was one of summer months spent in Northeast communities or on the European continent. Winter months were spent in Natchez attending to plantation business and entertaining. This lifestyle was elegant, yet also wrought with hardship. Diseases such as yellow fever and dysentery regularly eradicated segments of the community, regardless of economic status.



On January 11, 1831, John McMurrans wed seventeen year old Mary Louisa Turner. The marriage placed McMurrans in an influential family and close-knit community. The union of John and Mary produced three children, two of whom reached adulthood.

This way of life changed forever with the advent of the Civil War. John and Mary McMurrans sold Melrose, with most of its furnishings intact, in January 1866. The couple then moved to her parent's home, Woodlands, not far from Melrose. In December of that same year John passed away. Mary continued to live at Woodlands until her death in 1891.

The couple quickly began to acquire land and slaves with which to establish cotton plantations.



## Self-Guided Grounds Tour

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| 1. | VISITOR PARKING  | 7.  | PRIVY<br>Modern public restrooms can be found in this building.                            |
| 2. | GREEK REVIVAL MANSION  | 8.  | FORMAL GARDEN<br>This area contains flower beds of different shapes and sizes.             |
| 3. | OUTBUILDING<br>The first floor was used as a kitchen in the antebellum era. Today the first floor is the site of the visitor center.<br><br>The second floor of each outbuilding served as living quarters for house slaves. | 9.  | SLAVERY EXHIBIT<br>View a re-created slave residence.                                      |
| 4. | OUTBUILDING<br>The bookstore is located on the first floor.  | 10. | COTTAGE<br>This building houses park offices.  |
| 5. | CISTERNS<br>These two structures cover and protect the cisterns, which were so vital for storing water.  | 11. | STABLE<br>A typical antebellum estate contained livestock such as horses, mules, and cows. |
| 6. | SMOKEHOUSE<br>Meats were prepared for preservation by salting and drying.  | 12. | CARRIAGE HOUSE<br>Wagons, harnesses, and other equipment were stored in this building.     |