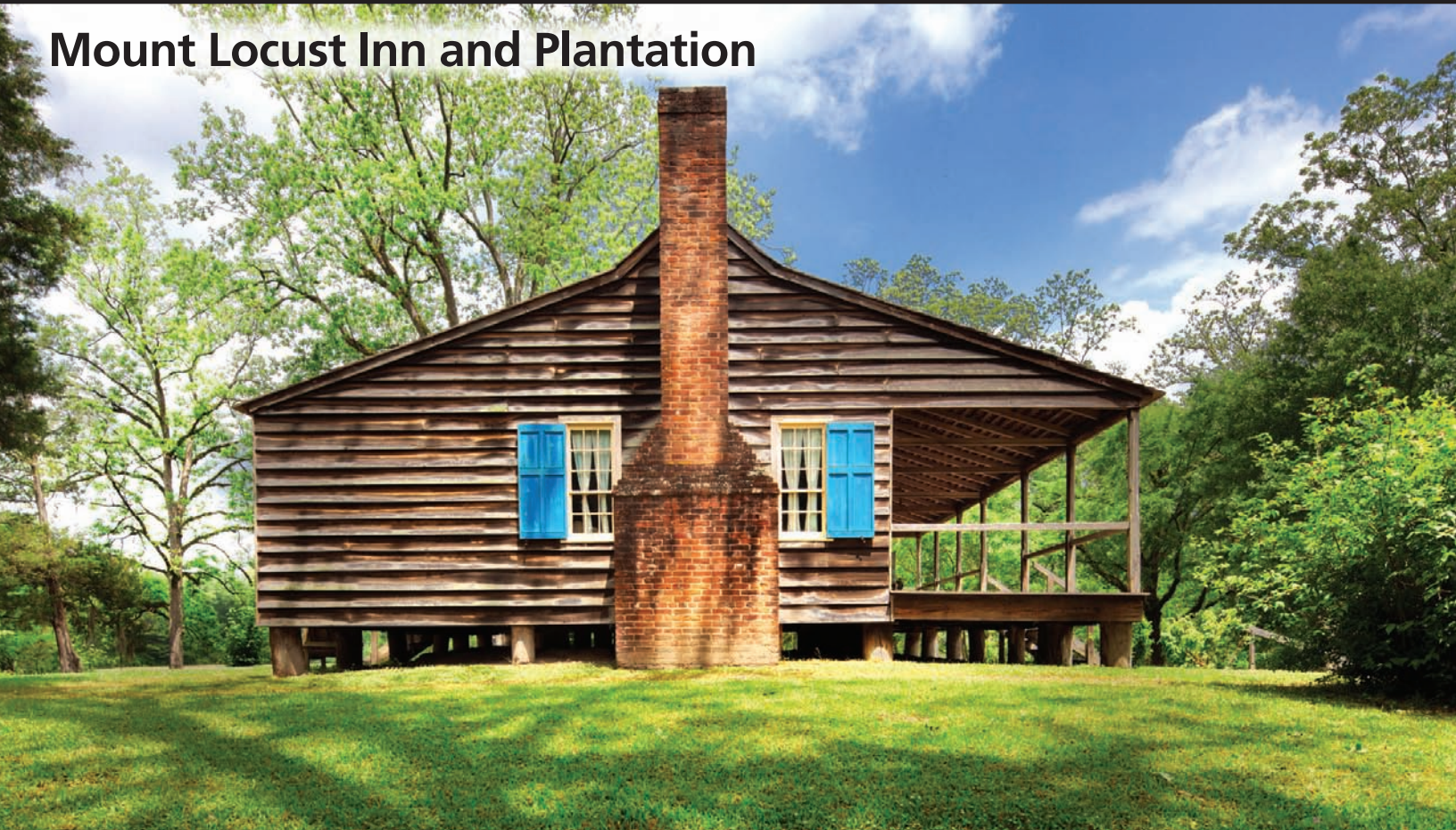




Mount Locust Inn and Plantation



Mount Locust Inn at Milepost 15.5 of the Natchez Trace Parkway.

NPS/© Marc Muench

A Call for Preservation

Mount Locust is one of the oldest structures still standing in an area known for historic homes. John Blommart began what would become Mount Locust by 1780, but his stay was short. After leading a failed rebellion against the Spanish, he was jailed, forfeiting his fortune and Mount Locust. Blommart’s former business associate, William Ferguson, and his wife Paulina purchased Mount Locust in 1784 and operated the farm until William’s death in 1801. A short time later Paulina married James Chamberlain, an overseer at Mount Locust, and they continued to build the growing farm. Mount Locust was home to five generations of Chamberlains, with the last leaving in 1944. The National Park Service began restoration in 1954, returning the historic home to its 1820 appearance.

From Homestead to Inn



NPS/© Marc Muench

By 1785, an increasing number of boatmen known as “Kaintucks” were floating flatboats down the Mississippi River to sell their goods at the markets in Natchez and New Orleans. Without an efficient way to navigate up the Mississippi River, the boatmen walked north on the Natchez Trace to make their way home. A day’s walk from Natchez brought the Kaintucks and their gold to Mount Locust. The growing number of travelers compelled the Fergusons to turn their home into a “stand,” which was

nothing more than a crude inn. A staple corn crop enabled the family to offer a meal of corn mush and milk with sleeping arrangements on the porches and grounds. As business prospered, a four-room, two-story annex was erected behind the house and became known as Sleepy Hollow. The simple structure was a luxury not readily found on the Old Natchez Trace. What could a weary traveler expect to pay for the much needed food and accommodations? The price was 25 cents.

Grandma Polly



NPS Photo

In an era when women were typically shunned from business, Paulina proved to be extraordinary. Despite losing two husbands and raising 11 children, seven with William and four with James, Paulina kept Mount Locust bustling. Sometime after 1810, James was gone, leaving her and the children to raise the family and run the farm and inn, which provided a comfortable living for the family. By the mid-1820s the steamboat and other roads all but brought an end to the Natchez Trace.

After 1825 the inn no longer catered to travelers but instead to Natchez residents who sought the rural solitude of Mount Locust. During her life, Paulina oversaw a small corn farm that became a thriving cotton plantation. Pauline Chamberlain died in 1849 at the age of 80. The Civil War (1861-1865) brought an end to the plantation system and Mount Locust began a slow decline. In a testimony to her spirit and the lasting impression she made on her family, her descendants still refer to her as “Grandma Polly.”

Slavery

... Bear in mind that a fine crop, consists, first, in an increase in the number, and a marked improvement in the condition and the value of the negros...

Ledger and account Book
Elliscliffe Plantation, Adams
County, Mississippi-1858

A small number of families were forced to endure the bondage of slavery at Mount Locust. The 1820 census lists 26 enslaved people at Mount Locust, and by the middle of the 19th century, the number had reached 51.

In 1834 the average prices for enslaved men and women who worked in the cotton fields were \$800 and \$600 respectively. Archeologists believe 12 to 16 slave cabins once stood on the property, with four to five people occupying each dwelling. On the west side of Mount Locust, a cemetery holds the remains of 43 enslaved workers. A marker lists the names of



NPS Image

some who may be buried there, and a single headstone marks the area. The Ferguson-Chamberlain family burial area sits on the southwest corner of the grounds.

Pathway to Parkway

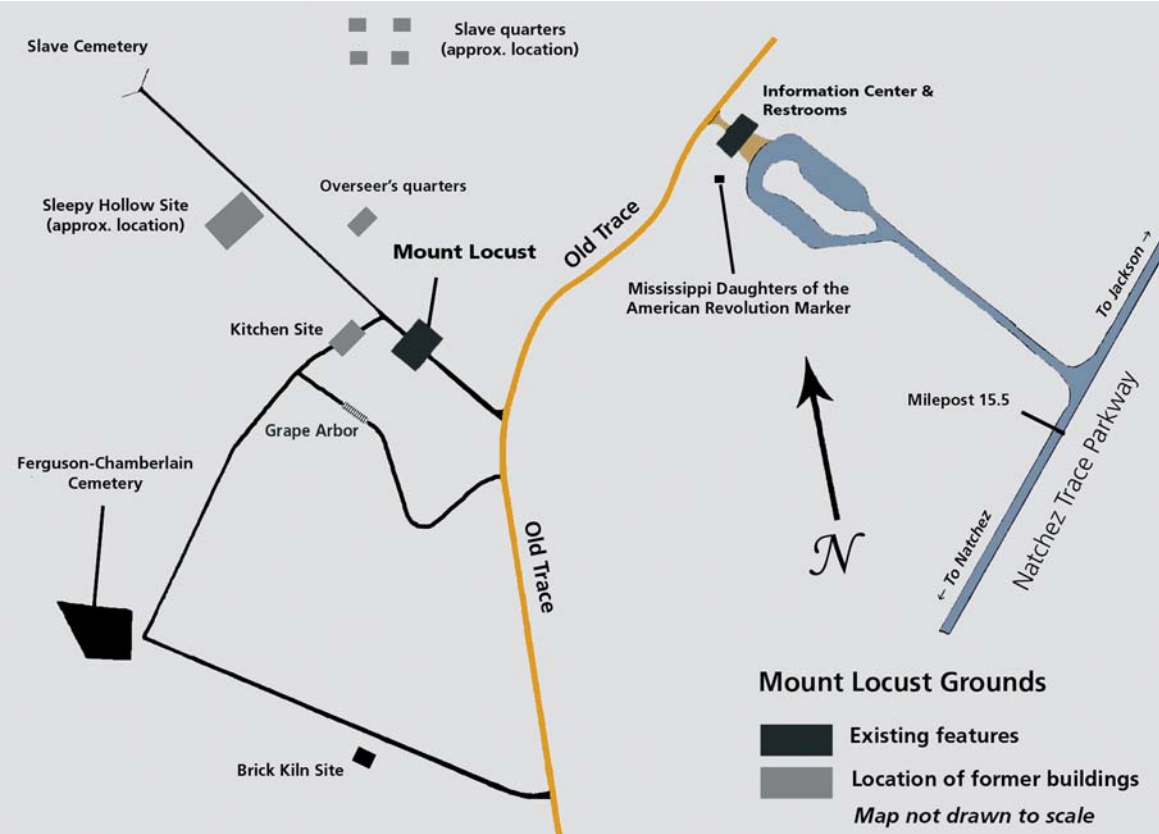


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By 1905 the Mississippi Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) realized the history of the Natchez Trace was being lost. From 1908 to 1933 they erected monuments in every Mississippi county through which the Old Trace passed. Dedication the 15 monuments created opportunities for speech making that were covered extensively by the press. The coverage generated widespread interest in the Old Natchez Trace.

In 1938 Congress passed legislation creating the Natchez Trace Parkway as a unit of the National Park Service. The 444-mile Parkway commemorates the Natchez Trace by preserving portions of the old path, adjoining structures, and landmarks. There are signs and literature along the way that enable visitors to understand and appreciate thousands of years of history on this historic travel route.

Mount Locust Site Map



Your Visit

Visitors are encouraged to tour the grounds of Mount Locust. A short walk behind the house will take you to the slave cemetery, the Ferguson-Chamberlain cemetery, and the brick kiln site, where slaves made the bricks to build parts of the Ferguson-Chamberlain home. Take a moment to reflect on the many people seeking food, shelter, and rest at Mount Locust. Visualize American Indians, boatmen, postriders, preachers, soldiers, explorers, and enslaved people traveling by foot or horseback on the Natchez Trace. Just like visitors today, they were from all walks of life.

Mount Locust is located at Milepost 15.5 along the Natchez Trace Parkway. For updated hours,

please call (800) 305-7417. Admission is free and interpretive programs are given daily.

Groups and schools are encouraged to make reservations by calling (601) 445-4211. Restrooms, exhibits, an information center, and a bookstore are on site and wheelchair accessible.

For Parkway Information:
Natchez Trace Parkway
2680 Natchez Trace Parkway
Tupelo, MS 38804
(800) 305-7417
www.nps.gov/natr