



81d. Brunet-Fourchy House, view from southwest.

82. The Magnolia Hotel

The following excerpt is from the June 9, 1901, edition of *The Biloxi Daily Herald*:

"The Magnolia Hotel-which boasts of being the oldest in Biloxi having been established in 1847 - is now open for the entertainment of guests for the summer. This hostelry has always been noted for the excellence of its cuisine, character of service, and attention paid to the welfare and comfort of its guests, while its terms are extremely moderate. It fronts on the Gulf, has its own bath houses, fishing boats, etc., and no better stopping place can be found by summer visitors to the coast. The hotel has been renovated, overhauled and refitted and is now in splendid shape for the entertainment of as many guests as come. A specialty is made of excursion dinners."



82a. Magnolia Hotel, 1847, view of south façade before 1890 (photograph courtesy of Mrs. Joseph Maumus).

The Magnolia Hotel is indeed the oldest tangible remainder of the early days of the resort industry in Biloxi and, as such, one of the most historic buildings on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. It is also very important architecturally, as its building history is well documented.

On March 23, 1847, John Hohn (or Hahn) contracted with Charles Kaufman for the latter to "build a two story frame house, to be forty feet square, and surrounded by a gallery seven feet wide, on the first and second stories, the lower story to contain a hall or room thirteen feet by forty running north and south, and on each side of said hall or room to be two rooms, the lower floor to contain six paneled doors; the hall door to be paneled with side lights. The lower floor joists to be three by eight inches, three feet apart. The partition doors to the upper story to be single battened. The galleries to be railed and bannistered. The lower and middle floor to be one and one quarter inch narrow stuff tongued and grooved, the upper floor to be plain inch plank tongued and grooved. The lower story to be mudded, plastered, within, without overhead- the upper story to be mudded and plastered within and without, and planned over-head- The roof to be straight, with cypress shingles, and three openings on each gable end, with battened shutters. The foundation to be upon brick pillars the height of which will be agreed upon by the parties. The lower story to be ten and one half feet high from floor to floor, the upper story to be nine and one-half feet high from floor to floor, the passage to run through six feet wide, and the partition to be plain tongued and grooved. Two staircases to be made leading to the second story, the place to be agreed upon by the parties. A chimney to run from the lower story to the roof with two fireplaces, the situation to be agreed upon by the parties. And the said party of the second part [Kaufman] hereby agrees to furnish the materials of every kind for the completion of said house, and the labor, and complete the same in a workmanlike manner by the first day of July A.D. 1847, under the penalty of the sum of five dollars per day for every day that the same may be unfinished after the said 1st day of July A.D. 1847."*

Hohn agreed to pay Kaufman \$2800.00 for the work. This contract accurately delineates the building seen in the old photograph here printed. The exterior walls of the first floor, as well as the walls of the central hall, are brick-between-posts, indicating that either the walls were later redone, or it was decided to use the sturdier method from the start. The hotel has seen a number of alterations and additions through the years, none of which have

adversely affected the structure. Charles Kaufman built a separate kitchen building, contracted for in June of the same year. Later the attic was altered to accommodate more guests; this space was generally reserved for young men, as it was the least desirable. This change included replacing the central opening in each gable with two doors opening onto a balcony, the addition of four dormers, sheathing the interior, and the construction of an external stair. Before 1890 another chimney was added and a new dining room and kitchen were built (possibly incorporating the 1847 kitchen). After 1890 the exterior batten doors were replaced by louvered French doors that were later glazed. Only minor alterations and additions were carried out during the twentieth century.

The Magnolia Hotel, with its mortised, tenoned, and pegged frame, brick-between-posts construction, and wide galleries, is an important evocation of the early forms of building on the coast, particularly hotel structures. It is a more compact building than the wing of the Montross Hotel (see the introduction of the Downtown section) that must be similar in date and is the only other early hotel building for which we have an illustration. Galleries were essential to a hotel structure as they provided a comfortable space for socializing and spending leisure vacation time. The galleries also provided easy access to all the hotel rooms, not requiring the use of an interior hall.

John Hohn was an immigrant from Hanover, Germany, who arrived in the United States in 1829 when he was still a minor. He apparently took up the tavern business and is listed in Pitt and Clarke's *New Orleans Directory* (vol. I, p. 199) of 1842 as running a coffeehouse at 246 Front Levee. Hohn died the year after his new hotel was built on April 4, 1848. An inventory was made of his estate that deserves quoting in full as it provides an excellent idea of how early Gulf Coast hotels were outfitted. It is also the earliest inventory so far in Biloxi that can be connected with an extant building.

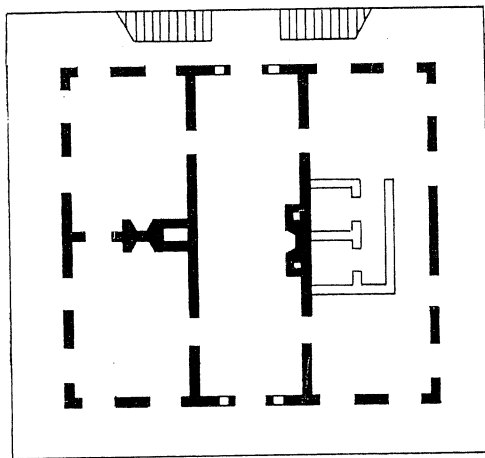
All of these items were necessary for the running of a hotel, and Mrs. Hahn petitioned the Probate Court to allow her to retain everything, paying off the debts of the estate gradually. This the court allowed, and Mrs. Hahn operated the hotel until her death, at which time her daughters, who had helped all along, took over. Louisa, one of the daughters, married a Holley, and subsequently their three daughters ran the business. The hotel was closed during the Second World War, and did not reopen. The hotel building then became the home of the

Holley sisters. Some cabins were built out front, and these were rented until destroyed by Hurricane Camille.

The Magnolia Hotel was "the most famous" in Biloxi, its popularity stemming from a number of important factors. It had an advantageous location, being near to the harbor, and later the railroad station, and it was also close to the business area. In 1850 it was described as "well adapted to families for the rooms were large, well ventilated, and desirably filled up." On the beach was the Magnolia Bar, and "ten-pin alleys and fishing and pleasure boats were furnished by the hotel."**



82b. Magnolia Hotel, view as relocated, from northeast (photograph by Deanne Stephens Nuwer).



82c. Magnolia Hotel, plan, north to right.

"The State of Mississippi:
Harrison County .

Inventory and appraisement of the goods,

Chattels, and personal Estate that were of John Hahn now deceased,
late of said State and County, viz.

One Sail Boat valued at	\$ 20.00
the Contents of the Bar, as Bar, Counter Shelves, Tables, Chairs, Looking glass. Clock, Pictures, Charts, Decanters, Tumblers, Beer Pumps, Lamps +c +c	- 105.00
One Ice Box	10.00
seventeen Demi Johns a 50¢	8.50
One Gridstone	1.50
Ten old Bedsteads complete a \$4.50	45.00
eight " D° without Tops a \$6.	48.00
Twenty six D° with D° a \$8	208.00
Six double. D° D D a \$17	102.00
thirty eight common Chairs a 37½¢	14.25
Six cane bottomed D° a 75¢	4.50
Five roking D \$1.25	6.25
nineteen Washstands, with Bowls & Pitchers	28.50
Fifteen Looking glasses a 75¢	11.25
ten Smal Tables a 75	7.50
four common Dining Tables a \$2	8.00
Two old Cherry Wood D° a 1.50	3.00
One Sofa & One round Table	20.00
One Safe	6.00
some Old Lamps	6.00
One Armour	12.00
One Sattu (?) & smal Closet	6.00
One Bureau & One old Clock	7.00
Kitchen utensils, as 1 Stove, knives & fork	
Dishes, Tumblers, Table Cloths +c +c	40.00
One Cow \$12. two Sows three Pigs	19.75
three doz Chicken	7.00
1 Goat & two Kitts	3.00

\$757.00

In 1893 the hotel served as the headquarters for two Australian prize fighters, Joe Goddard and George Dawson, who were to spar with two Americans at the Olympics Club in New Orleans. They had "selected Biloxi for their training ground," "made many friends" and stayed for a period of approximately a month, providing a topic for conversation and wagers. Their stay is chronicled in the Biloxi Herald between January 28 and March 2, 1893. In the 1880s, the hotel had begun to accommodate northern visitors, who then started coming in increasing numbers due to the Louisville & Nashville train connections throughout the Midwest.

When Hurricane Camille hit Biloxi in 1969, the building was severely damaged and appeared, at first, as though it would not survive. A group of citizens, led by Glenn Swetman, banded together, however, and raised money to move the building. It stands today 150 yards north of its original site on the same lot, restored, as a living reminder of the early days of Biloxi's fame as a "watering place," and the dominant position this industry has played in the economic history of Biloxi.

The Magnolia Hotel, 119 Rue Magnolia, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

* "Articles of Agreement" (building contract) between John Hahn and C. Kaufman, March 23, 1847. Original in possession of Mrs. Joseph Maumus, and reprinted by permission.

** Information in this paragraph from Ruth Irene Jones, "Ante-Bellum Watering Places of the Mississippi Gulf Coast," *Journal of Mississippi History* (Vol. XVIII, no. 4, October 1956), p. 288; she quotes an article in the New Orleans *Daily Delta* of May 21, 1850. An article in the *Daily Delta* on August 1, 1847 already states that the "Magnolia" is an excellent house and affords fine accommodations and is much resorted to."

83, 84, 85, 86, & 87. The 100 block of Rue Magnolia, opened in the early 1890s,* has a number of early twentieth century buildings which together make a fine ensemble. The street is anchored on the south by Marion's Antiques, the only pre-1900 building on the block, and 125 Magnolia Street, a substantial, interesting cottage. On the north 136 and 134 Magnolia Street terminate the block nicely as Queen Anne cottages. On the west side of the street a big bungalow, 129 Magnolia, and a late Biloxi Cottage, 131 Magnolia, complete the scene.

With the elimination of automobiles from the street and the introduction of a pedestrian mall in the 1970's, the range of styles and types can be readily enjoyed on foot.

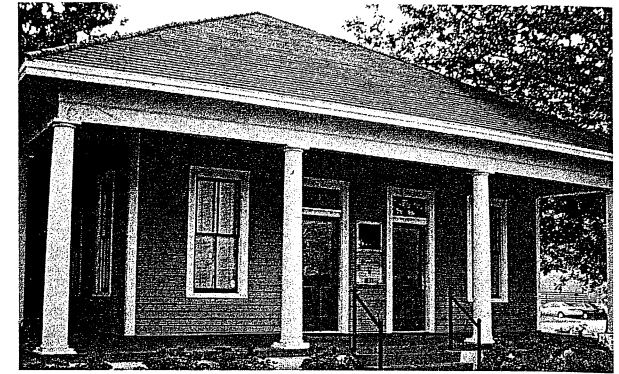
*A petition to open the street was granted by the city on October 6, 1890; City of Biloxi, Minute Books, Books no.1.



83a. 125 Magnolia Street, prior to 1925, view from east.



84b. 129 Magnolia Street, prior to 1925, view from southeast.



85c. 131 Magnolia Street, between 1909-1914, view from southeast.



86d and 87e. 136 and 134 Magnolia Street, between 1904 and 1909, between 1909 and 1914, respectively, view from northwest.

