

Rosalie
Our Mansion on the Bluff



100 Orleans Street
Natchez, Mississippi

**Rosalie Mansion & Gardens is owned, maintained, and operated by the
Mississippi State Society Daughters of the American Revolution.**

HISTORY

In 1716 the French built a fort on the bluffs of Natchez and named it Rosalie in honor of the Countess of Pontchartrain. In 1819 Peter Little, who came to Natchez from Pennsylvania in 1798 at the age of 17, purchased a portion of that land on which to build his home. He decided to keep the name Rosalie in honor of the fort and its settlers. He also purchased large areas of land in Louisiana.

Peter frequently used the ferryboat at Natchez Under-the-Hill to cross the Mississippi River to check on his Louisiana property. He developed a strong friendship with ferryboat owner Jacob Lowe and his family. In 1806 an outbreak of yellow fever quickly took Jacob's life; soon after, his wife contracted this dreaded disease. Knowing that her death was near, she was consumed with concern for her daughter Eliza. She sent for Peter and pleaded with him to take care of Eliza. He promised her he would.

Peter took Eliza in and did what he felt best for her - he married her. At the time Peter was 25, and Eliza 14, so marriage was in name only. Peter immediately saw to her education. Even though they were separated by many miles, a deep love blossomed between them. She came home to Peter a very educated and sophisticated young lady.

Rosalie was completed in 1823. Peter and Eliza moved into their new home. Even though they never had children of their own, the sound of children filled their home for many years. In 1816 Eliza helped establish the Natchez Children's Home, and many of those children found a loving home at Rosalie. Peter and Eliza also raised Peter's niece after his sister's death. By all accounts, Peter and Eliza remained deeply devoted to each other throughout their forty-five year marriage. Unfortunately, in 1853 at the age of 60, Eliza died of yellow fever. Three years later Peter died at the age of 74 without a valid will, thus forcing an auction of the estate.

In 1857 Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Wilson acquired the house. The Wilsons never had children of their own, and like the Littles, they took orphaned children into their home. They became especially close to one of the girls, Fannie McMurtry, and adopted her. To the Wilsons she was their true daughter. Fannie would later marry Captain Stephen Rumble in the parlors of Rosalie on August 2, 1866. Rosalie became their home for the rest of their lives. They had six children born at Rosalie.

In 1938 due to hard times, Annie and Rebecca, daughters of Stephen and Fanny McMurtry Rumble, sold Rosalie to the Mississippi State Society Daughters of the American Revolution. Miss Rebecca and Miss Annie continued to live at Rosalie and gave daily tours of the house. In 1958 after 101 years of life at Rosalie for the Wilson/Rumble families, Miss Annie passed away. She was the last of the descendants to live at Rosalie.

LIBRARY (Sitting Room)

There are very few items in the house today that belonged to Peter and Eliza Little, the original builders of Rosalie. We are fortunate to have the portraits of Peter and Eliza as well as Eliza's locking tea caddy on the table. Tea was an expensive luxury in America at the time. The Little family Bible is on the bookstand. Above it hangs a sampler that Eliza stitched in 1809 at the age of 16. Peter Little's checkbook from 1832, which sits on the desk on the opposite side of the room, was discovered a few years ago in the attic.

The room looks much as it did when the Wilson family lived here in the mid 1850s. Most of the books in the room are Wilson family books. The smoking stand was a Christmas gift from Miss Annie Rumble, a Wilson granddaughter, to her father, Captain Rumble. There is a beautiful hand-painted Japanese tilt-top table that was purchased in the Orient by a family member who served as a doctor in the Navy. The chandelier in this room is by Cornelius and Baker. It once hung in the upstairs hall and is the only original chandelier left in the house from the Wilson years.

FRONT PARLOR

The photos on the wall include Mrs. Wilson in her later years and the two young ladies, Fannie and Rebecca McMurtry, with Fannie on the right. Mr. Wilson's photo is on the wall to the right of the doorway. Fannie and Rebecca became accomplished artists and musicians. Fannie studied under Asher B. Duran of the famous Hudson River School. In 1858 Mrs. Wilson made a trip to visit Fannie at school in New York. Together they selected the magnificent parlor furniture made by the acclaimed furniture craftsman John Henry Belter. Rosalie's Belter parlor furniture, twenty-one pieces in all, is among the finest examples of his work still in existence. Mrs. Wilson and Fannie also selected carpet for the parlors. The present carpet is a reproduction of that very pattern. The Wilsons replaced the original wooden mantels and fireplaces with Italian marble and coal-burning fireplaces which were popular among the well-to-do in those days. The French gilded mirrors placed over the fireplaces added to the opulence of the room.

Rosalie was the headquarters for the Union Army during the Civil War in the Natchez area. Mrs. Wilson and Fannie remained at Rosalie while Mr. Wilson went to Leon County, Texas, in an effort to continue to raise cotton. General Walter Gresham, a gentleman from Indiana, was in command and was best remembered for his kindness to the family. He ordered that the furniture and fragile pieces be locked away in the attic so that they would not be stolen or damaged. These objects remained in the attic until the end of the war. The Wilsons had already removed the fine French mirrors before the army arrived. It is said that they were wrapped in blankets and protected between bales of cotton in a cave in the old fort area. General Gresham used the parlors and library for office space.

DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY

The chandelier is from a Mississippi River steamboat. More of Fannie and Rebecca's paintings are hanging on the walls. The tall case clock at the foot of the stairway belonged to Peter and Eliza Little. It was made by David Weatherly in Philadelphia, and it still keeps time beautifully. The photograph to the left of the dining room doorway is that of Fannie's husband, Captain Stephen Rumble.

BACK PARLOR

The back parlor is sometimes called the Music Room. There are two pianos in the room. One is a Chickering, purchased for Fannie's children in the 1880s. The other is a French Pleyel (patent 1849) that Fannie played when she was a little girl. Next to the piano are many of the Wilsons' music books dating as far back as 1830. Most have Fannie's name embossed in gold on the leather cover. The porcelain punch bowl was returned to Rosalie by a descendant; the pieces on both mantels, Old Paris French porcelain hand-painted in Paris, have been in the house since the 1850s. The harp, made in London, was a present from the Wilsons to Fannie in the 1840s. It is said that the harp provided the wedding music as Fannie and Captain Stephen Rumble exchanged their wedding vows while standing in the arch of the pocket doors on August 2, 1866. Many of Fannie's landscapes are also found in this room.

DINING ROOM

The dishes on the table are hand-painted Old Paris porcelain, and no two pieces are alike. The original china was also Old Paris with pink borders as seen on the punch bowl in the ladies parlor. The dinner table is set according to a diagram of the 1860s. By the door is a landscape painted by Fannie's daughter Rebecca at the turn of the 19th century. It was on display at her graduation ceremony from St. Mary's Academy in New Orleans.

Rosalie has never had an indoor kitchen. Food was carried from the kitchen through the covered breezeway and placed on the same outdoor table that is still there today. A servant would be standing in the dining room ready to receive it and place the food on the table. The plate warmer was used to warm the plates during a cold day.

The punch bowl by the window was a gift from the citizens of Natchez to the USS Mississippi II. It was passed along to the USS Mississippi III. When that ship was decommissioned in 1956, the bowl was returned to Natchez to be placed on exhibit at Rosalie.

Another of Fannie's paintings is over the sideboard. The silver tea service was a wedding present to Andrew and Eliza Wilson. Also on the sideboard is a flycatcher, an example of early pest control.

SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY

The large photo to the right of Fannie's doorway is Annie Rumble, Stephen's mother. The print of the Southern Belle and Prussian General was a favorite of Miss Annie, who loved to tell the story behind it. Rumor had it that the older general was trying to court the young girl who wasn't interested in him at all. She devised a test for him that if he could thread a needle she would be his. She gave him a very small needle and very thick thread. Obviously he failed. The gentlemen's wardrobe has doors on the side to accommodate long coats. Across the hall is the standing music box.

GENERAL'S ROOM

This room is so named because General Walter Gresham of the Union Army used it while Rosalie served as Union Headquarters during the Civil War. His photo is on the chest of drawers. The large mahogany bed, which belonged to the Wilsons, was made by the well-known furniture maker Charles Lee of Boston. The bed dates to about 1845. On the chaise lounge is a Union Army Cavalry saber dating to 1862. The screen behind the chaise would have been placed in front of the "potty chair" to provide the Wilson family with privacy.

CHILDREN'S ROOM

The children in the picture over the fireplace are Fannie and Stephen's six children. Most of the toys, books, dolls, and furniture belonged to the children. This room is shown as a "summer room" with mosquito netting covering the beds and grass mats on the floor. During the summer months the bedroom was arranged for cool breezes. The children's bed and child's carriage were locally made. The pet squirrel house is on the floor.

FANNIE'S ROOM

Portraits to the right of the doorway are of Stephen and Fannie. The picture over the washstand is of Fannie, probably taken in the early 1900s. It was on this bed that all of Fannie's children were born. At the foot of the bed is Fannie's Bible, a gift from Stephen to Fannie on their wedding day. It was in this room that Mrs. Wilson and Fannie, by their choice, ate their meals while the Union Army occupied the property. The Union Army supplied their meals. The sugar shakers, although not original to the house, are quite colorful and interesting

ANNIE'S ROOM

Annie was the last descendant to live at Rosalie. Her portrait, painted in 1956, hangs over the mantel. Miss Annie lived most of her life single, although she married an old friend, Captain James Marsh, when she was 60 years of age. Annie died in 1958 at the age of 84. The beautiful French doll in the corner was Annie's own doll. The locket pinned to her shoulder contains the photos of Annie's parents, Stephen and Fannie. Hanging on the wall is a swatch of a quilt which was made from the dresses of Annie and her sister Rebecca.

SECOND FLOOR BACK PORCH

From this porch is a view of the bell from the USS Mississippi III that may be rung while visiting the gardens. Small bells near the ceiling on the outside wall were used to summon household help when needed.

KITCHEN and LARDER (Located behind the Mansion)

Peter Little began building the dependency before construction on the main house. It was completed in 1820. It was traditional in the South to build the kitchen away from the house in case of fire. The kitchen consisted of three large rooms, two on the first floor and one on the second floor. Most of the cooking was done in one room while the rest was done in the adjoining room known as the warming kitchen. The larder was used to store smoked meats and other food items. The second floor housed some of the servants.

The fireplace was in continuous use. Items such as the fireplace waffle iron and other pots hung from a "swing-out" arm in the fireplace. The kitchen was equipped with several flat black irons on small stands kept at the fireplace. When one iron cooled, another hot iron was retrieved from the fireplace in order for ironing to continue without interruption.

THE ROSALIE CEMETERY

The United State Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg District, discovered the Rosalie cemetery during the Natchez Bluff Stabilization Project of 1999. One objective of the Corps was to protect the historical importance of the area being stabilized along the Natchez Bluff. Archaeological investigations began when discovery of burial pits were made. An unmarked cemetery was located on the property of Rosalie.

Twenty-five human burial sites were discovered in the Patricia Walton Shelby Bicentennial Garden where the marker is placed. Although there is no documentation to give the exact time the cemetery was in use, it is believed to be during the time of the early settlement of Natchez.

The Corps exhumed and studied four remains. Upon completion of the study, a re-interment ceremony of the four remains took place on April 28, 2004. A marker was placed on the site of the cemetery on Friday, March 26, 2010. With the marking of the cemetery

the Mississippi State Society fulfilled one of its objectives, historic preservation.

The identity of these settlers or where they came from may never be known. The site has been placed in the care of the Mississippi State Society Daughters of the American Revolution, which faithfully accepts the responsibility of its protection. The marker honors the lives of those early settlers who faced the wilderness and embraced the unknown for the hope of a better life and a better place to live.

*L*ocated on the grounds of Rosalie
are the following

- Bicentennial Garden and gazebo with an outstanding view of the river
- Cemetery for reinterred English speaking people from the late 1700's
- Rosalie Gift Shop
- Mississippi State Society Daughters of the American Revolution Genealogical Library.

*Rosalie's gardens may be rented
for private events.
Further information is available
at the office.*



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"Vestiges of another time"

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100 Orleans Street, Natchez, Mississippi 39120
601.446.5676 office • 601.445.4555 gift shop
www.RosalieMansion.com