

Hattiesburg Area Historical Society

HAHS MUSEUM
Hattiesburg Cultural Center
723 Main Street
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By any other name, history is lost!

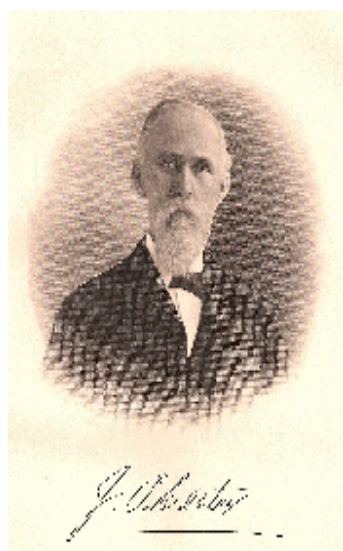
In Shakespeare's play Juliette insists, "What's in a name? that which we call rose by any other name would smell as sweet." One might therefore conclude that a renamed building would be the same. However, that is just not true. Renaming landmarks breaks the line of heritage, hinders researchers, alters culture, and destroys history.

Lately there seems to be a campaign to slap a name on every building and change the names of others. Often the names have nothing in common with the building, its history, or its purpose. This is not quite fair, since the building can't object or move out of reach. A good example is the **Carter Building** in downtown Hattiesburg.

Buildings are usually named for the business housed there, the architects who designed the structures, the builders who constructed them, the citizens who have made great social or financial contributions, or the owners themselves. Of course, not all older buildings have names, but the one at 509 Main Street did.



The **Carter Building** was built in 1904-1905 for the Honorable John Prentiss Carter, a Hattiesburg banker, lawyer, civic leader, and former Mississippi Lieutenant Governor. When the building was sold in 1973 to Faulkner Concrete Pipe Company, the name plate was replaced with the **Faulkner Building** plate that is on the wall today.



Carter or Faulkner; Faulkner or Carter. What's the difference? Both are perfectly good names, but one only has to read a little about J. P. Carter to understand why his name should be remembered.

An undated auto-biography will tell you that he was born near New Augusta on February 7, 1840. His parents, Abner Carter and Isabella McLeod Carter were descended from families who had settled in the area in the 1700's and become active participants in public and political affairs. He states that he attended Salem High School in Green County and graduated from Centenary College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1860.

In 1861 he entered the Confederate army as a private but was soon appointed Sergeant Major, elected 2nd Lieutenant, and promoted to 1st Lieutenant in 1863. He served as Adjutant for several colonels and was appointed acting ordnance officer for his brigade and attached to the staff of General Walthall. He participated in the battles of Murfreesboro and Chickamauga. (See next page)

In November of 1863 he was severely wounded at Lookout Mountain and captured. Until he was paroled and sent home on In November of June 24, 1864, he was held at Johnson's Island in Lake Erie.

When Governor W. L. Sharkey called a convention to write a new constitution, Carter was elected to represent Perry County. He was the youngest man there. Under the 1865 Constitution he was twice elected representative, twice elected senator, and serving again as representative for Perry County when elected delegate to the Mississippi Constitutional Convention of 1890.

Carter ends his life story by telling of joining the Methodist Episcopal Church South in 1858, being appointed to the board of Stewards in 1868, marrying Margaret McCallum on December 24, 1868, having six children, helping organize the Hattiesburg Camp #21 U.C.V., and helping organize Hattiesburg Commandery Knights Templar. He concludes by saying he assisted in the organization of the Bank of Commerce (later changed to National Bank of Commerce and then to First National Bank of Commerce) where he was still connected at the time of his writing.

In Volume III of *History of Mississippi The Heart of the South* published in 1925, Director of the Mississippi State Department of Archives and History Dunbar Roland fills in things Carter was too modest to say. "... Mr. Carter rose from the ranks through merit alone and his military record redounds to his credit, being distinguished by unfaltering devotion to duty and courage of the highest order."

"Mr. Carter has been called upon to fill many other public offices of trust and responsibility and has acquitted himself with dignity, fidelity and honor in every connection, discharging his duties with thoroughness, conscientiousness and efficiency. ..."

"... He is an able financier, shrewd, alert, resourceful, and his reputation as a banker is not confined to the limits of this locality. He is ever ready to extend the aid of the institution as far as possible, yet careful not to jeopardize the interests of depositors and stockholders, and his associates have utmost confidence in his judgment, foresight and integrity. Mr. Carter has built up one of the strongest moneyed institutions in the state and his opinions carry great weight in business circles in Hattiesburg. The city is also indebted to Mr. Carter for the substantial six-story office building on Main Street bearing his name, for the Strand Theater, an attractively designed structure, three stories in height, and for the two-story brick buildings adjoining."

"... Mr. Carter has inherited in full measure the sterling qualities and strong physique of his Scotch ancestors and although he has reached the venerable age of eighty-three years he is still able to direct his extensive business affairs. He is highly honored in his city and state and his life constitutes an inspiring example of good citizenship."

According to Theodore Roosevelt, "Never throughout history has a man who lived a life of ease left a name worth remembering." J. P. (John Prentiss) Carter is a name well worth remembering. Think about it the next time you pass *his* building on Main Street.



FOOTPRINTS ARE STILL A MYSTERY...In 1983, when the city put down aggregate walkways with exposed gravel, the brass footprints imbedded in the concrete by the Carter Building were reinstalled. Over the years many people offered explanations for why J.P. Carter had the large right footprints placed there. The best story at that time came from Dudley Conner who had asked Mr. Carter about them. With a smile, Mr. Carter told him, "That's so everyone will skip in here." Over the years many a child has done just that - hop and skip on the gold footprints!

