

1907 House

East of Prentiss on Fort Stephens Road
Prentiss

Said to have built by slaves as a plantation residence for the Magee family around 1820, this house is the site of the 1907 founding of Prentiss Normal Industrial Institute, one of the oldest educational institutions for African Americans in Mississippi. The Prentiss Normal and Industrial Institute was organized in June 1907 by Jonas Edward and Bertha LaBranche Johnson, who with other ambitious African Americans purchased the former Magee property from W L. Polk, a white landowner who had bought it from the Magee family in 1901. The 1907 House was used both as living quarters for the Johnsons and as a classroom facility for the school. Jonas Edward Johnson, an Alcorn College graduate, was president from 1907 until his death in 1953. His wife, a graduate of Tuskegee Institute, then became president, and upon her death in 1971, she was succeeded by her son, A. L. Johnson .

Licensed by the state as a private high school in 1909 and as a private junior college in 1931, Prentiss Institute Junior College received county funds for the operation of its elementary and secondary education programs until 1959, at which time a public school was organized in the town of Prentiss to serve the educational needs of the county's black children. Most of the elementary and secondary courses offered by the college were discontinued after 1959, although several are still available through the junior college curriculum. [CA 2/14/79, 79001321]