

## HISTORIC RESOURCES OF HARTWELL, HART COUNTY, GEORGIA

## INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY #23

I. IDENTIFICATION

HISTORIC NAME: Allie M. Best House  
 CURRENT NAME: Allie M. Best Residence  
 STREET ADDRESS: 122 Athens Street  
 CITY: Hartwell  
 PRESENT OWNER: Mrs. Allie M. Best  
 MAILING ADDRESS: 122 Athens Street  
 CITY: Hartwell  
 STATE: Georgia  
 ZIP CODE: 30643  
 CURRENT USE: residence  
 ACREAGE: less than one acre  
 U.S.G.S. QUADRANGLE: Hartwell, Georgia  
 U.T.M. REFERENCE: Z17 E321420 N3802550  
 V.B.D. OR TAX MAP NUMBER: H-14-1-8

II. DESCRIPTION

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND PRESENT CONDITION:

This house is a two-story, brick, English Tudor-style residence with a Craftsman-style interior layout. The main roof is composed of cross gables and contains smaller projecting gables covering first story bays. The house contains two granite and one brick chimney. A steep gable end dominates the principal, entrance facade. The first story of this bay includes one of two open porches containing round brick arches with granite inset at the spring line and granite keystones. The entrance is centered in a smaller gable-roofed portico, covered with stucco, and enframed by a rusticated, granite surround. A blind arch enframed with brick is positioned over the entrance. Other blind arches in the large gable ends contains pairs of 6/6 shuttered windows. A stucco gable dormer projects from the main roof on the principal facade and contains a round-arched window. The first story windows contain diamond shaped panes.

In plan the rooms are arranged asymmetrically around a internal stair hall. This central hall merges with the living room at the front of the house in typical Craftsman fashion. Interior features include wood floors, plaster walls and ceilings, birch doors, and decorative moldings.

The house is situated on a large corner lot which is formally landscaped with terraced lawns, a formal rose and boxwood garden to the north of the house, and mature cedar trees lining the drive. Pecan and dogwood trees are positioned informally on the lot, with the exception of a grove of eight mature pecans on the northwest corner of the site which surround a grape arbor. A frame garage built in 1935 is west of the house and driveway.

The property is in good condition.

PHOTOGRAPH NUMBER: 84

### III. HISTORY

ORIGINAL OWNER: Allie M. Best  
 ORIGINAL USE: residence  
 ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Luther Temple/Temple Family  
 HISTORIC ACREAGE: city lot  
 DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: ca. 1930  
 DATE(S) OF ALTERATIONS:

#### HISTORICAL NARRATIVE (FROM ORIGINS TO PRESENT):

This structure was built circa 1930 as the residence for Mr. and Mrs. Allie M. Best. Mr. Best came to Hartwell from Conway, South Carolina, where he was employed as a tobacco auctioneer and warehouseman. The house was designed by Luther Temple, a local architect. It was built by members of the Temple family of builders. Mr. Best is credited with the landscaping of the property; the terraces were created from the soil resulting in the excavation of a basement.

Allie M. Best was in the tobacco business and had come to Hartwell in the mid-1920s at the urging of the local Rotary Club. The club was promoting the development of tobacco as an alternative to cotton in Hart County. The distance to tobacco markets and the lack of local knowledge about the crop caused the failure of this venture. Best continued in the tobacco business, however, and married a Hartwell girl in 1925. The couple traveled to tobacco markets from February to July each year. They returned to Hartwell for the remaining months where Best carried out a farming operation on county land which he owned. During the 1930s, Best also became active in the development of the Soil Conservation Service, acting as supervisor for Hart County and helping farmers recover land lost to the ravages of excessive cotton production. Best's widow continues to reside in the house. The upstairs and basement have been converted to rental apartments.

### IV. SIGNIFICANCE

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA: A, B, C  
 AREA(S) OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Agriculture  
 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local

#### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL):

The Best House is architecturally significant as a rare example in Hartwell of an English Tudor-style house. Its tall gabled roofs, brick construction, stucco and stone details, round-arched

doorways, massive stone chimney, and lattice windows are characteristics of the style. In actuality a relatively small house, its design and siting give it a strong visual character. Built in 1930, it represents one of the few major building projects in Hartwell during the Great Depression. The Best House was designed by Luther Temple and built by Walker and Jule Temple, all of whom were members of the important Temple family of designers and builders in Hartwell. It is one of a relatively small number of architect-designed houses in the community.

The property is significant in the local history of landscape architecture for its carefully arranged grounds. Significant period landscape features include the terraced front yard (the terraces were sculpted from soil excavated from the basement of the house), the paved circular drive lined with cedars, formal boxwoods and rose gardens in the rear of the property, a grape arbor and pecan grove, and informally arranged trees and curvilinear walk across the front yard. Of special interest are the front-yard terraces which may have been inspired by the agricultural terraces being promoted by Soil Conservation Service as a means of controlling erosion. The formal planting scheme is one of the few planned landscapes in the multiple resource area. The vegetation continues to convey the intent of the original planting scheme.

In agricultural history, this property is significant for its associations with Allie M. Best. Best first came to Hartwell to provide expert advice regarding the cultivation of tobacco as an alternative to cotton, which recently had been devastated by the boll weevil, soil depletion, and erosion. Although tobacco never became a successful cash crop locally, the diversification effort it represented is typical of the kind of agricultural experimentation taking place during the 1920s and 1930s in upcountry Georgia. Best also contributed to the establishment of the Soil Conservation Service in Hart County and served as the county supervisor.

#### CONTRIBUTING/NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES:

Contributing building(s): 1  
 Contributing structure(s): 1 (landscaping)

#### V. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS: Historic Structures Field Survey: Hart County, Georgia

SOURCES OF INFORMATION: Interview with Mrs. A. M. Best

**FORM PREPARED BY:**

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VI. SITE PLAN/SKETCH MAP/FLOOR PLAN

Attached sketches are intended only to help illustrate the nominated property. No scale is provided or implied, unless otherwise noted. Boundary markings are simply general indications of the extent of the nominated property; the actual boundary description, unless otherwise noted, is the current legal description of the property which coincides with the current tax map number cited in Section I of this form. Also, note that the orientation of the various sketches differs from sketch to sketch; each is provided with a north arrow for clarity.

