

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PHO 676 004

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APR 25 1979
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Ross Crane House

AND/OR COMMON

Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

247 Pulaski Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Athens

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

10th - Rep. Barnard

STATE

Georgia

CODE

13

COUNTY

Clarke

CODE

059

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Georgia Beta Chapter, SAE Fraternity, University of Georgia

STREET & NUMBER

247 Pulaski Street

CITY, TOWN

Athens

VICINITY OF

STATE

Georgia

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Clarke County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Washington Street

CITY, TOWN

Athens

STATE

Georgia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE 1. Historic American Building Survey

2. Historic Structures Field Survey: Clarke County, Georgia

DATE 1. December 26, 1936

2. 1975

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress (1)

Department of Natural Resources
Historic Preservation Section (2)

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D.C. (1)

STATE

Atlanta, Georgia (2)

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Ross Crane House is located at the western terminus of Washington Street. Since the 1840s, this street has remained the main commercial thoroughfare for the city of Athens, Georgia. Built in the 1840s, Crane's large, two-story Greek Revival structure, with its massive, square, tapered, columned portico commands a place of strategic importance to the vista of this small Georgia city.

The exterior of the house was originally red brick; however, the main block and wings are now painted white. The six-columned, flat-roofed portico shelters a symmetrical five-bay front facade. The Greek Revival entrance is a well-proportioned grand entrance, framed in fluted pilasters with side lights and overlights. The main porch entrance is decorated by a similar doorway with side lights and overlights opening off the second-story central hall onto a balcony above. The balcony is surrounded by a distinctive diamond-patterned railing. All windows are six-over-six sash, capped by undecorated stone lintels placed in a common Greek Revival motif.

The house is constructed of load-bearing brick walls, varying in thickness from 16 to 24 inches. These walls are placed on a foundation of rubble stone which is invisible from the exterior. Major interior walls are also constructed of load-bearing brick with minor divisions made of wood and plaster construction. The portico columns are solid load-bearing brick with a stucco covering. The roof over the main block is an almost invisible low-hip shape in keeping with the flat-roofed portico. The roof structure is made of wood and covered in metal.

As is the case with many Greek Revival houses, the spacing of the columns is altered in order to widen the central entrance. The column positions on either side of the central entrance also take the placement of the building's windows into consideration and do not obstruct the balanced and orderly front exterior view that the Crane House has. The plan of the building was that of the ever-popular four-over-four square Greek Revival style which also included a central hall. The addition of two side wings to the main block on the original block in the 1930s altered the original house form. Nonetheless, the house's appearance remains strongly dominated by the original central block and portico.

Much of the original interior of the Crane House has been altered by the SAE fraternity since that social organization purchased the building in the 1930s. Two interior walls have been removed, which has resulted in a much expanded interior space. Interior alterations also include the removal of the walls separating the front and back rooms on either side of the central hall; the closing off of the end of the second-story central hall; and the division of the level into dormitory space.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
	<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			Local History

SPECIFIC DATES 1842-43

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Ross Crane

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Ross Crane House possesses significance both architecturally and historically as the original home of a local architect-builder who designed and built this structure at the high point of his career. It reflects the Greek Revival style, popular at this time, showing this local builder's awareness of the trends and his own ability to keep within them, preferring this for his own home.

The two decades between 1830 and 1850 mark the time when the businessmen of the small Southern city of Athens, Georgia, sought greater prosperity for themselves and their community by attracting a railroad and by further developing the city's textile industry. It was at this time as well that these same individuals began to build homes for themselves that would define their status of wealth within Athens. One of these businessmen who succeeded in establishing himself as a leading building contractor in Athens was Ross Crane.

Ross Crane (1807-1866), a native of New Jersey, came to Georgia with a younger brother (his parents were dead) by 1830. His brother died about the time that Ross Crane married Martha White Elliott of Jasper County, Georgia, in 1835. Although he had arrived in Athens about 1830, it was not until 1839 that he purchased Lot No. 5, consisting of two acres in the town of Athens, the site of this house. Having paid \$800 when he purchased it from Esther Finley (widow of Robert Finley) in 1839, he had not "improved" the lot as late as 1841, when it was valued at \$1,000 in the tax digest. It is, therefore, likely that he built this home ca. 1842-44, since in 1845 he was taxed for a town lot valued at \$3,000, indicating the presence of a house. He accumulated other property in the county and state, and the Cranes reared seven children to maturity while they lived here.

During the antebellum period, Crane always owned slaves. In the 1830s and 1840s, their number never exceeded ten, but as his reputation as a local contractor grew, and as he received more work, the number of slaves he owned also grew. In the 1850s, when Crane was building the James Hamilton residence on Milledge Avenue and the First Presbyterian Church of Athens on East Hancock Street, he owned as many as twenty slaves and probably employed many other free blacks whose labor he used for his construction purposes. Just how many

[continued]

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

William C. Davis, The Columns of Athens (Athens, 1951).
 Kenneth F. Marsh, Athens: Georgia's Columned City (Asheville, N.C., 1960).
 Ernest Hynds, Antebellum Athens and Clarke County, Georgia (Athens, 1974).
 Medora Perkinson, White Columns in Georgia (New York, 1952).
 Clarke County, Georgia, Deeds and Tax Digests

[continued]

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.82 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Athens West

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 17 280010 37599000
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Lot 5 in the original plan of Athens as deeded to Ross Crane in 1839, bounded on the east by Pulaski Street 198 feet, south by Reece Street 400 feet, west by Newton Street 198 feet, and north 400 feet, as shown on Clarke County, Ga., Tax Map 17-1-A-2, Parcel E-7.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Howard L. Preston, consultant; Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Preservation Section, Dept. of Natural Resources

DATE

March 1979

STREET & NUMBER

270 Washington Street, S.W.

TELEPHONE

(404)656-2840

CITY OR TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia 30334

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Elizabeth A. Lyon

TITLE

Elizabeth A. Lyon
Acting State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

4/16/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Charles Adams
 SUPERVISOR OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

6-18-79

ATTEST: *Carl A. DeBru*
 CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE

6/18/79

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CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

homes and buildings Crane actually built in Athens has never been determined. But he can certainly be credited with the construction of at least three structures that date back to the antebellum period and still remain an important aspect of the Athens cityscape.

Having survived the rigors of the Civil War and the loss of a son at the close of that war, Crane died on October 20, 1866, while on a visit to another of his sons, Ben, in Atlanta. A memorial to Crane indicates the local citizens gave him their "confidence and esteem."

The house and lot were not sold until after his widow's death in 1867. It was auctioned at public outcry the first Tuesday in December of 1870. At the time of the sale, the newspaper advertisement of the administrator's sales described the house thusly:

One house and lot in the town of Athens. The house is of brick, containing 10 comfortable rooms, dressing closets, and everything complete, good brick servants house, containing four rooms, brick smoke-house, kitchen, etc. and all necessary outbuildings. A splendid well of water and elegant flower yard in front. The lot contains 2 acres, more or less.

The purchaser of the house was William E. Alexander, who paid \$5,000 for it. Alexander did not stay long, selling the house and lot on November 7, 1877, to Simon Marks for \$4,000.

The Marks family continued to live here after Simon's death in 1888, and his widow, Pauline Stern Marks, was still residing here at the time of her death on a visit to New York City in 1915. Her funeral was held in the house.

The Marks heirs transferred the house to the trustees of the Athens Lodge, Order of Elks, about 1920, and they used it as a lodge for several years. On July 19, 1929, the Elks deeded the property to the Georgia Beta Chapter House Association for \$12,500 (representing the Sigma Alpha Epsilon men's social fraternity). The fraternity owns the building today, using it as a dormitory for its members, as well as a site for meetings and social gatherings.

[continued]

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The Ross Crane homeplace represents an example of Greek Revival architecture significant for the fact that it was a local builder-craftsman's home, as well as an example of what he valued among the various styles predominant in that era. Historically, the house has stood not only as a builder's "show-place" (from which Crane no doubt obtained other orders for homes), but also as an example of adaptive use, first as an Elks lodge, then for nearly 40 years as a fraternity house.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Bibliography ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

The Southern Watchman, weekly, Athens, Ga., for obituary of Ross Crane and tribute of respect, and sale of the house (issue of November 16, 1870).

Interview with Dr. and Mrs. William L. Funkhouser of Atlanta. Dr. Funkhouser is a descendant of Ross Crane. (March 1978)

Charlotte T. Marshall, Oconee Hill Cemetery (Athens, 1971).

U.S. Census of 1850, Clarke County, Georgia. Ross Crane listing.