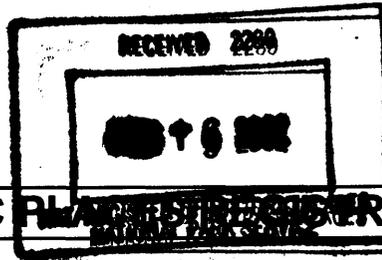


United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in "Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms" (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Donalsonville Historic District  
other names/site number N/A

## 2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by the Seaboard Railroad line, West Third Street (U.S. 84), and Morris and South Tennille avenues.  
city, town Donalsonville  
county Seminole code 253  
state Georgia code GA zip code 31745

( ) not for publication

## 3. Classification

### Ownership of Property:

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-federal

### Category of Property:

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

### Number of Resources within Property:

### Contributing

### Noncontributing

buildings	48	26
sites	0	0
structures	7	0
objects	0	0
total	55	26

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 1

Seminole County Courthouse, September 18, 1980.

Name of previous listing: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. ( ) See continuation sheet.

Richard C. Luce  
Signature of certifying official

1-11-02  
Date

W. Ray Luce  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

In my opinion, the property ( ) meets ( ) does not meet the National Register criteria. ( ) See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency or bureau

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

Edson H. Beall 3/20/02

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other, explain:

see continuation sheet

[Signature]  
Keeper of the National Register Date

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## 6. Function or Use

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### Historic Functions:

Commerce/Trade: specialty store, department store, financial institution, restaurant

Industry/Processing/Extraction: manufacturing facility, industrial storage

Government: courthouse, post office

Transportation: rail-related

Domestic: hotel

### Current Functions:

Commerce/Trade: specialty store, financial institution, restaurant

Industry/Processing/Extraction: manufacturing facility, industrial storage

Government: courthouse

Transportation: rail-related

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## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification:

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals: Beaux Arts

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Movements: Commercial Style

### Materials:

**foundation** Concrete

**walls** Brick

**roof** Asphalt

**other** Glass

### Description of present and historic physical appearance:

#### Summary Description

The Donalsonville Historic District encompasses the historic commercial, community landmark, and industrial resources associated with the downtown development of Donalsonville. The town was laid out in 1889 in a gridiron plan with the Alabama Midland Railway, now the Seaboard Coastline, alignment running through the northeastern section of the town. The historic commercial development consists of stores built from 1890 to 1950; the stores are concentrated along West Second Street between Woolfork Avenue and Knox Avenue. The stores along the north side of West Second Street are attached one-story brick buildings situated close to the street; the backs of the buildings are oriented towards the railroad. The stores along the south side of West Second Street are attached two-story brick buildings. The stores feature large display windows with transoms, recessed main entrances, single and paired second-story windows, and decorative

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7--Description

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corbeled brickwork along the cornices. The community landmark buildings include government- and institutional-related buildings. The Seminole County Courthouse, located on the western edge of the district, is a two-story Beaux Arts-style building designed by William J. J. Chase in 1922. The Seminole Memorial Hospital, built c.1940, is a rectangular two-story (second story was added in 1945) masonry building with original paired double-hung windows and replacement windows. The Oceola Hotel was built between 1906 and 1910 and is one of the largest and locally important buildings located in the commercial block. The two-story masonry building features large display windows with transoms and recessed entrances along the main floor, paired windows with decorative brickwork along the second story, and Folk Victorian-style detailing along the cornice. The hotel was designed by the Macon architectural firm of Dennis and Dennis. The historic industrial development is located along the railroad right-of-way on the northeastern edge of the district. The industrial complex, known as the Donalsonville Grain and Elevator Company, features historic brick warehouses and a water tower. A second, larger industrial complex was built as the Planters Products Company and includes nearly 20 mostly metal-clad buildings. Two cotton gins are located among the Planters buildings.

Description

The City of Donalsonville is the seat of government for Seminole County, a rural county in the extreme southwest corner of the state bounded by both Alabama and Florida. Donalsonville is laid out in a gridiron pattern with the alignment of the Seaboard Coastline intersecting the northwest corner of downtown. East First Street and a block of East Second Street run parallel with the railroad, deviating from the overall grid layout. Second Street, the principal downtown street, runs parallel with the tracks for a block and then turns west toward the courthouse, joining the established grid of streets. First Street, which lies between Second Street and the tracks, runs parallel with the tracks, but mostly functions as a service alley.

Downtown Donalsonville consists of late 19th- and early 20th-century commercial buildings. These have continuous storefronts with consistent setbacks fronting onto sidewalks (photos 3-13). The buildings are mostly brick with first-floor storefronts, double-hung sash windows above on two-story buildings, and with corbeled cornices. Some buildings retain their cast-iron storefronts. Most roofs are flat, and many buildings have adjacent or party walls with buildings on either side. The majority of the buildings are late Victorian commercial-style structures with little ornament except decorative brickwork in the parapet above the storefront. There are only a few buildings that can be characterized as having elements of high style. The Donalsonville City Hall on Second Street, for example, was built as a bank and has elements of Neoclassicism in its façade (photos 11 and 13).

The historic district includes two complexes of agriculture-related industrial buildings. The largest complex includes nearly twenty metal-clad buildings located in the northwest corner of the district between the courthouse and the rail line (photos 21-25 and 27). Founded as the Planters Products Company, the complex includes two large peanut storage buildings with steeply pitched monitor

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7--Description

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roofs (photos 24 and 27), numerous smaller sheds for peanut and grain storage, sheds for covered vehicle storage (photo 22, right), two cotton gins 25 and 27), a small frame commissary (photo 25), and a water tower (photo 21). Most of these buildings were built in the 1930s and 1940s. The second industrial complex, located east of downtown, was established as the Donalsonville Grain and Elevator Company (photos 18). The complex includes a brick warehouse, a water tower, and three steel silos.

The following are descriptions of selected buildings located in the historic district:

*Seminole Memorial Hospital.* Located on Cherry Street, this building was built in the early 1940s by Dr. E. E. Mosley (photo 7, center right). The red brick hospital was built as a one-story building, but a second floor was added by 1945. Mrs. Mosley gave birth to the first child born on the second floor. Dr. Mosley attended to the medical needs of all citizens, black and white, rich or poor. Patients were segregated. By the 1950s, a rear addition was built to serve African-American patients, who had a separate entrance and waiting room. The hospital was forced to close in late 1960s because the building did not meet the necessary safety codes.

*Fire station.* The fire station on Woolfork Avenue was built as a Chero-Cola bottling plant with city offices on the second floor (photos 16). After its construction, the downstairs was converted into a fire station. The City Hall later moved out of this building to its current location on Second Street.

*Seminole County Courthouse.* Completed in 1922, the Seminole County Courthouse was designed by William J. J. Chase in the Beaux Arts style (photos 1 and 2). This was the first of several Georgia courthouses designed by Chase. The Donalsonville Garden Club landscaped the grounds of the courthouse in 1928.

*Oceola Hotel.* Built by Thomas J. Shingler between 1906 and 1910, the two-story hotel had a dry goods store on the first floor and 24 guest rooms above (photo 4). The original two-story porch that spanned the Second Street façade was removed in the 1950s. The interior is largely intact, including the registration desk, main staircase, guest rooms, and skylights. The north facade has been covered with textured stucco in an effort to stabilize the soft brick. The windows have been boarded up, but remain intact. The hotel was designed by the Macon architectural firm Dennis and Dennis.

*The Olive Theater.* Built before 1930, the Olive Theater was altered with a redesigned front entrance but the upper level remains intact (photo 15). The Dunn family, who previously ran a silent movie theater in a building on Second Street, built the Olive Theater. The theater was named after Mrs. Olive Dunn. When in 1949 the family built the Dunn Theater on the corner of Wiley Avenue and Second Street, the Olive was sold. It has operated as several commercial businesses and is currently owned by the Donalsonville/Seminole County Arts Council, which plans to restore the theater for community performances.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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**Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:**

nationally       statewide       locally

**Applicable National Register Criteria:**

A       B       C       D

**Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):**  N/A

A       B       C       D       E       F       G

**Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):**

Architecture  
Community Planning and Development  
Commerce  
Industry  
Transportation  
Health/medicine  
Politics/Government

**Period of Significance:**

1889-1950

**Significant Dates:**

1889 - E. S. Law laid out plan of Donalsonville. The Alabama Midway Railroad laid through town.  
1897 - Donalsonville incorporated.  
1922 - Seminole County Courthouse completed.

**Significant Person(s):**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation:**

N/A

**Architect(s)/Builder(s):**

William J. J. Chase (architect)

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

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**Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)**

The Donalsonville Historic District is a downtown historic district encompassing the remaining historic commercial, community landmark, and industrial resources of Donalsonville. The district is significant in the area of architecture for its excellent collection of late 19th- to mid-20th century commercial, industrial, and community landmark buildings. The stores are excellent examples of freestanding and attached brick one- and two-story buildings. The character-defining features include large display windows with transoms, parapet roofs, recessed main entrances, and second-story double-hung windows. The stores fronting West Second Street are excellent representative examples of the Folk Victorian style with their masonry construction, decorative corbeling along the cornices, and decorative arches over the second-story windows. The Seminole County Courthouse is an excellent representative example of the Beaux Arts style with its symmetrical facade, two-story pilasters, double windows with arches, and decorative garland swags. In addition, the historic district contains an exceptionally large number of intact, early 20<sup>th</sup>-century industrial buildings characterized by their simple geometric form and metal cladding.

The district is significant in the area of community planning and development for its crossroads plan with a railroad plan designed by E. S. Law in 1889. Typical of towns in which the railroad post-dates the founding of the community the primary orientation of the town is not toward the railroad. Yet the railroad is an important part of the physical development of the town and accounts for the orientation of the industrial resources and especially railroad-related resources. The railroad's location at the edge of downtown and its diagonal orientation to Donalsonville's established grid is also characteristic of crossroads towns with railroads.

The district is significant in the area of commerce, industry, and transportation for its development as a series of commercial blocks that served the needs of Donalsonville residents as well as those from outlying areas. The Alabama Midland Railway, completed through the town in 1889, provided transportation for goods to be sold in the stores and for the transportation of crops from Seminole County farms to and from Donalsonville. Peanuts grown from Seminole County were transported to Donalsonville and cleaned and shelled at the Planters Products Company and Donalsonville Grain and Elevator Company. The peanuts were then transported by rail from these agriculture-related industrial complexes to markets in Georgia and throughout the nation.

The district is significant in the area of health/medicine for the Seminole Memorial Hospital. The hospital served as a small community hospital that provided health care to both white and black patients in Donalsonville. The Donalsonville Hospital, located north of the historic district, functioned as a regional medical center; whereas the Seminole Memorial Hospital served mostly local residents, from its construction c.1940 until it closed during early 1960s. Seminole Memorial Hospital is a rare property type in Georgia. It is one of only 46 hospitals in the statewide survey (that covers roughly 40% of the state) and is one of only eight hospitals in a town setting.

**National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

**Section 8--Statement of Significance**

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The district is significant in the area of politics/government as the seat of government for Seminole County. Government-related activities that took place in Seminole County are represented by the Beaux Arts-style Seminole County Courthouse, which was built in 1922.

**National Register Criteria**

A and C.

**Criteria Considerations (if applicable)**

N/A

**Period of significance (justification)**

The period of significance begins in 1888, the year E. E. Law laid out the plan for the town of Donalsonville, and ends in 1950 (the 50-year end date) to include the period when downtown Donalsonville served as the commercial, governmental, and industrial center of Seminole County.

**Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)**

Contributing resources in the historic district are those constructed between 1889 and 1950 that are significant for the themes of architecture, community planning and development, commerce, industry, transportation, health/medicine, and politics/government and which retain historic integrity. The seven contributing structures are the plan of the historic district, the railroad line, two water towers, and three silos.

The noncontributing buildings were built after 1950 or have lost sufficient historic integrity through additions or alterations so that they no longer convey their historic significance. The block of West Second Street between the courthouse and Wiley Avenue includes several noncontributing buildings that are less-than-fifty years old, including the post office (photo 3). Other noncontributing resources include noncontributing industrial buildings, such as the Planters Products Company drying sheds, built in 1970 (photo 21). Examples of noncontributing buildings that have lost their integrity due to additions or alterations include the Badcock Home Furnishings Center (photo 9), Radio Shack (photo 19, center), and the City Hall Annex (photo 11, center).

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

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**Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)**

The city of Donalsonville is the seat of government for Seminole County, a rural Georgia county located in the extreme southwest corner of the state in area known in the nineteenth century as the pine barrens. The area around Donalsonville was originally part of Early County, which was formed in 1818 from lands ceded by the Creek Indians in 1814. In 1823, Decatur County was formed from parts of Early County. Seminole County was formed in 1920 from parts of Decatur County.

Donalsonville had its beginnings as the site of a turpentine still belonging to Jonathan Earnest Donalson, for whom the town is named. From this still, a lumber business developed, bringing with it the commerce and workers necessary to operate and support it. As the business and town grew, the area's population increased. In 1890, the first post office in town was established with S. D. Cherry acting as Postmaster. The post office operated from Cherry's store.

The town was incorporated as the town of Donalson in 1897, but because there already existed a Donalson in Georgia, it was re-chartered as Donalsonville. Donalsonville was named in J. E. Donalson's honor because of his tremendous influence on its development and because he gave the land necessary to create the town. The first officers of the city were: Dr. Thomas Chason (mayor), J. E. Donalson, W. B. King, S. D. Cherry, and R. D. Carr (alderman). The first town limits were one-half mile square in each direction from the Presbyterian Church, making the area of the town one-mile square.

J. E. Donalson belonged to a pioneer family in Decatur County that owned a plantation on the Chattahoochee River. His father served in the Georgia House of Representatives in 1843 and was a large landholder in southwest Georgia and north Florida. He primarily grew sugar cane and cotton, which was shipped by steamboat down the Apalachicola River. J. E. Donalson was born April 29, 1846 in nearby Bainbridge, Georgia. He enlisted as a private in the Confederate Army in 1862 while attending college at Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He served until the end of the war, attaining the rank of 4th Corporal. After the war, he was commonly referred to as Colonel Donalson, although he did not achieve any rank higher than 4th Corporal in the army. This was done out of respect for his standing in the community as a prominent lawyer and businessman. Following the war, he continued his education and graduated with a law degree from the University of Georgia.

Donalson returned to southwest Georgia to live in Bainbridge. He was a lawyer, farmer, and in the lumber business. He was involved in numerous organizations. He served as the Vice President of the Georgia Bar Association, was both an alderman and mayor of Bainbridge, a Presbyterian (possibly Methodist) Elder, a Knight of Pythias, and he also served on the board of directors of several banks and railroads. In 1877, Donalson served as a member of the Georgia Constitutional Convention and was the author of a declaration that stated that limited the number of new counties in Georgia.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

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J. E. Donalson owned several thousand acres in the area where Donalsonville developed. In 1889, a bridge over the Chattahoochee River was built and the Alabama Midland Railway was laid between Bainbridge and Gordon, Alabama. This line passed through Donalson's property. Donalson had purchased the property for the purpose of developing a lumber business. Donalson had known of the coming rail line because the previous year he had been elected president of the Alabama Midland Railroad.

The railroad system was the most important factor in opening up for settlement the interior of south Georgia. The population was sparse in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the only large cities were Albany, Newton, Thomasville, and Bainbridge. With the exception of Thomasville, all of these towns were located along the navigable Flint River. Albany managed to connect with a rail line from the north in 1857, and the Savannah, Florida, and Western reached Thomasville in 1861.

In 1887, J. W. Woolfork of Montgomery, Alabama, proposed that if Bainbridge purchased \$50,000 in proposed railroad stock, the town would be made the terminus of the rail line. The citizens of Bainbridge quickly raised this money, and in 1888, elected J. E. Donalson as president of Alabama Midland Railroad. He also served as president of the Chattanooga, Columbus & Southern Railroad in 1889.

Donalson quickly set up a turpentine and lumber enterprise along the proposed path of the railroad. This business, between the courthouse and the railroad line, was called the Donalson Lumber Company. Large stands of virgin pine timber were cut, milled, and shipped to market by rail. As mill operations increased and more workers were necessary, commercial enterprises catering to them set up near the mill. Because of the tremendous demand for pine timber and turpentine products, Donalson's business grew quickly. Housing was constructed for black workers along Morris Avenue, though none of these houses survive. By late 1889, a man named E. S. Law laid out the street pattern that exists today. A historical marker near the old city park mistakenly states that Donalson laid out the city plan.

In addition to commercial enterprise, doctors were also necessary to keep the workers healthy. Typhoid fever, yellow fever, and malaria were common diseases at this time, especially in hot, humid climates like south Georgia. It was a common practice among such businesses to employ a doctor to keep the workers healthy.

In addition to the Alabama Midland Railroad, there were two short lines from Donalsonville called tram lines. These were used to get the timber from the county to the mill where it was processed and sent to market. The trams were also used to transport workers and supplies to the field.

**National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

**Section 8--Statement of Significance**

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The original depot was an old boxcar set next to the tracks. A permanent depot was built at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was a simple, unadorned structure with a wood shingle roof. This building, located on the south side of the rail line near Wiley Avenue, was demolished in the mid-1980s.

The new rail line through southwest Georgia and the Donalson Lumber Company brought many people to the area seeking jobs and fortune. One of these people was Thomas John Shingler. Born in South Carolina in 1863, Shingler left home at the age of 19 to join his older brother, James Simon on a turpentine crew. He soon wound up in Fort Gaines, Georgia, where he met his future wife, Leona Rish. They were married in 1883, and living in Donalsonville by 1900. Shingler became successful in the naval stores business. He and his brothers, especially J. S. Shingler, formed many business partnerships. Brothers J. S. and T. J. Shingler formed a timber operation known as T. J. Shingler & Brother. As timber in the areas was cleared, the business expanded into farming and cattle.

Besides his primary business interests in naval stores, Shingler became interested in the citrus industry in south Florida and established the peanut mill in Donalsonville, which was the first in southwest Georgia. He started the cotton-seed oil industry in the region, bred Hereford cattle, served as a long-time president of the Bank of Donalsonville and director of several other banks in the surrounding area; and was a successful farmer and pecan grower. By 1920, T. J. Shingler and his brother James Simon Shingler were among the most successful farmers in Georgia with 13,000 acres under cultivation. With total land holdings of 33,000 acres, they were among the largest landholders in Georgia.

T. J. Shingler and his brother James were also instrumental in the creation of Seminole County. Seminole County was created out of parts of Decatur County in 1920. The county was formed as a direct result of the growth of Donalsonville. As the town grew its citizens demanded more convenient access to local government. Travel to Bainbridge, the county seat, took six hours by horse when the roads were dry. Peter S. Cummings, Jesse L. Dickerson, John L. Roberts, and Arthur Reynolds were active in the drive to form the new county. The most powerful influence came from T. J. Shingler and his brother J. S. Shingler, who was a Georgia legislator from Ashburn. J. S. Shingler was instrumental in the founding of Turner County in 1905. During his second term in the Georgia legislature, J. S. Shingler co-authored the constitutional amendment that led to the creation of Seminole County.

When the county was first created, county offices were housed in various locations throughout downtown. The first court was held on February 21, 1921 above a store on Second Street in the Knights of Pythias Hall. Bonds were issued by the county for \$100,000; \$85,000 for the courthouse construction and \$15,000 for road improvements. Land was donated by Shingler and the courthouse was built in 1922.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

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Dr. Thomas Chason is another important citizen of Donalsonville. Born in the Donalsonville area in 1872, Dr. Thomas Chason studied medicine at Vanderbilt College. After graduating in 1892, he returned to Donalsonville to set up a practice. In 1906, he attended the New York Post Graduate Hospital. He remained in Donalsonville from 1918 until his death in 1941. Between 1918 and 1943, Dr. Chason established and operated the area's only regional hospital, the Donalsonville Hospital, which is located outside the historic district and individually listed in the National Register. The hospital has been a tremendous benefit to the local economy, bringing medical professionals to the community, as well as providing career opportunity to local residents. In addition, Dr. Chason served as a state senator in 1936.

The Donalsonville Hospital closed briefly during World War II because medical personnel were needed in the war effort. At this time, Dr. E. E. Mosely opened a hospital in the central business district. Dr. Mosley was a generous doctor and treated patients regardless of their financial situation. His hospital, the Seminole Memorial, and the Donalsonville Hospital were competitors. Both hospitals thrived. The Donalsonville Hospital served as a regional facility whereas the Seminole Memorial served mostly Donalsonville residents. Dr. Mosley also built a row of commercial buildings on Cherry Street in 1946. In the late 1960s, new national building codes were applied to hospitals, causing both hospitals to be ineligible for federal assistance. The Donalsonville Hospital was able to build an addition, which met these codes and assured its survival. Seminole Memorial, however, closed and has since been used for various commercial enterprises.

Agriculture in Seminole County developed more slowly than in other parts of Georgia. Its low-lying, poorly drained soils were not well suited for cotton or food crops. Additionally, Yellow Fever, Typhoid Fever, and Malaria also hindered the development of the land. Other than a few isolated cotton or sugar cane plantations along the Chattahoochee River, most of Seminole County was uninhabited and covered with longleaf pine trees. By the 1880s, the naval stores and timber industries started clearing the land. Many of the workers in the turpentine industry were convict laborers, who collected pine sap and converted it into turpentine and resin. These products were for, among other things, medicine, paint, and varnish. Before the railroad came through the area, agricultural products were taken to market by boat on the Chattahoochee or Flint rivers.

The Donalson Lumber Company operated for about ten years until it was destroyed by fire in the late 1890s. The remains of the mill were purchased by the Shingler brothers and several other partners and operated as the Chattahoochee Lumber Company. This new mill burned in 1902. The fire spread to the business district and destroyed most of the commercial enterprises in town. It was several years before the town was rebuilt. During this time many people moved away, and those that stayed derived income from farming. The Shinglers were bought out of the Chattahoochee Lumber Company and it was moved to the community of Lela because the timber near Donalsonville had been exhausted.

**National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

**Section 8--Statement of Significance**

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In 1906, the Shingler brothers started the Donalsonville Oil Mill, which was located between the courthouse and railroad line. Later, it was called the Planters Product Company and in 1940, it became the Beall Peanut Company. The office building, storage sheds, and the water tower that supplied water for the steam driven machines survive.

Land around Donalsonville that had been cleared for timber was put into agricultural production. Cotton and truck crops were grown, and some land was used for livestock. By 1915, most of the trees had been felled, and the lumber and naval stores businesses were disappearing. This changing economic base caused a slump in Donalsonville's economy. As the county seat, Donalsonville served as the area's market and trade center. The local economy was closely linked to the success of farming. After World War I, cotton prices fell further, depressing the local economy. This was made worse by the boll weevil, which caused extensive damage to cotton crops. The downturn in cotton prices caused ripples throughout the agricultural community, in turn lowering prices of other crops as well. By the time the Great Depression hit in 1929, agricultural prices had begun to climb. Through the depression prices continued to rise and farmers did better from 1930 to 1940 than they had during the previous decade.

During World War II, there was a shortage of farm labor because many men had left the county to fight overseas. German prisoners of war were used to overcome this shortage. The hospital also faced personnel shortages and was forced to temporarily close. The entire farming industry in Seminole County changed after the war with the introduction of mechanized equipment in 1947. This, combined with the increased use of chemicals in the late 1950s, required fewer hands to run a farming operation. The result was to drive many people out of the county and into Donalsonville in search of work. Between 1920 and 1960, the population of the unincorporated county fell by over 20 percent.

During this same period, Donalsonville's population grew by over 150 percent. After 1970, the downturn in the county reversed because people moved outside of town in part due to lower fuel costs. Donalsonville's population climbed steadily from 1920 until the 1980s, when the number of residents in the city began to decline.

In Downtown Donalsonville, many commercial buildings also housed public institutions. The telephone office, called central (a switchboard), was housed in the rear of a grocery store. Court was held in the second floor of a shoe store on Second Street. A Masonic Lodge was located above a Second Street business. An early post office was located in a building that was part of the C. D. Thomas Hardware Store. Before the county jail was built, prisoners were held on the second floor above a store.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

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The Dunn Theater was located above a store on Second Street. The theater opened sometime in the teens, and featured Mrs. Dunn on the piano at silent movies. By 1928, the Dunns built the Olive Theater on Woolfork Avenue. In 1949, Dunn's built the larger Dunn Theater at the southwest corner of Second and Wiley. It was is one- and two-story building that featured storefronts along Second and Wiley streets. The flat roof of the one-story building was reconfigured with a low hip roof. The theater operated into the 1970s.

In 1928, the year the Garden Club of Georgia was established, the local garden club in Donalsonville landscaped the courthouse grounds. In 1932, the local club became affiliated with the Garden Club of Georgia. It was known as the Donalsonville Garden and Community Club. The garden club initially held meetings at the Dunn Theater on Woolfork Avenue with the purpose of beautifying the town and exchanging plants with other members. In the early 1930s the city gave the club \$250 to buy plantings for churches and the cemetery. The garden club also furnished and maintained a log cabin that was built in the city park in 1943 by the Works Project Administration. In 1941, the club planted dogwood trees along the main highways leading to town, but these were removed when gas lines were installed in the right-of-way. From 1936 to 1950, the garden club held annual flower shows.

Donalsonville's commercial district developed first along both sides of East Second Street, primarily between Wiley and Woolfork avenues. The south side of West Second Street between Wiley Avenue and the courthouse was occupied in the 1930s by the Georgia Power and Light Company building. This building was previously used as an ice plant. A city park that included the garden club's clubhouse occupied the north side of this block. The area where the courthouse now stands was the site of Donalson's lumber mill. In 1902, the mill and the entire business district were destroyed by fire. The mill was also rebuilt, but later burned. The mill was not rebuilt because of the area's timber supply had become exhausted.

Between the fires of the early 1900s and the construction of the courthouse in 1922, new business in town were established adjacent to existing ones along Second Street. After the courthouse was built, Second Street between Knox and Wiley avenues developed slowly. The block was never built with continuous commercial buildings. Only two or three buildings were built on this block prior to 1940. The Dunn Theater, which occupies the southeast corner, was constructed in 1949. The post office, which occupies the northeast corner, was built in 1960 on land that was formerly the city park. The remaining buildings on the block are not historic. Other business that existed in Donalsonville in the 1930s included: a Chero-cola plant located on Woolfork Avenue in the 1930s; a Standard Oil Company plant at the corner of Tennille Avenue and the north side of the railroad line; and three filling stations on Second Street east of Woolfork Avenue.

Downtown Donalsonville has managed to maintain much of its commercial viability although there is competition from commercial strip development on U.S. Highway 84, which runs along Third Street. In an effort to modernize the downtown, a number of merchants covered their original facades with

**National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

**Section 8--Statement of Significance**

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aluminum fronts in the 1960s and 1970s. There has recently been renewed interest in preserving and enhancing the downtown and a few rehabilitations have taken place.

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## 9. Major Bibliographic References

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Forgey, Paul. National Register Historic District Information Form. Donalsonville Historic District. On file at the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division, Atlanta, Georgia, 1997.

Roth, Darlene R. Georgia Community Development and Morphology of Community Types. Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, December 1989.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS): (x) N/A**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested**
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been issued**  
**date issued:**
- previously listed in the National Register**
- previously determined eligible by the National Register**
- designated a National Historic Landmark**
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #**
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #**

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State historic preservation office**
- Other State Agency**
- Federal agency**
- Local government**
- University**
- Other, Specify Repository:**

**Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A**

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property**      Approximately 55 acres.

### UTM References

- |    |         |                |                  |
|----|---------|----------------|------------------|
| A) | Zone 16 | Easting 701670 | Northing 3436360 |
| B) | Zone 16 | Easting 702530 | Northing 3436110 |
| C) | Zone 16 | Easting 702530 | Northing 3435750 |
| D) | Zone 16 | Easting 701690 | Northing 3435940 |

### Verbal Boundary Description

The historic district boundary is indicated by a heavy black line on the attached map, which is drawn to scale.

### Boundary Justification

The Donalsonville Historic District comprises the intact and contiguous properties associated with the commercial downtown and historic industrial resources in Donalsonville. The historic district retains a high level of historic integrity.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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**State Historic Preservation Office**

**name/title** Steven Moffson, Architectural Historian  
**organization** Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**mailing address** 156 Trinity Avenue, S.W., Suite 101  
**city or town** Atlanta      **state** Georgia      **zip code** 30303  
**telephone** (404) 656-2840      **date** January 15, 2002  
**e-mail** steven\_moffson@mail.dnr.state.ga.us

**Consulting Services/Technical Assistance (if applicable)** ( ) not applicable

**name/title** Paul Forgey, Historic Preservation Planner  
**organization** Southwest Georgia Regional Development Center  
**mailing address** P.O. Box 346  
**city or town** Camilla      **state** GA      **zip code** 31730  
**telephone** N/A  
**e-mail** N/A

- ( ) **property owner**
- ( ) **consultant**
- (x) **regional development center preservation planner**
- ( ) **other:**

**Property Owner or Contact Information**

**name (property owner or contact person)** Benda Broome  
**organization (if applicable)** Donalsonville-Seminole County Chamber of Commerce  
**mailing address** P.O. Box 713  
**city or town** Donalsonville      **state** GA      **zip code** 31745  
**e-mail (optional)** N/A

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

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**Name of Property:** Donalsonville Historic District  
**City or Vicinity:** Donalsonville  
**County:** Seminole  
**State:** Georgia  
**Photographer:** James R. Lockhart  
**Negative Filed:** Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**Date Photographed:** September 1999

**Description of Photograph(s):**

Number of photographs: 27

1. Seminole County Courthouse, photographer facing northwest.
2. Seminole County Courthouse, photographer facing southwest.
3. West Second Street, photographer facing west.
4. West Second Street, photographer facing southeast.
5. West Second Street, photographer facing east.
6. West Second Street, photographer facing west.
7. Cherry Street, photographer facing southwest.
8. Cherry Street, photographer facing southeast.
9. West Second Street, photographer facing east.
10. West Second Street, photographer facing northwest.
11. West Second Street, photographer facing southwest.
12. West Second Street, photographer facing northwest.
13. West Second Street, photographer facing northwest.
14. Woolfork Avenue, photographer facing southwest.
15. Woolfork Avenue, photographer facing southeast.
16. Woolfork Avenue, photographer facing northwest.
17. South Tennille Avenue, photographer facing northeast.
18. Donalsonville Grain and Elevator Company, photographer facing northeast.
19. Donalsonville Grain and Elevator Company, photographer facing northeast.
20. Wiley Avenue, photographer facing southeast.

**National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

**Photographs**

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21. Planters Products Company warehouses, photographer facing northwest.
22. Planters Products Company warehouses, photographer facing northeast.
23. Planters Products Company warehouses, photographer facing northeast.
24. Planters Products Company warehouse, photographer facing northeast.
25. Commissary and cotton gin (background), photographer facing southeast.
26. Cotton gin, photographer facing northwest.
27. Planters Company Products (left) and cotton gin (right), photographer facing northeast.

(HPD WORDPERFECT form version 11-03-01)