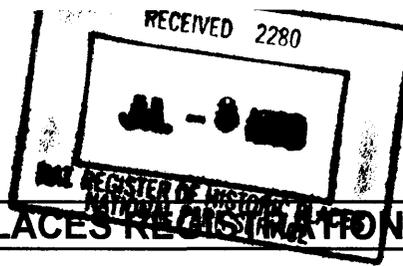


923



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 Tybee Island Back River Historic District
other names/site number n/a

2. Location

street & number Chatham Avenue, from the mouth of the Tybee River, the most southern point of Tybee Island, to Venetian Drive.
city, town City of Tybee Island (n/a) **vicinity of**
county Chatham **code** GA 051
state Georgia **code** GA **zip code** 31328

(n/a) not for publication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:	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>
buildings	44	24
sites	1	0
structures	20	0
objects	0	0
total	65	24

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: n/a

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.

R. W. Luce

7-1-99

Signature of certifying official

Date

for 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

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

Elson A. Beall *8-5-99*

() determined eligible for the National Register

() determined not eligible for the National Register

() removed from the National Register

() other, explain:

() see continuation sheet

Keeper of the National Register

Date

for

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

DOMESTIC/single dwelling
OUTDOOR RECREATION/beach
LANDSCAPE/natural feature

Current Functions:

DOMESTIC/single dwelling
OUTDOOR RECREATION/beach
LANDSCAPE/natural feature

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

OTHER: Raised Cottage
OTHER: New South Cottage

Materials:

foundation	brick piers, continuous concrete
walls	wood
roof	pressed metal, asphalt
other	n/a

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

The Tybee Island Back River Historic District is a late 19th- to mid-20th-century costal residential development consisting of beach resort cottages situated at the mouth of and along the Tybee River inlet, also known locally as the Back River. Tybee Island, located east of Savannah, is Georgia's most northern barrier island and is situated at the mouth of the Savannah River (see Attachment 1).

The residential development within the district consists of short narrow lots, located at the northern end of the district, gradually increasing in length as the residential development extends south to the mouth of the Tybee River, which is locally known as The Point. The cottages, oriented towards the Tybee River inlet, are located near the center of the lots with wax myrtles, tall grasses, palmetto trees, and live oak trees located in front and behind the cottages. When present, outbuildings are located between the cottages and Chatham Avenue. Chatham Avenue is a narrow street approximately 10-feet wide lined with palmetto trees. Inlet Avenue and three sandy alleys run from Chatham Avenue to the edge of the beach; these roads provide access to the cottages as well as to the beach along the Tybee River inlet.

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The historic cottages within the district represent two historic periods of residential development along the Tybee River inlet. The cottages constructed during the first period, 1886 to 1923, are associated with the coastal resort development of Tybee Island by the Tybee Improvement Company. The cottages constructed during the second period, 1923 to 1948, are associated with the transition of the function of the island as a seasonal resort destination to a permanent year-round settlement.

Unfortunately, most of the late 19th-century cottages were lost during hurricanes that hit the island in 1893 and 1898. The only remaining building constructed during the late 19th century is the Chatham Artillery Clubhouse located on the corner of Inlet Avenue and Chatham Avenue. The Chatham Artillery Clubhouse, built 1888, is a two-story cottage featuring a hipped roof, wide overhanging eaves, exposed rafter tails, and recessed wrap-around porches located on the first and second floors (see Attachment 6). Tall palmetto trees and oak trees surround the cottage.

The other cottages built during the first period of development are located near "The Point" area. Specifically, this area is located in the two blocks between The Point (on the south) and Inlet Avenue (on the north). These cottages, locally known as Colony Row, typically feature two-story height (one cottage, 1907 Chatham Avenue, had a third story added in 1932), square massing, mortise-and-tenon construction, and recessed first- and second-story wrap-around porches. Many of the cottages have rooms that open onto porches through long windows or french doors. Bedrooms are generally located on the main floor, and the dining room and other service-oriented facilities are located on the ground floor. The Baker-Lamar Cottage, located at 1807 Chatham Avenue, and Walker-Lynah Cottage, located at 1801 Chatham Avenue, are representative of the type of cottages found in Colony Row. The Baker-Lamar Cottage is a two-story building constructed c.1915 and features a hipped roof, overhanging eaves, exposed rafter tails, recessed wrap-around porch, a raised main floor featuring the main living quarters, and a partially enclosed ground floor featuring the kitchen and dining room. A cluster of palmetto trees separates the Baker-Lamar Cottage from the servants' cottage, built c.1915 (see photo 9). The Walker-Lynah Cottage is similar to the Baker-Lamar Cottage. The Walker-Lynah Cottage is a two-story building constructed in 1918 and features a hipped roof, standing seam metal roof, exposed rafter tails, recessed second- and ground-level wrap-around porches, a raised main floor featuring the main living quarters, and a partially enclosed ground floor (see photo 10). The servants' cottage, built c.1920, is located between the main house and Chatham Avenue (the servants' cottage now serves as a garage).

A Coastal and Geodetic Survey Tower is situated at The Point near Colony Row. The original tower was constructed around the turn of the century, made of wood, and approximately 70-feet tall. The tower was used by the US Coast Guard to monitor ships off the southern end of Tybee Island as well as by the US Army during World War I as a lookout tower. The wooden tower was replaced with the

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current metal tower by the US Coast Guard during the early 1940s, and again used by the US Army during World War II as a lookout tower (see photo 3).

Another extant historic structure located near The Point and Colony Row is a concrete sea wall constructed by the Works Projects Administration (WPA) in 1937-38 (see photo 4). The concrete sea wall was built to replace an older wooden sea wall (see photo 5 and 6, note: the wooden sea wall is still visible behind the concrete sea wall in photo 6). The date of the wooden sea wall is not known since the wall was continuously replaced; however, it was probably first constructed during the first period of residential development of the district, and then continuously maintained until 1937-38 when the concrete sea wall was constructed.

Also located within the Colony Row and The Point area of the district was the turntable and Inlet Station stop of the Savannah and Tybee Island Railroad, owned by the Central of Georgia Railroad, which was completed on Tybee Island in 1887 (see Attachment 3). Both the turntable and Inlet Station were located on the corner of Inlet Avenue and Chatham Avenue; Inlet Station was the last stop of the railroad which ran down Main Street (now Butler Avenue). The station, which was a small clapboard building, and the turntable were removed during the early 1930s when the Savannah and Tybee Island Railroad was abandoned due to the completion of Tybee Road/US Highway 80 from Savannah to Tybee Island.

The second period of development, 1923 to 1948, consists of cottages built within the district after the construction of Tybee Road/US Highway 80, which provided better access by automobile to the island. This development represents the change from the use of cottages as summer resort cottages to permanent year-round residences. These permanent residences differed in construction and type from the resort cottages. The residences have the living quarters on the main floor and a latticed garage area on the ground floor. Other differences include smaller porches and windows, gable-end roofs, and balloon-frame construction. The cottage located at 1405 Chatham Avenue is representative of the type of cottage constructed during this period of development. The cottage is a one-story raised cottage and smaller than those located in Colony Row. The New South-type cottage (central hallway flanked by pairs of rooms, one room projects forward) features a hipped roof with a front projecting gable, recessed wrap-around porch, chamfered wooden post supports, narrow double-hung windows, and the lattice panels along the ground floor. The house has recently undergone a restoration; the original lattice was replaced and a second opening for an automobile was added to the area below the front projecting wing (see photo 19).

Two multiple-family dwellings were built within the district. The only remaining multiple-family dwelling built within the district is the Riverside Lodge, located at 1511 Chatham Avenue. The three-story building is rectangular in massing and features a multi-gabled roof, rafter tails, paired double-hung windows, recessed wrap-around porch, and lattice panels covering the ground level. An open

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grass yard is located between the lodge and Chatham Avenue; however, palmetto trees and shrubs landscape the yard between the lodge and the Tybee River inlet (see photo 18).

The overall appearance of the district is a designed coastal landscape. The landscape changes from The Point area north along the shoreline to the northern end of the district. The Colony Row cottages near the southern end of the district are located near the center of long narrow lots with little coastal vegetation located between the cottages and the Tybee River inlet beach (see photo 1). Further north, the lots become longer and more coastal vegetation, such as palmetto trees, few pine trees, wax myrtles, tall grasses, and other indigenous shrubs fill the spaces between the cottages and the shoreline, as well as along the property boundaries (see photos 10, 12, 14 and 15). The lots north of Alley 3 become shorter and the cottages are located closer to the shoreline with coastal vegetation marking the boundary lines. The construction of private docks by cottage owners was exclusively done along the Tybee River inlet. According to the historic preservation consultant who was hired to research the district area and the local residents, the current docks located along the river were originally built during the historic period and have been maintained by the local cottage owners. Because of the temporary nature of the docks and the harsh conditions in which they are located, construction materials have been replaced over time with in-kind materials. The docks have remained in their original locations and have retained their original scale.

The nonhistoric buildings within the district consist of condominiums that are typically two-stories with hipped and gable-end roofs and integral porches. These nonhistoric buildings typically replaced lost historic cottages and are located near the center of the lots and have maintained the historic coastal landscaping (see photos 12 and 15). Only a few lots, especially near the center of the district, have been subdivided into smaller lots. The intact historic coastal vegetation partially blocks the view of the nonhistoric buildings on the subdivided lots from the historic cottages.

The area outside the historic district encompasses nonhistoric condominiums and modern commercial development along Butler Street, a mix of nonhistoric and historic dwellings along Inlet Avenue, 15th Street, 16th Street, 17th Street, 18th Street, and 19th Streets. Much of the modern development has taken place inland away from the coastline.

8. Statement of Significance

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):

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
ARCHITECTURE
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance:

1886-1948

Significant Dates:

1885 Subdivision of the Tybee River inlet/Back River area for development.
1887 Completion of the Savannah and Tybee Island Railroad.
1888-1948 Construction of resort cottages within the district.
1923 Completion of Tybee Road/US Highway 80 from Savannah to Tybee Island.

Significant Person(s):

n/a

Cultural Affiliation:

n/a

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

n/a

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Section 8--Statement of Significance

Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)

The Tybee Island Back River Historic District consists an unusual collection of late 19th- and 20th-century resort cottages located in a unique landscape design only found in Georgia on this coastal island. The district is significant in community planning and development, entertainment/recreation, architecture, and landscape architecture. The district is eligible under National Register Criteria A and C and has a state level of significance.

The district is significant in the area of community planning and development and entertainment/recreation for its development as a beach resort during the late 19th century. Unique in Georgia, Tybee Island is the only barrier island to be developed by a land developer as a coastal resort for the general population. Georgia's other barrier islands were owned by wealthy individuals who built large homes to serve as retreats, such as "Dungeness" on Cumberland (built by the Thomas Carnegie in the 1910s and now in ruins) and "Main House" on Ossabaw Island (built by the Torrey family in 1924) and by land developers who constructed exclusive elegant hotels, such as the Cloisters Hotel (1928) on Sea Island and Jekyll Island Club Hotel (1901) on Jekyll Island, as vacation destinations for the wealthy.

Tybee Island is the only example of the American coastal resort movement in Georgia. The movement finds its roots in the English coastal resorts of Scarborough and Briton, in which British physicians expounded the virtues of the curative powers of sea water as an 18th-century panacea. By the 19th century, this idea was transplanted to America and gave rise to the coastal resorts along the Atlantic coast. Many Georgians as well as other people throughout the South traveled north to resorts in Long Branch, New York, Cape May, New Jersey, and Nantucket, Massachusetts. These resorts were popular and set the standard for resorts by offering such amenities as transportation networks, hotels, service-oriented businesses, and amusement establishments. The resort development of Tybee Island was modeled after these resort areas. At the height of its resort popularity, Tybee Island featured grand hotels, dance pavilions, bath houses, boarding houses and inns, service-oriented businesses, railroad stops, and private summer cottages.

During the mid-19th century, limited recreational activities were provided on Tybee Island; however, visitors had to board a steamer at Savannah and travel over one hour to reach the island. Many people throughout the South had to travel to northern coastal cities to enjoy seaside resorts, which were established during the early 19th century. The development of Tybee Island from limited recreational purposes to a seaside resort was begun in 1873 by the Tybee Improvement Company. In 1873, the company acquired the island and subdivided the oceanfront property south of Fort Screven into lots. The company constructed oceanfront hotels to lure vacationers to Tybee Island. To insure the development of Tybee Island as a resort destination, the Tybee Improvement Company announced the construction of a hotel, named Ocean House, in 1876, and the Savannah and Tybee

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Railroad, which cut the travel time to the island and brought more people to the beach, was completed in 1890. It was during this period that the development of the Tybee Island Back River Historic District took place.

The area of the Tybee Island Back River Historic District consists of Ward No. 6/lots 1 through 31 (see Attachment 2). The lots located north of the intersection of Chatham Avenue and 6th Street were created in 1920 by the Tybee Improvement Company, which filled in salt marsh to create approximately 15 additional lots. To attract more people to the resort, a grander, more elegant hotel, the Hotel Tybee, was completed on the southern end of the island in 1891 (see Attachment 5). The lots located within the district were seen as desirable since the Tybee River area was a more secluded alternative to the frenetic bustle of the resort oceanfront area. The subdivision of the land into individual lots in 1886 determined the eventual pattern of cottage development and the design of the coastal landscape which creates the physical framework for the historic district and gives it its unique overall character. Cottages were built in the center of the long narrow lots and coastal vegetation retained along the lot lines. This arrangement afforded the property owners a spacious and private setting with a somewhat communal element. The cottages within the district were built by families and served as vacation or resort cottages during the summer months.

The transition of the development of the island from a summer resort location into a permanent settlement is represented by the cottages built after the completion of Tybee Road/US Highway 80 and the infill of the northern end of the district for the construction of more cottages to accommodate the growing number of people permanently settling on Tybee Island. The population of Tybee Island grew quickly with year-round residents following the completion of Tybee Road/US Highway 80. The island population jumped from 202 residents in 1930 to approximately 640 residents by 1940. The increase continued during the 1950s and 1960s.

The district is significant in the area of architecture for its excellent examples of cottages situated in their coastal setting. The residential resort architecture on Tybee Island is unique to this Georgia coastal island and features two periods of development. Unlike the other barrier islands of Georgia, the cottage resort architecture of Tybee Island was designed to be seasonal and occupied by middle-class families.

The first period of cottage constructed is from 1886 to 1923 and is represented by the Chatham Artillery Clubhouse and the Colony Row cottages. The Chatham Artillery Clubhouse originally functioned as a meeting place for the members of the Chatham Artillery, an organization founded in Savannah in 1786 and functioned as a militia unit/National Guard. The clubhouse shares many of the character-defining features of the cottages located in Colony Row. These character-defining features include a two-story height, square massing with projecting eaves, mortise-and-tenon construction, and recessed first- and second-story wrap-around porches (see Attachment 6).

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The Colony Row cottages feature rooms that open onto porches through long windows or french doors, which help to maximize ocean breezes and provide ample natural light. Bedrooms are generally located on the main floor, and the dining room and other service-oriented facilities are located on the ground floor. These features are a direct response to a waterfront environment, with its occasional storm winds and high water, as well as an informal, summer-resort lifestyle. When present, separate servant's quarters were located between the main cottages and the Chatham Avenue.

The Baker-Lamar Cottage, located at 1807 Chatham Avenue, and Walker-Lynah Cottage, located at 1801 Chatham Avenue, are excellent representative examples of resort cottages with detached servants' quarters found in Colony Row. The character-defining features of the Baker-Lamar Cottage, a two-story building constructed c.1915, include a hipped roof, overhanging eaves, exposed rafter tails, recessed wrap-around porch, a raised main floor featuring the main living quarters, and a partially enclosed ground floor featuring the kitchen and dining room. A cluster of palmetto trees separates the Baker-Lamar Cottage from the servants' cottage, built c.1915 (see photo 9). The Walker-Lynah Cottage is similar to the Baker-Lamar Cottage. The Walker-Lynah Cottage is a two-story building constructed in 1918 and features a hipped roof, standing seam metal roof, exposed rafter tails, recessed second- and ground-level wrap-around porches, a raised main floor featuring the main living quarters, and a partially enclosed ground floor (see photo 10). The servants' cottage, built c.1920, is located between the main house and Chatham Avenue (the servants' cottage now serves as a garage). These design features maximize the use of natural ocean breezes to cool the cottages and also to protect the cottages from storms.

The Varnedoe Cottage, located at 1711 Chatham Avenue, is an excellent example of a Colony Row cottage that does not have detached servants' quarters (see photo 13). This cottage also incorporates a c.1900 cottage in its design. The Varnedoe Cottage was constructed c.1910-1918 and features a main two-story block with a side ell addition. The character-defining features of the main block include its two-story height, hipped roof, standing seam metal roof, exposed rafter tails, and wrap-around porch on the ground level. The alterations to the cottage include an enclosed second-story porch and window replacements. The side ell is the oldest portion of the house; the ell was constructed c.1900 as a small cottage for an early Tybee Island resident, Captain George P. Walker. The c.1900 cottage was originally located on the site currently occupied by a historic cottage, 1801 Chatham Avenue. In 1916, the c.1900 cottage was relocated within the Colony Row area and continued to serve as a resort cottage until 1948. During that year, the cottage was again moved and attached to the Varnedoe Cottage to function as an ell addition. The addition of the c.1900 cottage as an ell to create more living space illustrates the change of a resort cottage into a permanent residence.

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Following the completion of Tybee Road/US Highway 80, Tybee Island experienced a second period of housing development as more people were able to access the island by the highway. The cottages constructed within the district after the completion of the highway in 1923 differed from the resort cottages constructed before 1923, and the cottages were intended to function as year-round residences and not just seasonal. The major difference between the periods of cottage development is that the post-1923 residences have the living quarters on the main floor and a latticed garage area on the ground floor. Other differences include smaller porches and windows, gable-end roofs, and balloon-frame construction. Wrap-around porches, large windows, high ceilings, french doors, and other early ventilation enhancing devices were not as necessary due to the advent of air conditioning.

The cottage located at 1405 Chatham Avenue is a good representative example of the type of cottage constructed during the second period of development. The cottage is a one-story raised cottage and smaller than those located in Colony Row. The New South-type cottage (central hallway flanked by pairs of rooms, one room projects forward) features a hipped roof with front projecting gable, recessed wrap-around porch, chamfered wooden post supports, narrow double-hung windows, and the lattice panels along the ground floor. The house has recently undergone a restoration; the original lattice was replaced and a second opening for an automobile was added to the area below the front projecting wing (see photo 19).

During this second period of development, Tybee Island experienced an increase in the number of tourists visiting the island by automobiles for weekend trips. To accommodate these weekend tourists, several small inns and hotels opened along Main Street (now Butler Avenue) and Chatham Avenue. Some companies built inns, such as the Atlantic Mutual Fire Insurance Company Clubhouse (located outside the National Register boundary) for their employees and guests to stay while visiting Tybee Island. The Riverside Lodge, located at 1511 Chatham Avenue, is the last of two inns that were historically located within the district. The character-defining features include the building's three story height, rectangular massing, multi-gabled roof, rafter tails, paired double-hung windows, recessed wrap-around porch, and lattice panels covering the ground level. An open grass yard is located between the lodge and Chatham Avenue; however, palmetto trees and shrubs landscape the yard between the lodge and the Tybee River inlet (see photo 18).

The district is significant in the area of landscape architecture as an excellent example of a unique coastal landscape design. In 1885, Captain D.G. Purse of the Tybee Improvement Company purchased a controlling interest in the island. Captain Purse was directly responsible for bringing the Savannah and Tybee Railroad to Tybee Island. With the northern end and oceanfront sections of the island subdivided (these areas were subdivided for development in 1873) and development started, Captain Purse turned to the far southern end and the Tybee River inlet area (see Attachment 2). He advertised the "Back River" area as being "destined to be one of the most desirable portions

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of the [I]sland” and that it “is already mapped out into building lots, and will be dotted with innumerable cottages.”

The cottages were built near the center of the long narrow lots, oriented towards the river, and landscaped with coastal vegetation. The natural landscape changes from the sandy mouth of the river (inlet) near the southern end of the district to the bluffs overlooking the river in the northern end of the district. The landscaping incorporates significant character-defining features that are both man-made and natural river features. As the river landscapes changes, the designed landscape responds to incorporate these changes. The lots closest to the mouth of the river feature dry beaches during low tides and sand dunes are covered with scrub and other indigenous plants to prevent erosion (see photos 1 and 7). The lot lines are landscaped with palmetto trees, wax myrtles, shrubs, and other indigenous plants (see photos 3, 8, 9, and 10). Several of the lots feature small private docks extending from a boardwalk (see Attachment 3 and 4). Due to the temporary nature of these small docks, parts of the wooden structures have been replaced with in-kind materials as needed over time. The docks have always been located on the same sites and have remained the same in scale (see photos 15, 16, and 17). The small private docks are significant coastal features since the river was an important developmental force in the settling of the district area. The dock provided access to the river for recreation by the families residing in the cottages. Many of the cottage owners constructed these docks since the calmer river currents allowed for their use. Access to the river from the cottages was just as important as having access to Chatham Avenue. Although some lots have had modern buildings or historic buildings altered so that they no longer contribute to the district, the historic docks have been maintained over time and still contribute to the larger district.

Between the mouth of the river and Inlet Avenue, the significant coastal features change as lots increase in length but remain narrow. A WPA-era concrete sea wall protects the gradually rising river's edge from erosion (see photos 4, 5, and 6), and the original wooden sea wall is still visible behind the concrete wall (see photo 6). The lot lines continue to be landscaped with palmetto trees and other coastal vegetation. Since a larger expanse was created between the river and the cottages due to the increased length of the lots, more vegetation was used to landscape the space. Many of these lots also feature the private docks.

The lots north of Inlet Avenue to the northern end of the district gradually change from long narrow lots to short narrow lots. The lots from Inlet Avenue to the intersection of Chatham Avenue and Sixth Avenue are a part of the original subdivision of the area. The lots north of the intersection of Chatham Avenue and Sixth Avenue were filled in in the early 1920s by the Tybee Improvement Company. As the lots become shorter, less vegetation is used between the cottages and the river; however, the lot lines continue to be demarcated with palmetto trees and other coastal plants. Many of the lots feature the private docks.

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The nonhistoric development consists of condominiums, smaller single-family homes, and altered resort cottages. The largest of these are the condominiums, and even though they are larger in scale than the surrounding historic cottages, they "fit" into the developmental pattern since they are typically located near the center of the lots. The landscaped lot lines also serve to screen the view of the nonhistoric buildings from the historic cottages. The smaller single-family homes are similar in scale to the historic cottages and also "fit" into the developmental pattern since they are typically located near the center of the lots.

Even though modern residences have been built within the district, the integrity of the coastal landscape has remained intact. The 1885 subdivision plan of the district area has remained intact; very few of the lots have been subdivided (the majority of the subdivided lots are located between Inlet Avenue and Alley 2). Chatham Avenue has maintained its historic landscaping of palmetto trees lining the avenue, and the three alleys have maintained their sandy roadbeds. Where modern buildings are present, they share the historic setback of the historic cottages and are visually screened from view by palmetto trees and other coastal vegetation along the lot lines.

National Register Criteria

The Tybee Island Back River Historic District is eligible under National Register Criterion A for its association to the American coastal resort movement and residential development. The district is also eligible under National Register Criterion C for its excellent examples of coastal architecture in their historic coastal landscape design.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

n/a

Period of significance (justification)

The period of significance for the Tybee Island Back River Historic District begins in 1885 with the subdivision of the area along the Tybee River Inlet which formed the physical framework for the development of the district including its unique landscape characteristics. The period of significance ends in 1948, the year Walker Cottage, built c.1900, was added as an ell addition to the historic Varnedoe Cottage. This was the last improvement made to a coastal cottage.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

The 65 contributing resources encompass 44 historic buildings, which include cottages, garages, and auxiliary buildings; one historic site consisting of the overall coastal landscape design; and 20

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historic structures, which include 19 historic docks and a Coastal and Geodetic Survey Tower. The 24 nonhistoric resources include modern residential development and significantly altered cottages.

Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

The development of Tybee as a beach resort in the 1870s represents a late manifestation of the American coastal resort movement. The movement finds its roots in the English coastal resorts of Scarborough and Briton, in which English physicians expounded the virtues of the curative powers of sea water and sea air as a 18th century panacea. By the 19th century, this idea was transplanted to America and gave rise to the coastal resorts along the Atlantic coast. Many Georgians as well as people throughout the south traveled up north to resorts in Long Branch, N.Y., Cape May, New Jersey, and Nantucket, Massachusetts. These resorts had been in operation for many years and had set the standard for resorts by offering such amenities as transportation networks, hotels, service oriented businesses, and amusement establishments. Tybee was modeled after these resorts and was even referred to in advertisements as "The Long Branch of the South." Like the northern resorts, many private cottages were built on land surrounding the resorts on lots made available by the developing companies. The Tybee Island Back River Historic District is one of the summer resort settlements that sprung up as a result of the development of Tybee as a regional beach resort.

The Tybee Improvement Company began developing the north end and ocean side of the island in the early 1870s. An 1873 map outlining proposed plans for Tybee's subdivision into building lots shows no subdivision of the inlet side of the island. Whether or not initial plans were made by the Tybee Improvement Company to develop the inlet side, or South End of the island prior to 1885 is unknown.

In 1885, Captain D.G. Purse, the man principally responsible for the construction of the rail line to Tybee, purchased a controlling interest in the island. In an 1886 pamphlet entitled "A History of Tybee Island, Ga., and a sketch of the Savannah and Tybee Railroad", B.H. Richardson writes a brief history of the island in which an in-depth account of the railroad and Mr. Purse's planned development of the island is outlined. (It undoubtedly was meant to be an advertisement, seeing that the railroad was still under construction.) In the pamphlet, Purse's intentions for the development of the Back River area is clear. Richardson refers to the South End as being "destined to be one of the most desirable portions of the Island" and goes on to state that it "is already mapped out into building lots, and will be dotted with innumerable cottages." Other plans included the construction of a second large hotel in the vicinity of Inlet Ave. in which, according to Richardson, "a number of handsome cottages will be erected at this point in vicinity of the hotel, and there will be facilities provided for those who prefer river bathing to buffeting with the rigorous surf."

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Section 8--Statement of Significance

In 1887 Purse, together with a group of other capitalists, formed a joint stock company that was later incorporated under the name of the Tybee Beach Company. A civil engineer was hired to survey and subdivide the remaining parts of the island and the lots were put up for sale. The opening of the railroad in 1887 did much to encourage lot sales. This can readily be seen in the 1890 plan of Tybee prepared by Percy Sugden, which shows the disbursement of lots in the district from the Point to Alley No. 3 as they are found today. The map reveals the effect the railroad had on development in the district in that all of these lots had already been purchased by the time of the map's first printing.

The first building built in the district was constructed for the members of the Chatham Artillery for use as a clubhouse. An 1888 article in the Savannah Morning News announced the club's purchase of property for the construction of a clubhouse and target practice area on Tybee's South End. Sugden's map shows that a lot was bought and a structure was built on the corner of Inlet Ave. and Chatham Ave. The building is today one of the oldest extant houses on the island.

Since mostly all of the lots in the district were laid out and purchased by 1890, it is likely that many had been built upon by the turn of the century. However, since the Chatham Artillery Clubhouse is the only known house in the district to predate 1900, it is probable that most of the early cottages were lost in the devastating hurricanes of 1893 and 1898. This would explain why most of the older cottages in the district date from shortly after 1900 to 1915.

The most intact grouping of cottages that portrays the most unadulterated view of the architectural and landscape characteristics of the district can be found between Inlet Avenue and The Point. Most of these cottages are two story, square, and have hipped roofs with recessed, wrap-around porches. The main living quarters are located on the second floor with kitchen and dining rooms as well as other service related rooms situated on the ground floor. Some of the cottages still retain their separate servant buildings which were situated between the main cottage and the road.

Samuel L. Varnedoe, whose family has retained a cottage in this section of the district since 1909, recalled in his Memoirs of Tybee Island: 1909-1988 what the area from Inlet Avenue to The Point looked like when he first arrived. He refers to this assemblage of cottages as "Colony Row." Varnedoe recalled that "all of the row of cottages were built facing the ocean or inlet" and that "these (the cottages) must have been built by the same architect or contractor, because they were all built square shaped with the same type roof and a servants house on the back of each cottage." He maintains that a small house was situated in the back of every cottage to house a barrel of oil for lighting devices and that chicken yards were also common. Varnedoe also describes a boardwalk that runs the length of the bluff in front of the cottages from Inlet Station to The Point, as was the practice in many turn of the century river and beach resort developments. The boardwalk is no

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well as the identity of the early owners of most of the cottages as outlined by Mr. Varnedoe in his memoirs.

Not all of the cottages in the district were built as single-family retreats. Although some cottages were undoubtedly leased, the Collins-Ciucevich/Grevemburg Cottage was originally built as a boarding house c.1900. Located on the corner of Alley No.2 and Chatham Avenue, the building was probably one of the first built in this part of the district. It was a two story, hip-roofed house with a two level, three sided, recessed, wrap-around porch. It had a central hallway flanked by three rooms on each side. The original gable front kitchen was connected to the rear of the house by a breezeway. The house was owned by R.L. Bynum and operated as The Riverside Hotel as late as 1916. It was sold to J.T. Collins in the 1920s and has since been used as a private summer cottage. The main house was destroyed in 1996 but the outbuildings remain. Another cottage that was built as a boarding house is located at 1511 Chatham Avenue, a few lots beyond Alley No. 3. It was built in 1928 and was operated as the Riverside Lodge as late as the 1960s. It is a two-story raised cottage with multiple gables built into the roof over each window. It has a one story wrap-around porch that extends around three sides.

During the 1920s, developers made plans to fill in the marsh land east of Chatham Avenue and north of Alley No. 3 to Horse Pen Creek. The subdivision was to be called Venetian Terrace. A very small portion of this development is located within the district. The cottages built in this area of the district reflect the increased residential role that Tybee began to play in the 1930s and 1940s. Remaining lots in the Venetian Terrace part of the district were sold and built on beginning in 1970.

Most of the new construction within the district has been concentrated between Inlet Avenue and Alley No. 2. The construction consists of condominiums and single-family homes; however, much of the historic pattern of the district has remained intact. The Tybee Island Back River District has not had the same developmental pressures as the other historic areas along the oceanfront.

During the past year, the City of Tybee Island has lost some significant community landmark buildings and has had an increase in modern residential development in its historic areas. With the loss of these buildings and increase in construction of condominiums, the city has become more aware of the importance of preservation on the island.

9. Major Bibliographic References

- Interviews:

- 1) Mary Ciucevich 9/92 by Preparer
 Josephine Grevemburg
- 2) John E. Ciucevich Jr. 3/96 by Preparer

- Historic Maps and Plats:

- 1) Plan of Tybee Island, c.1873 by John R. Trebeau
- 2) Plan of a Part of Tybee, c.1890 by Percy Sugden
- 3) Lot map for the Tybee Hotel and Improvement Company, c.1930s

- Newspapers:

- 1) Savannah Morning News - Several articles dating from 1874 through the 1960s that are located on microfiche at the Georgia Historical Society and the Main Branch of the Chatham County Public Library, the vertical files at the Georgia Historical Society, and scrapbooks at the Tybee Branch of the Chatham County Public Library.

- Memoirs:

- 1) Memoirs of Tybee Island: 1909-1988 by Sam L. Varnedoe

- Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps:

- 1) Tybee Island, Map #164, Savannah, Ga. Vol 2, c.1916
- 2) Savannah Beach, Tybee Island, Map #405, Savannah, Ga. Vol 4 c.1954

- Other:

- 1) Chatham County Metropolitan Planning Commission. 1992-1993 Chatham County Historic Resource Survey. Savannah, Ga. (Conducted by Beth Reiter, Preservation Planner)
- 2) Estill, J.H. " Tales of Tybee " Savannah Morning News 12 Feb. 1905
- 3) Godley, Margaret. Historic Tybee Island. Savannah, Ga. Savannah Beach Chamber of Commerce, 1958.
- 4) Miller, Cynthia. Tybee Island, Ga: Changing Images and Land Uses, 1733-1895. c.1990 (Loose graduate level geography paper located at the Tybee Library having little biographical information)

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Section 9--Major Bibliographic References

- 5) Richardson, B.H. (pamphlet) " A History of Tybee Island, Georgia, and a Sketch of the Savannah and Tybee Railroad." Savannah Times Publishing Company, c.1886
- 6) Savannah College of Art and Design. Tybee Creek Beach Neighborhood. Historic Preservation Department. Savannah, Ga. c.1992
- 7) Synder, R.N. Savannah, Georgia: The Progressive City. c.1912

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): CH-T-97 to CH-T-116 (Chatham Co.)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Approximately 30 acres

UTM References

A)	Zone 17	Easting 513760	Northing 3539880
B)	Zone 17	Easting 514240	Northing 3538900
C)	Zone 17	Easting 513950	Northing 3538720
D)	Zone 17	Easting 513640	Northing 3539860

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for the Tybee Island Back River Historic District is indicated by a heavy black line on the attached USGS topographical map and the National Register Map.

Boundary Justification

The Tybee Island Back River Historic District encompasses the contiguous historic cottages in their historic coastal landscape bounded on the north by the intersection of 14th Street and Chatham Avenue, on the west by the furthest dock projecting out into the Tybee River inlet, on the south by the mouth of the Tybee River inlet, and on the west by Chatham Avenue. The area outside of the National Register boundary has lost its historic integrity due to the construction of multi-story condominiums, hotels, and restaurants.

11. Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Office

name/title Amy Pallante/National Register Specialist
organization Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
street & number 500 The Healey Building, 57 Forsyth Street
city or town Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303
telephone (404) 656-2840 **date** July 1999

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

name/title Robert A. Ciucevich/Preservation Consultant
organization Quatrefoil Consulting
street and number 1240 East Victory Drive, Apt. 4
city or town Savannah **state** Georgia **zip code** 31404
telephone (912) 233-8655

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

(HPD form version 02-24-97)

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Photographs

Name of Property: Tybee Island Back River Historic District
City or Vicinity: City of Tybee Island
County: Chatham
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: September 1997

Description of Photograph(s):

- 1 of 19 View of the Adams Cottage, 1902 Butler Avenue (foreground), and Lawrence Cottage, 1904 Butler Avenue (background); photographer facing northwest.
- 2 of 19 View of the east elevation of the Spague-Exley-MacGill Cottage, 1907 Butler Avenue; photographer facing northwest.
- 3 of 19 View of the west elevation of the Spague-Exley-MacGill Cottage and lookout tower; photographer facing east.
- 4 of 19 Detail view of a Works Projects Administration (WPA) emblem in the concrete sea wall; photographer facing east. (Note: the picture has been electronically scanned from a slide onto archival paper.)
- 5 of 19 Detail view of the top of the concrete sea wall; photographer facing north.
- 6 of 19 View of sea wall; photographer facing south (note: sections of the wooden sea wall are still visible behind the concrete wall).
- 7 of 19 View of the west elevation of the Smart-Reeve Cottage, 1903 Chatham Avenue; photographer facing east.
- 8 of 19 View of the east elevation of the Myers-Schley Cottage, 1901 Chatham Avenue; photographer facing northwest.
- 9 of 19 View of the east elevation of the Baker-Lamar Cottage with outbuilding, 1807 Chatham Avenue; photographer facing west.

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National Park Service

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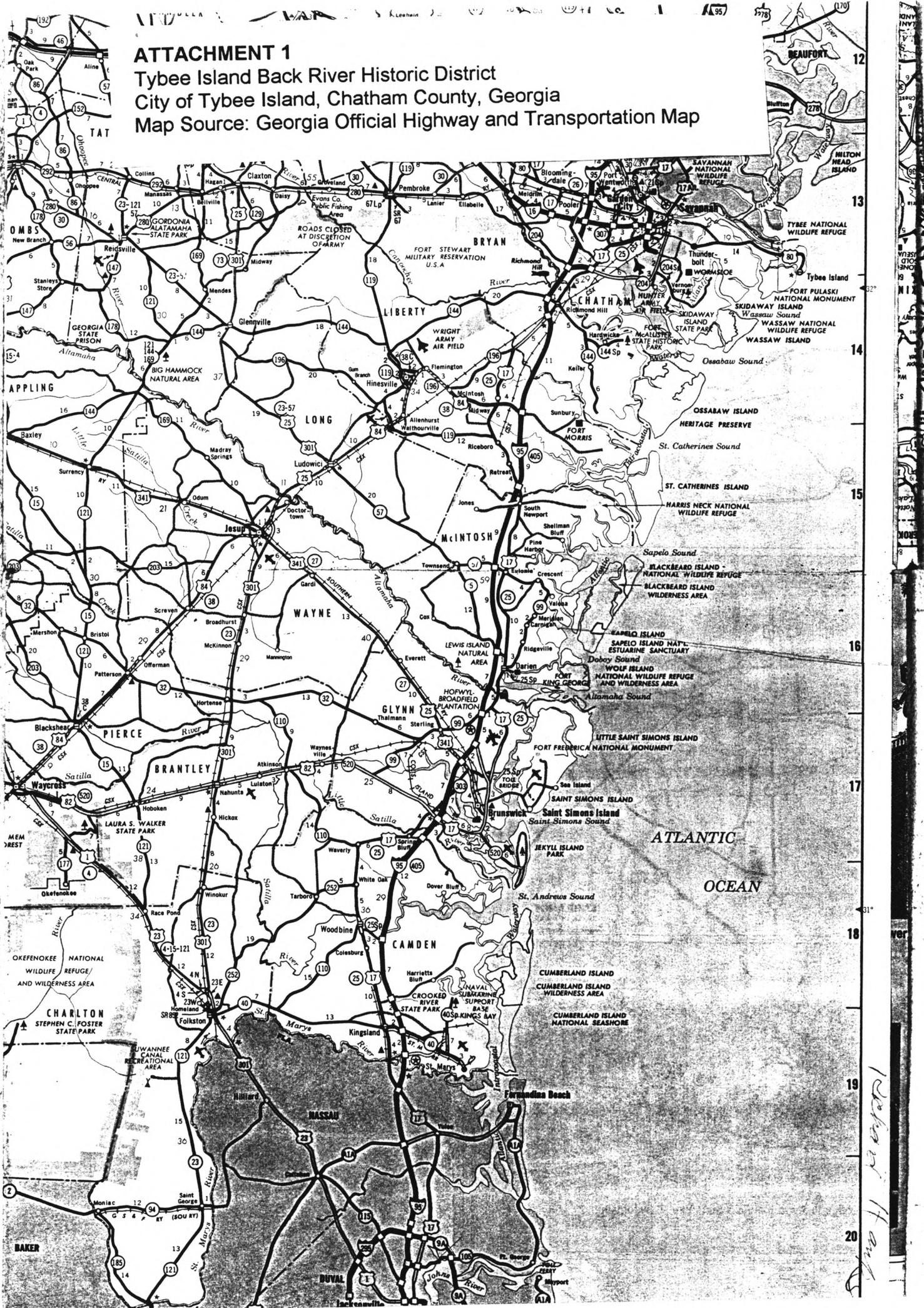
Photographs

- 10 of 19 View of the east elevation of the Walker-Lynah Cottage with outbuilding, 1801 Chatham Avenue; photographer facing west.
- 11 of 19 View of the west elevations of the Walker-Saussy Cottage, 1713 Chatham Avenue (foreground), and Walker-Lynah Cottage (background); photographer facing southeast.
- 12 of 19 View of the modern construction along the shoreline of the Tybee River inlet; photographer facing southeast.
- 13 of 19 View of the west elevation of the Varnedoe Cottage, 1711 Chatham Avenue; photographer facing east.
- 14 of 19 View of the south elevation of 1705 Chatham Avenue; photographer facing north.
- 15 of 19 View of the shoreline along the Tybee River inlet; photographer facing south.
- 16 of 19 View of the shoreline along the Tybee River inlet; photographer facing north.
- 17 of 19 Detail view of the replacement docks; photographer facing north.
- 18 of 19 View of the east elevation of the Riverside Lodge, 1511 Chatham Avenue; photographer facing southwest.
- 19 of 19 View of the east elevation of 1405 Chatham Street; photographer facing northwest.

ATTACHMENT 1

Tybee Island Back River Historic District
City of Tybee Island, Chatham County, Georgia

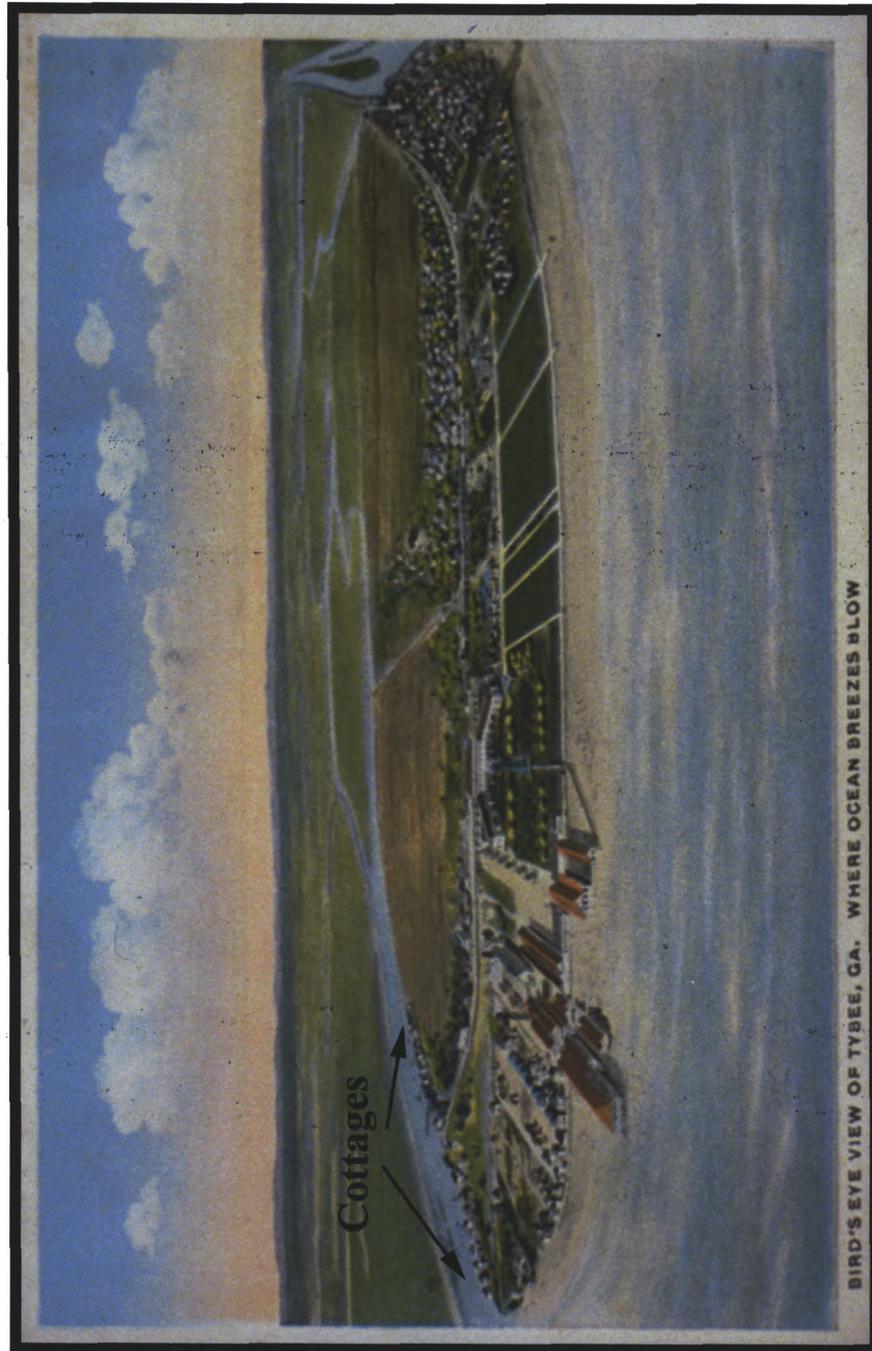
Map Source: Georgia Official Highway and Transportation Map



Reference from

ATTACHMENT 5

Tybee Island Back River Historic District
City of Tybee Island, Chatham County, Georgia
Illustration: 1917 Post Card of Tybee Island



ATTACHMENT 6
Tybee Island Back River Historic District
City of Tybee Island, Chatham County, Georgia
Chatham Artillery Clubhouse
Photo source: Sponsor

