

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

**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 Demorest Commercial Historic District  
other names/site number none

**2. Location**

street & number Central Avenue and Georgia Street  
city, town Demorest (n/a) vicinity of  
county Habersham code GA 137  
state Georgia code GA zip code 30535

(n/a) not for publication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	7	1
sites	0	0
structures	0	0
objects	0	0
total	7	1

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 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.

Elizabeth A. Lyon  
Signature of certifying official

9/11/89  
Date

Elizabeth A. Lyon  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer,  
Georgia Department of Natural Resources

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

entered in the National Register

Alan Byers 10/10/89

( ) 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/business/specialty store/department store  
SOCIAL/meeting hall  
RELIGION/religious structure

### Current Functions:

COMMERCE/specialty store/restaurant  
RELIGION/religious structure

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## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification:

Tudor Revival  
Italianate  
No Style

### Materials:

foundation	brick
walls	brick, concrete
roof	asphalt
other	wood

### Description of present and historic physical appearance:

The Demorest Commercial Historic District consists of the intact historic commercial buildings and a historic church that remain in the city of Demorest's downtown business district. Demorest is a small city in Habersham County in the northeastern part of the state. The downtown business district is located at the intersection of Georgia Street and Central Avenue (U.S. 441). The buildings in the historic district were constructed from 1890 to 1934 and consist of six commercial buildings and one church.

Four of the commercial buildings are attached, brick structures on the north side of Georgia Street. The corner building at the intersection of Georgia Street and Central Avenue (now Steffi's Store) is the oldest remaining commercial building. Known as the "Brick Block" or the Starkweather Building, it was constructed in 1890. It is a two-story, brick structure with first-floor original wood-framed storefront and upper rows of segmentally arched window openings. A front-gabled roof has been added to the building, but the original stepped, brick parapet wall with corbeled cornice is still visible. A one-story, brick addition was made onto the rear of the building in the early 1930s.

Next to the Brick Block is a narrow, one-story, rusticated cast-concrete block facade (now Tin Pan Alley) with entrance door and double-hung window. This facade and a roof were added to the alley between the Brick Block and the building next door about 1910 to create commercial space.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 7

---

The Brown Building (now the Calico Cafe) was constructed in the 1890s shortly after the Brick Block. In 1934 the building burned, leaving only a shell. The interior and front facade were immediately rebuilt. The facade is a simple brick front with one row of corbeled bricks serving as a cornice. The storefront is more recent, with recessed entrance and large display windows. A canvas awning with wooden post supports has also been added.

The two-story, brick Chrisler Building (now part of the Calico Cafe) was constructed in 1916 to replace a wooden structure. The front facade has a single storefront with large display windows and recessed entrance. The upper facade has double-hung windows with flat-arched lintels and a corbeled brick cornice. Here, a wood-framed and shingled canopy supported on wooden posts has been added over the storefront. A vacant lot now used for outdoor seating space for the cafe separates the Chrisler Building from a nonhistoric commercial building constructed in the 1940s.

Farther west along Georgia Street and across Hazel Street is the Demorest Methodist-Congregational Federated Church. Built in 1908, the church is constructed of rusticated cast-concrete blocks. The building has a cross plan with entrance tower at one corner and large gables at each end of the cross. Windows are twenty-over-one-pane, double-hung sash and are grouped together under a segmental arch in the gabled ends. The building is raised on a basement with smooth stuccoed surface and two-over-two windows. The interior retains a wooden, beamed ceiling structure supporting a ceiling covered with decorative pressed metal.

On the east side of Central Avenue are two freestanding commercial buildings within the district. The two-story, brick building (most recently Demorest Antique Mall) was built by the Demorest Lodge International Order of Odd Fellows #420 in 1901. The first floor has large display windows while the second floor has smaller one-over-one windows. The cornice is a simple line of corbeled bricks along the building's top.

The other freestanding commercial building is a one-story, wood-framed building with front-gabled roof and raised on a stone basement. The front facade consists of a traditional storefront with large windows and recessed entrance. The building was constructed in 1893 and is the only surviving example of wood-framed commercial construction in Demorest. The building has been recently rehabilitated.

Historically, commercial buildings also lined the south side of Georgia Street. These buildings and several of the early buildings on the north side of the street have been destroyed by fire or

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Section 7**

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demolition. The buildings now standing on the south side of Georgia Street are nonhistoric commercial. The one noncontributing building within the district is the nonhistoric commercial building between the Chrysler Building and the church.

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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  
Commerce

**Period of Significance:**

1889-1934

**Significant Dates:**

1889

**Significant Person(s):**

n/a

**Cultural Affiliation:**

n/a

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

Willett, H. W.

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8

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**Significance of property, justification of criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above:**

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

The Demorest Commercial Historic District is the historic central business district of the small, northeast Georgia city of Demorest. The district was laid out in 1889 with the founding of the city and developed into the 1930s. It is significant in the areas of architecture and commerce. These areas of significance support National Register eligibility under Criteria A and C.

In the area of architecture, the district is significant for its concentration of attached and freestanding commercial buildings and a church that together form the remainder of the city's historic downtown core. The attached, brick and cast-concrete-block commercial buildings are good examples of the late-19th- and early 20th-century small-town commercial building type. This type has a straightforwardly commercial facade consisting of a first-floor storefront space with entrance and display windows, upper windows representing office or storage space when two-story, and simple decorative details of corbeled brick. One of the two freestanding buildings was constructed as a lodge. The other is the only historic wood-framed commercial building that remains in Demorest. All others were replaced with brick buildings or lost by fire. The church is a good example of an early 20th-century, small-town church building with stylistic references to English country churches with its cruciform plan, square tower, steeply pitched roof, and hammer beam ceiling. The building's rusticated cast-concrete-block construction is a local variation. Both the bricks and the cast-concrete blocks of the downtown buildings were locally made by the Demorest Brick Works.

In the area of commerce, the district is significant as the historic downtown commercial center that has served the city of Demorest since the city's founding in 1889. The historic commercial buildings that remain are representative of the commercial activity that took place in this business district. The church's location immediately next to the city's commercial buildings is typical of small-town downtowns. It provided a convenient, central location at which the church's members could gather.

**National Register Criteria**

The Demorest Commercial Historic District is eligible under Criterion A for its associations with the founding and commercial development of the city's central business district. The district is eligible under

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8

---

Criterion C for its intact collection of historic commercial and religious buildings that together form downtown Demorest.

**Criteria Considerations (if applicable)**

The religious structure within the historic district is significant as an integral part of the downtown business district. It represents the presence of religious institutions in central business districts that is typical in many Georgia cities. The church is also significant architecturally as an example of a modest church building type with cruciform plan and square corner tower that has stylistic influences from the early 20th-century English Vernacular Revival style.

**Period of significance (justification, if applicable)**

The period of significance for the district is 1889 to 1934. Development in Demorest began in 1889 when the planned city was founded and laid out. The central business district continued to develop into the 1930s, with the last historic building being constructed in 1934.

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

In the late 1800s, the area of Habersham County which was to become Demorest was mostly woodland. There were a few scattered farms, a saw mill owned by Henry Rossignal and run by power from a low wooden dam (near the site of the present Demorest Lake dam), and a water-driven grist mill on Hazel Rapids. Neither of these are in existence today. Iron beds were located south of the Rossignal property, and iron had been manufactured there as early as 1828. Work in the iron beds was discontinued in the late 1800s.

One of the first buildings in the area was the old Carr homestead located on what is now Picnic Point on the far side of Demorest Lake. It was gone before Demorest became a town. The Rossignal house was located on the site of the present Piedmont College Administration Building, on Central Avenue just north of the downtown business district. After Demorest was founded, this house was used as a center for much of the town's activity, but it burned in 1920.

The Demorest Home, Mining, and Improvement Company (DHMI Company) began surveying the area in the summer of 1889. The DHMI Company consisted of a group of men from various parts of the country who had worked together to promote or "boom" several cities in the south and who decided to form a company for the purpose of building a town in a healthful climate with a good supply of natural resources that would offer excellent prospects to settlers to establish a great variety of



**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Section 8**

---

industries, to furnish employment for labor, to improve the natural advantages for business which this healthful region would afford, and to provide good schools, churches, and homes. Being strong advocates of prohibition, they would not allow any saloons or gambling houses in the town. They named their company and the town in honor of the internationally known prohibitionist, publisher, and philanthropist William Jennings Demorest of New York. The company was incorporated in the state of Alabama on February 21, 1889, with its main office to be in Edwardsville, Alabama.

John A. Reynolds, a civil engineer and surveyor who had been associated with some of these men in several "boom" towns, was familiar with northeast Georgia and suggested that the company consider building their town in this region. Having agreed with Mr. Reynolds' suggestion for the location of the new town, the company moved its main office to Georgia and registered the corporation at the Habersham County Courthouse in Clarkesville. The charter for the new town of Demorest was granted by the State of Georgia on November 13, 1889. The Company purchased 3,500 acres, and the plan for the town was drawn up. Reynolds surveyed the land and laid out streets 60 and 80 feet wide with 16-foot alleys behind all residential lots. Business lots were 25 x 100 feet and residential lots were 50 x 150 feet. The principal street, now U.S. 441, was named Central Avenue. The business district was located at the intersection of Central Avenue and Georgia Street.

City limits were set by drawing a circle one mile in diameter with the center of the circle located in the alley behind the Brick Block on Georgia Street. However, surrounding areas of the circle had lots listed and streets were named on the 1890 plat map (see historic plat map). Residences were scattered throughout the town. The Company employed many men to help in grading the streets, putting in sidewalks, etc., before the Company turned the maintenance of the streets and walks over to the City. The Company also was involved with supplying manpower for the construction of the Demorest Lake dam.

The company did not develop any other towns but concentrated all its efforts in the progress of Demorest. The Company offered free water power to any industry coming to Demorest. The Company also would offer sites for industries at a nominal price, including the investor's right to select any residential lot which had not already been sold, provided the industry would be completed within one year and at a value of not less than \$1,000.00 or other sum as determined by the Company. If the improvements to the industry or land exceeded the specified amount in the agreement, the Company would cancel all or part of the note taken out by the investor. In some cases, the

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8

---

Company would deed the land to a person who was going to develop a business.

The DHMI Company went into bankruptcy in 1893. Cause of the bankruptcy might be attributed to the Company's generosity when attracting new industry and residents.

Most of the early settlers came to Demorest from the Midwest and New England, primarily Massachusetts, though a few came from other areas of the country. Most settlers came for health reasons and to take advantage of the opportunities for opening their own businesses with the incentives offered by the DHMI Company. There were some families already in the area who lived on farms before the town was founded. When the DHMI Company went into bankruptcy in 1893, many people who had come here from other states left the town. But other families continued to come to Demorest and stay.

Advertising brochures and newspaper articles were widely distributed throughout the nation, extolling the area's healthy climate, natural resources, excellent sites for industry, and the fact that this was a planned temperance town. It was stated in early deeds from the company that if any intoxicating beverages were served or sold on the property, the property would revert back to the Company as if it had never been sold.

Mr. and Mrs. William Jennings Demorest, for whom the town was named, apparently did visit Demorest to take part in the celebration of "Demorest Day" which was held on August 20, 1894. It is not known if the men who established the Company and town consulted Mr. Demorest regarding the naming of the town and their company for him. The men who established the Company were staunch prohibitionists and perhaps chose his name solely because Demorest was similarly a staunch prohibitionist and philanthropist. Evidently Mr. Demorest did approve of the naming of the town because he gave a large bell to the Methodist Episcopal Church, North (outside the district) in 1891. The bell is now mounted on the lawn of the Demorest Methodist-Congregational Federated Church.

Some of the industries that were established and operated in Demorest were the Flor Saddle Tree Factory established in 1890 and operated until 1978; the Stambaugh Novelty Works which operated from 1890 until the mid 1950s; the Demorest Broom Works which was established in 1907 and continued to manufacture brooms until 1955; the Bathtub Works that manufactured self-heating portable bathtubs started in 1891, but, due to financial problems, ceased to operate around the turn of the century; the first commercial apple orchard in Habersham County that operated from 1902 until the 1950s.

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Section 8**

---

The Demorest Brick Works made the bricks for construction of downtown Demorest as well as for several residences in the town. Rusticated cast-concrete blocks were also locally made at the Brick Works. Demorest Manufacturing Company had a large lumberyard stacked with pine and hardwood lumber for use in construction in Demorest. These industries did not continue long after the DHMI Co. went into bankruptcy.

The railroad came through Demorest around 1880 on a route from Cornelia to Clayton. It reached Tallulah Falls in 1882. The rail line was sold in 1897 to Tallulah Falls Railroad which operated from 1897 to 1961, eventually running from Cornelia through Clayton and on to Franklin, North Carolina. The railroad depot still stands and is located behind Piedmont College. It is now used for commercial purposes.

On May 7, 1892, the Union Congregational Church was organized in Demorest. Most of the members of the new church had come from the northeastern and midwestern states, accounting for the unusual presence of the Congregational denomination in northeast Georgia. In 1947 the church joined with the Demorest Methodist Episcopal Church and became the Demorest Methodist-Congregational Federated Church. H. W. Willett was both architect and builder of the Congregational Church. The building's cornerstone was laid June 29, 1908.

The J. S. Green Collegiate Institute was formed in Demorest in 1897. It later became the J. S. Green College and in 1903 became Piedmont College, its current name. C. C. Spence, a Methodist minister and educator from Young Harris College in neighboring Towns County, founded the school. The college was originally sponsored by the Methodist Conference, but in 1901 the Conference decided they could not afford to support two institutions of higher learning so close together. The Congregational Church took over the school's support, and the affiliation continues today. All buildings on the campus are nonhistoric.

A number of small businesses, including a millinery shop, grocery stores, and drug stores were established along Central Avenue. Unfortunately, all of these early buildings have either burned or been demolished with the exception of the 1901 former Demorest Lodge on the southeast corner of Central Avenue and Georgia Street and the newly renovated 1893 wood-framed commercial building just below it. Other businesses in the downtown business district were located on both sides of Georgia Street between Hazel Street and Central Avenue. All of the historic structures on the south side of the street have been destroyed by fire and demolition.

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Section 8**

---

According to The Demorest Times, the DHMI Company completed the first commercial building (two stores with a common wall between them), known as "The Brick Block", in 1890 and moved its offices to the second floor. The Demorest Times, a city newspaper, was first printed on the lower floor from 1890 to 1892. John Henry Loudermilk moved his grocery store into the west side of the Brick Block at the same time. In 1891, the building was bought from the Company by Starkweather and Safford. Since this time, the building, called then the Starkweather Building, has had a variety of businesses, a temporary high school, and in its upper story, living quarters. Now, the Brick Block is occupied by a furniture and gift shop.

J. P. Brown then had a brick store building built adjacent to the Brick Block. He owned and ran a grocery here until he sold to (or rented to) his son-in-law, who also used it as a grocery store. It was later purchased again and continued as a grocery until it became a toy store in 1985. The interior of this building burned in 1934 and was immediately rebuilt.

The alley left between the Brick Block and the Brown Building was half-roofed and used first as a feed store, then a plumbing shop. Later, it was fully roofed and became a babies' garment shop, then, later still, a stained glass shop. Presently, it is operated as Tin Pan Alley, a gourmet coffee/kitchen gadget shop.

The Chrisler Building was erected next to the Brown Building, using a common wall. It was built in 1916 to replace a wooden structure which W. F. Chrisler had built as a general dry goods and jewelry store. The new brick building continued in the same use until it was purchased to be used as a shirt manufacturing plant. After several different uses, such as a wood working shop and a music shop, a restaurant called the Calico Cafe was established there.

The former Demorest Lodge was built in 1901 by the International Order of Odd Fellows #420. The organization was unable to pay their debts, however, and the building was taken over by the Cornelia Bank. Finally sold in 1941, the building was used for a coffee shop, gas station, flea market, and most recently an antique shop.

The only remaining wood-framed commercial building was constructed in 1893. It has had a variety of uses including a shoe shop, gift shop, and residence until recently rehabilitated for commercial use once again.

The DHMI Company was bankrupt in 1893, and their plans for developing the city of Demorest came to an end. After this the town continued to

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Section 8**

---

grow and develop as a small mountain community rather than along the lines of the Company's grand scheme for a planned temperance town. The downtown business district continued to develop and change throughout the early 20th century. Central Avenue (U.S. 441) became a major thoroughfare into the mountains of northeast Georgia. After the flurry of development from the 1890s into the early 20th century, the commercial center of the city was focused on the intersection of Central Avenue and Georgia Street. Commercial buildings stood on either side of Georgia Street and along Central Avenue. Due to both fire and demolition, these early commercial buildings have been lost or replaced, so that only seven historic downtown buildings remain that date from the 1890s to the 1930s. These buildings stand along the north side of Georgia Street and on the east side of Central Avenue and make up the historic district.

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## 9. Major Bibliographic References

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Hancock, Carol S., et. al. Historic District Information Form, November 14, 1988. On file at the Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia, with supplemental information.

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

- ( ) preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ( ) 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:

- (x) 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** 2 acres.

**UTM References**

A) Zone 17 Easting 266495 Northing 3827565

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary encompasses six historic commercial buildings and one historic church on Georgia Street and Central Avenue following current property lines.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary encompasses the intact historic buildings in the central business district of Demorest. Originally commercial buildings stood on both sides of Georgia Street and along Central Avenue. Only two groups of these historic commercial buildings remain - four attached commercial buildings and a church on the north side of Georgia Street and two freestanding commercial buildings on the east side of Central Avenue. The two freestanding buildings are a former lodge and the only remaining wood-framed commercial building in the city, and so are important buildings in the development of downtown Demorest. All of the buildings have a visual relationship with each other and clearly represent the historic central business district. Outside of the district boundaries are residential areas to the north, west, and south, and nonhistoric commercial development and the Piedmont College campus to the north and east.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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**name/title** Debra A. Curtis, Architectural Historian  
**organization** Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**street & number** 205 Butler Street, S.E., Suite 1462  
**city or town** Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30334  
**telephone** 404-656-2840 **date** September 8, 1989

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ PHOTOGRAPHS \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_ 1

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DEMOREST COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

Demorest, Habersham County, Georgia

Photographer: James R. Lockhart

Negative: Filed with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Date: July 1989

Description:

1 of 8: Attached commercial buildings on Georgia Street; photographer facing north.

2 of 8: Attached commercial buildings on Georgia Street and one nonhistoric building; photographer facing east.

3 of 8: Detail of attached commercial buildings on Georgia Street; photographer facing northwest.

4 of 8: Demorest Methodist-Congregational Federated Church on Georgia Street; photographer facing north.

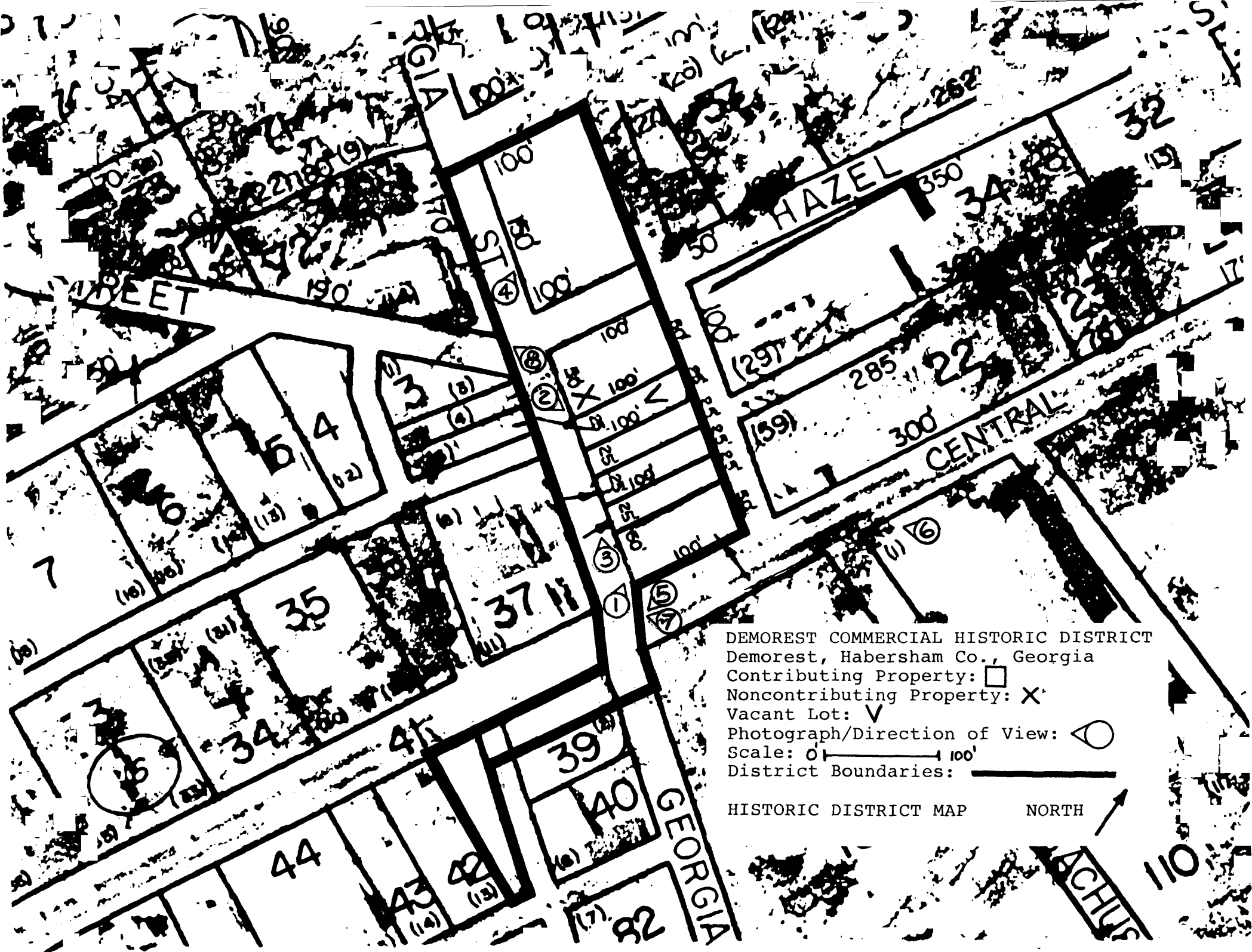
5 of 8: Freestanding commercial buildings on Central Avenue; photographer facing south.




6 of 8: Rear facades of attached commercial buildings on Georgia Street; photographer facing west.


7 of 8: Nonhistoric commercial buildings across Georgia Street from the district; photographer facing west.

8 of 8: Nonhistoric commercial building across Georgia Street from the district; photographer facing west.





DEMOREST COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT  
 Demorest, Habersham Co., Georgia  
 Contributing Property:   
 Noncontributing Property: X  
 Vacant Lot: V  
 Photograph/Direction of View:   
 Scale: 0  100'  
 District Boundaries: 

HISTORIC DISTRICT MAP      NORTH 

# DEMOREST, GEORGIA

## WATER

Large number of them, and all suitable and well equipped with water, gas and electricity.

## SCHEMES

Plans of the neighborhood are being prepared by the architect.

## COST OF LIVING

The cost of living is very low. The cost of building is very low.

## A PROFITABLE INVESTMENT

Land is sold by plan which will produce a profit in every lot.

## GUARANTEE

The person who owns the lot to build on will receive a guarantee of the best lot of the group they wish to buy. If purchase is not made when he wishes to build, the Company will exchange the lot with any other lot of the same price to him.

## MAKING SELECTIONS

Persons making their selections of lots from the plan will please note that the lots are in the neighborhood and will be sold before the plan is completed.

For facts, book, pamphlet, or other information, address

**THE DEMOREST WORK, BUILDING AND IMPROVEMENT CO.,**

DEMOREST HABERSHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA



DEMOREST COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT  
Demorest, Habersham Co., Georgia

Historic Plat of Demorest, 1890