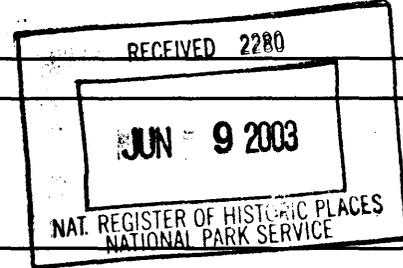


NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES -- REGISTRATION FORM

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 Hillcrest-Wildwood Circle Historic District
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Bounded by Wildwood Avenue, 13th and 17th Streets, and Dixon Drive
city, town Columbus (N/A) **vicinity of**
county Muscogee **code** GA 215
state Georgia **code** GA **zip code** 31906

(N/A) not for publication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:

Contributing

Noncontributing

buildings	94	13
sites	0	0
structures	0	0
objects	0	0
total	94	13

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 2

Name of previous listing: Hilton

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.

W. Ray Luce
Signature of certifying official

5-29-03
Date

W. Ray Luce
Historic Preservation Division Director
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

Donald J. Viviz 7/14/03

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other, explain:

see continuation sheet

fvr Keeper of the National Register Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

DOMESTIC: single dwelling
DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

Current Functions:

DOMESTIC: single dwelling
DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

LATE VICTORIAN: Queen Anne
LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Colonial Revival
LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Tudor Revival
LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival
LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Bungalow/Craftsman
MODERN MOVEMENT: Moderne
OTHER: Ranch

Materials:

foundation	BRICK CONCRETE
walls	BRICK WOOD: weatherboard STUCCO ASBESTOS SYNTHETICS: vinyl
roof	ASPHALT ASBESTOS TERRA COTTA
other	GRANITE BRICK

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7—Description

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

The Hillcrest-Wildwood Circle Historic District is located east of downtown Columbus, the county seat of Muscogee County, and is roughly bounded by Wildwood Avenue, 13th and 17th Streets, and Dixon Drive. The district is located in an area of predominately historic residential developments that was known as Wynnton before its incorporation into the Columbus city limits in 1925. The Hillcrest-Wildwood Circle Historic District developed in the early 20th century with the subdivision of the John F. Flournoy family estate, Hillcrest, and the Wildwood Circle subdivision developed by Flournoy's real estate company.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Hillcrest-Wildwood Circle Historic District is a residential neighborhood encompassing the Hillcrest and Wildwood Circle subdivisions. The Hillcrest portion of the district includes the John F. Flournoy family estate. Situated on the highest hill in the Wynnton area, Flournoy's Queen Anne-style and -type Hillcrest house was constructed in 1890 and designed by architect L.E. Thornton. The front and side yards of the house were later subdivided by his children, and several houses were built from 1906 to 1951. Wildwood Circle was subdivided in 1911 by Flournoy's real estate company, which actively sold and rented property in the area through the early 1950s. The early- to mid-20th-century house types represented in the district include Georgian cottage, Georgian house, bungalow, English cottage, English house, and ranch. Common house styles in the district include Colonial Revival, English Vernacular Revival, Mission/Spanish Revival, and Craftsman. Several historic apartment buildings and multi-family dwellings are also located within the district. Located at the southeast corner of the district is the remaining property associated with the antebellum Hilton house (listed in the National Register of Historic Places January 20, 1972). The house burned in 1983, but the foundation, a brick outbuilding, stone retaining wall, plantings, and original hardwoods remain. Other landscape features found throughout the district include mature trees, informal plantings, and wide sidewalk strips.

FULL DESCRIPTION

The following description was prepared by John Lupold, Rebecca K. Williams, Lynda Kannady, Carroll Calhoun, and Julie Martin of the Department of History, Columbus State University and edited by Gretchen Brock, National Register Coordinator, Historic Preservation Division. "Hillcrest-Wildwood Circle Historic District," draft National Register of Historic Places Form, July, 1999. On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia.

The Hillcrest-Wildwood Circle Historic District was essentially developed by John Francis Flournoy, a prominent Columbus real estate developer during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Flournoy's

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7—Description

1890 house, Hillcrest, and the Hillcrest section of the district developed as a sort of family compound where his children built their homes and later sold off their inherited pieces of the estate grounds. Flournoy's real estate company established Wildwood Circle as a subdivision in 1911, and the firm continued to play an active role in selling and renting property in this area through the early 1950s.

HILLCREST

The small, residential Hillcrest portion of this district comprises the original front and side grounds of John Francis Flournoy's 1890 house. Beginning in the 1880s, John F. Flournoy was the pioneer suburban developer of the East Highlands, Weracoba, and Wynnton areas, located east of the Columbus city limits at the time. He continued to be one of the most active developers of suburban Columbus neighborhoods through the 1920s. The Hillcrest house was one of the city's best and is now the only remaining example of high-style Queen Anne-Eastlake architecture (photograph 1).

Flournoy built his house on the highest hill in the Wynnton neighborhood. In Wynnton, elevation was always a prime consideration in selecting a house site. Wynnton Road, an important thoroughfare in this area, climbed the hill from Columbus to Wynn's Hill and then ran eastward along a ridge toward Macon. Another ridge ran northward from Wynnton Road just beyond Wynnton Academy; Wildwood Avenue¹ traverses the crest of this ridge with the land falling away to the west, toward Weracoba Creek. Flournoy selected his site on the top of this ridge, high above and two blocks east of Wildwood Park² that he created at Weracoba Creek. His home also fronted on the streetcar line he established and was near the middle of his proposed subdivisions.

The street pattern of this district mirrors the history of this tract of land. In the antebellum period what is now Wildwood Avenue connected Wynnton Road with homes farther to the north, such as the Wildwood house (not extant), which gave its name to the street.³ The thoroughfare was probably altered in the late 1880s when it became a streetcar route; the graceful curve in front of Hillcrest was designed to provide a gradual transition for the rail line. Flournoy situated his house about 325 feet from and facing Wildwood Avenue and 140 feet from Seventeenth Avenue, an east-west thoroughfare, also known as Shepherd or Middle Road. Hillcrest originally had a driveway from Wildwood and perhaps an access road from Seventeenth Street.

Beginning about 1906, Flournoy's children built four houses to the south of the Hillcrest house. A private, dirt road connected the fronts of those houses with Seventeenth Street, and three dirt driveways connected that dirt road with Wildwood Avenue. In the 1930s and 1940s John's children,

¹ Originally Wildwood Avenue was Wynnton Road and what is now Wynnton Road was called the Columbus Road or the Columbus to Macon Road. This turn in the original Wynnton Road explains why Wynnton Road turns into Macon Road at this point.

² Wildwood Park originally encompassed the grounds of Columbus High School.

³ This home, which is no longer standing, was the birthplace of Jane Augusta Evans (1835). She wrote the novel St. Elmo (1866), which ranked as one of the best selling American novels throughout the late 19th century.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7--Description

Josiah and Rebecca (Hamburger), subdivided the front or eastern part of the tract into fourteen lots. Seven lots faced Wildwood Avenue while seven fronted on Carter Avenue. The lots were filled with houses by early 1950s. At some point after 1950, the dirt street was paved and became Carter Avenue, except for the portion in front of Tranquilla, the southern-most house in this section of the district. This property retains its long front yard.

Because this small subdivision evolved from a family compound of houses, the size of the original lots is larger than those in adjacent neighborhoods. Hillcrest house sits on an acre of land and Tranquilla occupies a two-and-a-half-acre tract. The other Flournoy lots have a typical width, about 100 feet, but their depth of 250 feet or more is unusually deep for the neighborhood. The subdivision lots, developed after 1937, are more typical in scale, about 100 by 100 feet. Because of the slightly curved road, the lots adjacent to Seventeenth Street are not rectangular. The setbacks in the two areas of the district also vary. The older homes are generally about 35 feet from the road, while the newer homes are set back 25 feet or less.

The contributing buildings for this section of the district are the Hillcrest house, second-generation Flournoy houses, outbuildings, and concentration of 1940-1951 houses.

The most prominent resource is the Hillcrest house. Built in 1890, Flournoy's house is an excellent example of Victorian-era architecture within the city and the only monumental high-style Queen Anne house remaining in Columbus. According to family tradition, Flournoy's second wife, Mary Reynolds Flournoy, purchased the land and paid for the house, so she dictated its style. She wanted something different from her Greek Revival family home in Alabama.⁴

Architect L. E. Thornton designed the house, which incorporates most of the features associated with the Queen Anne-Eastlake style. A steeply pitched roof with many different gables accentuates the asymmetry of the house. "Overlapping shingles, applied wooden moldings and lacy decorative trim are all part of the elaborate design that mixes textures and patterns in a fanciful Victorian design," according to Marilyn Laufer's depiction of this house for The Architectural Styles of Our Town: Columbus, Georgia. Her description of the house follows:

The carved floral latticework on the single-story porch is the most dominant visual feature of this three story wooden frame house. This kind of decoration is often referred to as gingerbread or Eastlake detailing (after Charles Eastlake, the 19th century furniture designer). This intricate pattern is used not only on the wrap-around porch but also on the porte-cochere and again to form the balustrade or railing on the second story porch, which features a roof with flared eaves reminding one of a Japanese temple.

The front entrance captures one's attention because the designer/builder has stacked three very different features that draw the eye upward. At the first level is a pedimented pavilion that

⁴ Mount Ida in Talladega County, Alabama. The historical narrative section of this nomination gives more details about her purchase of the land.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7—Description

extends beyond the porch and is supported by four ornately carved posts. The detail in the pediment features fish-scale shingles (so called because they overlap like fish scales.) Above that is a second-story porch that appears to step back behind the first floor pavilion but is aligned with the wraparound porch below. This porch, as already mentioned, has a pagoda-style roof. Finally, above that is an enclosed roof tower that is stepped back once again, aligning it with the front of the house. This tower has paired stained glass windows in addition to a most elaborate arched window in its gable. As one's eye moves upward and discovers all of these details, it also notices the recession into space that was intended to break up the height and volume of the vertical surface of the structure.

Stained glass, a popular feature of the Victorian house, is used here in either a fruit or floral motif that appears in the transom-like feature that crowns every window at the first and second levels.

With all of its complicated architectural spaces, such as the second-story bay windows under a classically inspired pediment, and all of the detailed surface ornamentation, this house has a commanding presence, all the more because it sits atop the hill for which it was named.

According to family tradition, the contractor went into bankruptcy while he was building Hillcrest, because it was so elaborate. The house was owned by the family until 1995 and remains in excellent condition. Family members remember covering the stained-glass windows on the inside of the house when they went out of fashion, but the only exterior modification was to change the color. What was probably a three- to five-color exterior paint scheme became solid white in the 1920s because of changing tastes and to avoid the labor-intensive upkeep.

The lighting fixtures in the house were somewhat unique for 1890: they were designed to use electricity, because Flournoy's Columbus [street] Railroad Company supplied commercial electricity to the city. So, despite its suburban location, the house had access to electricity, probably by 1890 since the power line used for the trolleys was adjacent to the house. The modern house sitting on a hill with its electric lights twinkling must have impressed streetcar riders on their way to Wildwood Park.

Beginning about 1906, four of John Flournoy's children built houses beside or to the south of Hillcrest. One house burned in 1926, and the front facades of two others have been remodeled since 1950. In 1906, Mallory Reynolds Flournoy built the house now known as Tranquilla at 2393 Sixteenth Avenue (photograph 21, non-contributing). Built as a large Queen Anne cottage with a one-story wrap-around porch supported by Corinthian columns, it represented a typical high-style house for this neighborhood at that time. The home passed to Reynolds's wife, Mattie Hatcher Flournoy, after his early death in 1920. Her daughter, Mary Passailaigue, a Columbus artist, inherited the house in 1956. The next year, under the supervision of architect Murphey Pound, the building was remodeled. The front of the house lost its Victorian character as a brick façade covered the original weatherboarding, and a classical, central portico with coupled Corinthian columns replaced the old rambling porch.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7—Description

In 1912, Josiah and Jeannette Flournoy built their home immediately south of Hillcrest. The house, located at 1644 Carter Avenue, is an extended side-gable cottage with Colonial Revival details: modillion blocks, a fanlight, a central portico supported by coupled Doric columns, and a centered dormer with a large arch-headed window (photograph 2, left). Maud Flournoy Dixon and her husband Stephen built a house next to Josiah, but it burned in 1926, and the Dixon family moved into the Hillcrest house. Nothing was built on this lot again until 1942.

In the early 1920s, Rebecca Flournoy Hamburger built a house, located at 1620 Carter Avenue, next to Tranquilla (photograph 3, noncontributing). According to family tradition, this was her summer cottage, but the city directory shows various occupants from 1923 until 1947, when she became a permanent resident. In the 1960s, after the Woolfolk family sold their antebellum Wynnton Road house to AFLAC, they bought the Hamburger home. Edward Neal designed a remodeling of this house in the 1960s that included enlarging the structure and giving it a new front façade.

Because it was a family compound and perhaps because of the depth of the Flournoy lots, at least five historic outbuildings, which appear on the 1929 Sanborn map, have survived. An early, unpainted garage for Hillcrest house is accessed by a driveway that does not go through the porte-cochere. Another garage is located behind Josiah's former house (1644 Carter Avenue). A structure behind the Dixon's house survived the fire and was used by Mrs. Dixon to conduct piano lessons. Her camellia-filled back yard was the site of many recitals for nervous young Columbusites. The building is still standing and is now used mainly for storage.

Behind Rebecca's original summer cottage is an unpainted saddlebag house that was a servants' quarters and, according to Joe Flournoy, had been on the Chambers estate and was moved to this location. The same might have been true of a house behind Tranquilla that was first used by servants and then became Mary Passailaigue's art studio, perhaps as early as the 1930s, judging by its appearance. Presumably, she was using this building, perhaps twenty years, before she purchased the main house.

In 1942, Maud Flournoy Dixon sold the lot, where her house had stood before the fire, to Mr. and Mrs. Donald Broda. Gardiner Garrard, who was associated with Columbus-based architect James J. W. Biggers, designed the house. The house has some characteristics of the simpler ranch-style houses that neighbored it: a white exterior, a low hip roof with a large overhang and a very narrow fascia. The dominant feature on the front of the house is a projecting element, which contains the living room and is placed slightly to the right of the centerline of the house. The wide bay features three long, vertical windows—the middle being slightly wider; the chimney at the ridge is aligned with this bay.

After the death of John Flournoy, the children subdivided the front or western portion of the Hillcrest estate. In 1937, Josiah created ten lots in the block bounded by Seventeenth Street, Carter Avenue, Moss Drive,⁵ and Wildwood Avenue. Houses were erected here between 1942 and 1955. Rebecca

⁵ When Moss Avenue was being delineated, the surveyor asked Josiah Flournoy what the name of the street would be?

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7--Description

Flournoy Hamburger divided her land into six lots. One of these tracts contained her house (1620 Carter Avenue) and at 1626 Carter Avenue she built a brick cottage (1951) for her daughter Isabelle Hamburger Tuggle, who was ill with cancer. Four houses were built in 1950 on her lots between Carter and Wildwood Avenues (1617 and 1623 Carter Avenue and 1620 and 1624 Wildwood Avenue).

The remaining seven brick homes display similar characteristics of early ranch-style houses. For example, the houses at 1617 Carter Avenue and 1672 Wildwood Avenue are asymmetrical, brick, one-story houses with a long, low form and hipped roof (photographs 4 and 5). The houses also feature interior chimneys and attached garages.

This section of the district also retains much of its original landscape. The towering oak and walnut trees in the original front portion of the Hillcrest estate stood there when cows were still grazing in the area. The other major landscape elements are the ornamental trees and shrubs that owners have used to decorate their yards. The primary ornamental tree in this neighborhood is flowering dogwoods. Camellias and azaleas form an integral part of the neighborhood, especially during the spring. Old varieties of camellia japonica bushes, some of which are more than eight feet tall, bloom profusely from October until the weather turns warm in April or May. In the early spring the pale pink petals of several large Japanese magnolia trees decorate the neighborhood. Mrs. John Flournoy established a rose garden on the north side of Hillcrest house, but it did not survive.

WILDWOOD CIRCLE

The Wildwood Circle subdivision is an almost perfect microcosm of the history of the Wynnton area in general. By the late 1830s, two antebellum houses stood in the vicinity of what is now Stark Avenue, just east of Wildwood Avenue. By the late 1880s the streetcar line ran along Wildwood Avenue, the western edge of the future neighborhood. In 1911, John Flournoy's real estate company platted the area as a subdivision. Like other neighborhoods in the area, it did not start to develop until after World War I and took time to fill the entire tract.

Even though the Wildwood Circle subdivision only consisted of seven square blocks, over four decades passed before all of the lots were filled. In terms of house types and architectural styles, the district perfectly reflects the building trends throughout the Wynnton area. Almost from its inception, the area included upscale apartment buildings, and the creation of Fort Benning and the impact of World War II accelerated that trend. The final step in developing Wildwood Circle came with Flournoy Realty erecting apartments near the junction of Dixon Avenue and Wynnton Road; the company then actively recruited Fort Benning officers to occupy them. Thus, the history and appearance of this subdivision resembles most of its neighbors in the Wynnton area of Columbus.

Whereupon, Flournoy asked the surveyor his name; he replied Moss and the street become Moss Drive.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7—Description

The name Wildwood Circle was probably an attempt to link the area to a romantic streetcar ride around the Belt Line circle to Wildwood Park. The original street layout, as designed in 1911, had nothing to do with circles or even curvilinear streets, and most of the intersections were perpendicular. Some of the street names honored past residents of the area—Chambers (now Fifteenth) Street for James Chambers and Garrard (now Thirteenth) Street for the former owners of the Hilton estate. Baldwin (now Sixteenth) Street was named for George Baldwin of Savannah, a business associate in Flournoy's power and real estate companies.⁶

The company's original 1911 plan for Wildwood Circle appeared to project a neighborhood of small Craftsman-style bungalows very similar to Flournoy's earlier subdivisions. The original plan delineated lots fifty feet in width, the same width as his earlier two subdivisions, even though the Wildwood Circle lots were deeper. When the Wildwood Circle lots began selling after 1917, the local economy was booming, and the buyers built more up-scale houses than in Flournoy's Wynnton Place subdivision.

Even after the lots began to sell, the development did not proceed in an even manner. A burst of house building occurred in the 1920s (48% of the remaining historic fabric), slowed in the 1930s (only 9%), and boomed again in the 1940s (26%) and 1950s (16%).⁷ Even though the entire area was platted in 1911, drainage problems presumably slowed the development of the eastern portion of the subdivision. It was re-platted in 1925 and was called the Wildwood Circle Addition in the Industrial Index but not on the plat. Given the two periods of growth the subdivision had two clearly delineated parts.

The portion of the Wildwood Circle subdivision consisting of Stark, Wildwood, and the west side of Hilton avenues was almost filled by 1929. In what was called Wildwood Circle Addition on the eastern side of Hilton Avenue, Dixon Drive, Harding Drive, and Fifteenth Street the majority of the houses were built in the 1940s and the early 1950s. So the two portions of the neighborhood differ in appearance, style, and scale.

The first area of the neighborhood to be occupied as a subdivision was the western side along what became Wildwood, Stark, and Hilton avenues. Wildwood Avenue, which, according to the deeds, ran north from Wynnton Road and through the suburban village of Wynnton was originally referred to as Wynnton Road. It probably became Wildwood after Wildwood Park was developed. In the antebellum period two houses existed in the area that became Wildwood Circle: the Chambers House (not extant) and the Bedell-Stark House. Both of these houses would originally have been accessed from Wildwood Avenue.

⁶ George Baldwin, whose activities are more fully described in the historical section of this nomination, was an associate of Stone & Webster of Boston, an engineering firm and holding company for electric power companies.

⁷ Only one house survives from the pre-1920 period.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7—Description

The oldest extant house on Stark Avenue (and in the subdivision) was built for William A. Bedell in 1838. Bedell's house was built as a modest Georgian cottage with Greek Revival detailing. Its first owner was a partner in the cotton brokerage firm of Grey, Bedell, and Hughes. The house passed through a succession of owners: Hugh Dawson owned it from 1861 until 1867 when John M. Stark bought it. Mary E. Stark acquired it in 1877. In 1884, the house was acquired by H. H. Epping, the father of John F. Flournoy's first wife, Rebecca Epping, who had died in 1873.⁸ Flournoy married his second wife Mary Welch Reynolds in September 1881, and she purchased the Bedell-Stark house, the Chambers house, and the surrounding land from Epping for \$7,500 in 1885. Then four years later, she sold the property to Muscogee Real Estate Company for \$22,500.⁹ Her family lived in the Bedell-Stark house while the Hillcrest house was being constructed. From 1889 until 1917, the property was owned by Muscogee Real Estate Company (later Flournoy Real Estate Company) and was part of the large tract of land assembled by the company as East Highlands. In 1911, when the company platted Wildwood Circle the front of the Bedell-Stark House was located on the western side of Stark Avenue and the rear of the house blocked passage on the projected street. Presumably at some point between 1911 and 1917, the house was moved to the east side of Stark Avenue and sold to J. Rhodes Browne in the latter year. Browne was definitely living in the house by 1921 and maybe earlier.¹⁰ He was among the first residents of Wildwood Circle and was an important asset in selling lots on that street. Browne was prominent in banking and a local insurance company; he served as mayor of Columbus (1908-11) and on the Muscogee County Board of Commissioners (during the 1920s). The Browne house lot measured 300 by 200 feet and occupied an eighth of a block until 1929, when the northern third was sold. Architect T. Firth Lockwood designed a complete remodeling of the one-story house that was executed in 1926 and 1927. Judging from the sketch of the house appearing on the 1911 plat, the house had a full width porch. The original porch was replaced by a central portico topped with iron cresting and supported by coupled Doric columns and matching pilasters. It sheltered the original door, which was surrounded by a transom and sidelights. All of the exterior walls have lapped weatherboarding siding except the front, which is clad with drop siding. The windows are topped with cornices that were probably added at the same time. So, today the house reflects its 1920s Colonial Revival-style remodeling rather than its original Greek Revival style (photograph 14).

Even though the restrictions for the Wildwood Circle suburb did not specify the purchase of more than one lot for the erection of a house, this appeared to be the practice of most buyers, who purchased either two (100 feet) or one-and-a-half lots (75 feet). So, the size of the lots and the houses, especially the earliest ones, made this an upper-middle class neighborhood that in terms of scale fell between the more modest developments such as along Chambers (or Fifteenth) Street and the nearby upper-class Peacock Woods subdivision. When the eastern portion of the subdivision was re-

⁸ She had two children with John Flournoy before she died: John Francis, Jr. (1870) and Rebecca Epping (1873).

⁹ The later transaction might have included more land than what she purchased from Epping.

¹⁰ The City Directory for 1921 lists him as living in Wildwood Circle. In 1916 & 1918, he is shown as being in Wynnton, so he might have been in the house by the second date

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7--Description

platted the lot sizes were changed from fifty to seventy-five feet to conform to what had become the practice in the earlier part of the development.

Architects designed at least a third of the houses in Wildwood Circle. John C. Martin, Jr., was the most prolific architect in the area with ten houses designed as part of the firm of Hickman and Martin, and seven he did alone before his early death in 1928. T. Firth Lockwood executed plans for at least five of the homes, and James J. W. Biggers, who began practicing in Columbus in 1930, served as the designer for five houses built on Dixon Drive and Harding Drive in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Almost two-thirds of the houses were executed in brick. Two-thirds of the wood-frame houses were built on Wildwood and Stark avenues, the first streets to be filled within the subdivision. Except for the 1950s and later apartment buildings (including one duplex), all of the structures on Wildwood and Stark avenues were constructed by 1930 with a median construction date of 1923 for both streets.

Even though Wildwood Avenue was adjacent to the trolley line, the Wildwood Circle subdivision was never a streetcar suburb. Its development occurred after the peak of the trolley, and the residents were affluent enough to own cars. Within Wildwood Circle, thirty-seven original garages are still standing, though many have been modified in various ways. Also eighteen original, two-track driveways still exist (photograph 13).

Stark Avenue also filled very rapidly, perhaps because of its proximity to Wildwood Avenue or because of the presence of J. Rhodes Browne's house. The street's Craftsman-style bungalows were much larger in scale than those in most Wynnton area subdivisions; two were a story-and-a-half. Three two-story houses also existed initially; only one survives: a Georgian House originally built for Gordon Flournoy, one of John's sons. Replaced by apartments in the 1960s, the Chambers House (1540 Stark Avenue) and Kirven House (1550 Stark Avenue) were large two-story houses that anchored the northeast corner of Stark Avenue.

Houses on the west side of Hilton Avenue, between Thirteenth and Sixteenth streets, were built at about the same time as Wildwood and Stark avenues (with 1928 as the median construction date). Ten of the thirteen surviving houses on that side of the street were built between 1922 and 1927. A majority of the houses have Colonial Revival detailing, perhaps because John Martin, Jr., served as architect for four of these houses.

The re-platting of the eastern portion of the subdivision in 1926 opened the east side of Hilton Avenue for development, and the first house appeared there in 1926. Its English Vernacular Revival style was repeated on four of the seven houses on the east side of the street. While most of the three blocks on the west side was built out in five years, the two blocks on the eastern side took twenty years (until 1950). The onset of the Depression probably affected the pace of real estate activity.

The Wildwood Circle subdivision was home to some of Columbus' most prominent residents during the 1920s and 1930s. Typical residents who lived on Wildwood, Stark, and Hilton avenues included a physician, dentists, owners of retail and wholesale stores, presidents and other company officers for Bell telephone, Columbus Power Company, Columbus Brick and Tile, the W. C. Bradley

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7—Description

Company, Nehi, Miller-Taylor Shoes, National Biscuit, National Showcase, Barlow-Gordy Contracting, and at least one jeweler.

WILDWOOD CIRCLE ADDITION

The lots on the eastern side of Hilton Avenue did not begin to sell until after 1925, when the lots were re-platted.¹¹ Perhaps the problem involved inadequate drainage. Originally Preston and Cooper avenues were to be the north-south avenues at the easternmost portion of the property. Apparently a branch or creek shown on the 1911 plat as running along the back lot lines between Preston and Cooper avenues carried enough water to cause the streets to be redesigned.¹² Dixon and Harding drives were created; the main feature of Dixon Drive was a large D-shaped median or park in the middle of the street.¹³ This green space holds the large culvert that contains the original branch. When the area was re-platted the Preston and Cooper names were not used. The new streets—Dixon and Harding drives—were named for family and a business associate. The Dixon name came from the family of John Flournoy's daughter, Maud Flournoy Dixon. Reynolds M. Harding was the head of the Columbus Power Company, which had evolved from Flournoy's Columbus Railroad Company.

The lot sizes in the Wildwood Circle addition tended to be seventy-five feet in width, rather than the hundred feet on Stark and Wildwood avenues. Lots in the Wildwood Circle addition sold very slowly. The first house constructed was the 1926 Spanish Colonial Revival-style stucco house built for W. F. Jenkins, a physician, at 1636 Dixon Street (photograph 27). The next year, the Flournoy Realty Company built four houses designed by architect John Martin, two on Harding Drive (2536 and 2522 Harding Drive) and two on Dixon Drive (1520 and 1533 Dixon Drive). Judging by the Industrial Index the building of speculative houses by the company did not continue. By 1927, the southern textile economy had turned downward and business activity in Columbus decreased.

Development also probably slowed by the late 1920s because so much competition existed for real estate in the Wynnton area of Columbus. The next house, a duplex, did not appear on Harding Drive until 1940. It took another eleven years, until 1951, to construct the five remaining structures on that street. On Dixon Drive, two houses were built in 1929 and then a decade lapsed before the next one was completed. Then, seven buildings (including two apartment buildings) were constructed in 1941 and 1942 and another seven between 1947 and 1953. A final single-family house was built in 1974. Four houses (three Colonial Revival-style and a Tudor Revival-style) were built on Fifteenth Street in the late 1940s and are shown on the Sanborn Map in 1951.

¹¹ See the 1911 and 1925 plats.

¹² Becky Williams and Lynda Kannady's interview with Joe Flournoy, January 2000.

¹³ A resident whose family had lived at 1561 Dixon Drive since 1938 said the D in the street stood for John Dixon, a Flournoy family member who had developed the property. Joe Flournoy indicated that his cousin John Dixon had nothing to do with that development and that no attempt had been made to form a D. The median was built to cover the culvert holding the creek.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7--Description

Landscaping throughout the Wildwood Circle subdivision and the later addition is similar to the informal, picturesque landscaping in the Hillcrest portion of the historic district and Wynnton area of Columbus in general. The district is characterized by sidewalks with strip plantings, a hardwood canopy, and a variety of ornamental shrubs and trees including camellias, azaleas, dogwoods, and Japanese magnolias (photographs 23, 29, and 31).

ARCHITECTURAL TYPES AND STYLES

Common house types in the historic district include side-gable cottage, English cottage, bungalow, Georgian house, Georgian cottage, and ranch. Common house styles in the district include English Vernacular Revival, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, Mission/Spanish Revival, and Moderne.

A majority of the Craftsman-style bungalows in Wildwood Circle portion of the district are located in the original subdivision, not in the addition, and most of them are concentrated on Stark Avenue. The architectural firm of Hickman and Martin designed the brick house at 1303 (originally 1403) Stark Avenue and builder Parker A. Allen constructed it by 1922 (photograph 11). Large battered, brick-and-stucco columns (a feature found on other Craftsman-style bungalows in the neighborhood) support a large clipped-gable porch roof. The house also features knee braces, exposed rafters, and corbelled brickwork.

Another 1922 Craftsman bungalow at 1310 Stark Avenue was designed by Hickman and Martin and built by W. C. Lunsford. The dominant feature of this house is the single front-gable porch with stuccoed, battered pillars. Other examples of large Craftsman bungalows within the district are three one-and-a-half-story, side-gabled bungalows with full-width integral porches. The bungalow at 1517 Hilton Avenue is dominated by a central, front-gable porch with a large rectangular vent and triangular knee braces. Massive, stuccoed pillars support the integral porch on the stuccoed house.

Integral porches are also the dominant feature of the two side-gabled Craftsman bungalows located at 1503 and 1524 Stark Avenue. The bungalow at 1503 Stark Avenue features knee braces, exposed rafters, and an integral porch supported by grouped piers on brick columns (photograph 16).

Several houses within the district that are primarily Craftsman in style have half-timbering in their gables. One example is 1520 Wildwood Avenue, which was designed by the architectural firm of Hickman and Martin and built by Parker A. Allen (photograph 7). The one-story, stuccoed bungalow features a large cross-gable front porch with knee braces, exposed rafters, battered piers, and half-timbering in the gables.

Located at 1519 Stark Avenue, the home of celebrated author and playwright Carson McCullers is an excellent example of a Craftsman bungalow in the district (photographs 18 and 19). The one-story, frame house retains its original Craftsman-style exterior details including exposed rafters, knee braces, Craftsman-style windows, and front-gable porch with stuccoed piers.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7--Description

The most prevalent examples of the Colonial Revival style within the district were designed by architect John C. Martin, Jr., either when he was working with Charles Hickman or by himself shortly before his early death in 1928. Martin favored symmetrical, tripartite houses with modillion blocks and other classical details featured on the central bay. The Martin-designed 1922 wood-frame Georgian cottage at 1411 Hilton Avenue features coupled Ionic columns supporting a pedimented front portico with a round, tracery window in the pediment (photograph 25). Another example of Martin's work is located at 1535 Hilton Avenue. The 1924 wood-frame house features a pedimented front portico with four Doric columns.

Several examples of two-story Colonial Revival-style houses exist within Wildwood Circle. The widow of former Columbus mayor Clifford Grimes lived in an asymmetrical, two-story, wood-frame, Colonial Revival-style Georgian house at 1511 Hilton Avenue. The 1918 three-bay house features a pedimented, single-bay portico on the left bay front and a pedimented door surround. Another example is the c.1920 Colonial Revival-style Georgian house located at 1502 Stark Avenue (photograph 17). The house was built by Flournoy Realty for John Flournoy's son Gordon. The house features a graceful arched hood over the central doorway under a second-story Palladian window. Two one-story pergolas originally flanked the house; the left one is now a room and the right one is a screened porch.

Two two-story, Colonial Revival-style brick houses were built on Wildwood Avenue in the early 1920s. Across the street, the same architectural firm working with West Point Iron Works built another Colonial Revival-style house at 1416 Wildwood Avenue (photograph 8, left). Originally the first floor was unpainted brick, an appropriate material since the original owner, C. W. Dixon, served as secretary-treasurer for the Columbus Brick & Tile Company. The second story and the balustrade of the single-story wings (a porch and a porte-cochere) were covered with stucco. The house has since been converted into four apartments and a second story added to each wing.

The Colonial Revival style continued to be utilized in the later Wildwood Circle addition. Several examples were designed by architect James J. W. Biggers and were generally symmetrical, side-gable cottages or Cape Cod cottages on Dixon Drive during the early 1940s. Minimal Colonial Revival-style details characterize the 1940-41 cottage at 1534 Dixon Avenue. The entrance features a pedimented hood over a fanlight. Other examples of the later cottages built in the 1940s in this portion of the district include one-story, brick, side-gable cottages with minimal Colonial Revival and English Vernacular Revival details (photograph 28).

Another prevalent architectural style within the district is the Tudor Revival or English Vernacular Revival style. Many examples were designed by noted Columbus architects including T. Firth Lockwood, Jr. who designed the house at 1318 Stark Avenue for Dr. O. C. Brannen. The house features a large, half-timbered, front gable, grouped windows, and two interior chimneys with flared tops. Another example is located at 1529 Stark Avenue and is an English Vernacular Revival-style house designed by Dave R. Dudley of Dudley Lumber Company. The brick-and-stone house has two steeply pitched gables, decorative stonework, and a chimney with two chimney pots. The house was

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7—Description

the childhood home of Margaret Miller Fort, who has become very important in local Columbus philanthropy.

The one example of a Mission/Spanish Revival-style house in the district is located at 1636 Dixon Drive and was designed by Charles Hickman, who designed several similar houses in the nearby National Register-listed Weracoba—St. Elmo Historic District (photograph 27). Built in 1926, the one-story, stucco house features a parapet gable over grouped windows, an arched entrance with quoins, and a two-story, square tower with a second-story balcony.

James J. W. Biggers designed the only Moderne-style house in the district, which is located at 2527 Harding Drive (photograph 30). Built in 1945, the one-story, brick, elongated side-gable cottage features a projecting half-circular front bay with a flat roof and glass blocks; a long, low side-gable roof, ribbon windows, and a front terrace.

The historic district has several examples of multi-family dwellings, which were built from the mid-1920s through the end of the historic period. The Wildwood Court garden-style apartments at the corner of Wildwood Avenue and Thirteenth Street were built in 1927 (photograph 10). The apartments were advertised in W. C. Woodall's Industrial Index before their construction as being financed by D. Lewenstein of Atlanta and built by the Williams Lumber Company at a cost of \$150,000. The Wildwood Court apartments are comprised of two, two-story, brick buildings arranged in a U-shape around a central court. Monumental, two-story Corinthian columns supporting a wide entablature delineate each block of the building.

By 1945, the city's most modern apartment complex was the new Hillcrest Apartments, just a couple of blocks up the street from Wildwood Court, which consisted of six buildings of four units each (photograph 20). Designed by James J. W. Biggers and constructed by Murphey Pound Construction Company for Mike Leary and Associates, the six two-story, brick, Colonial Revival-style buildings are seven bays wide with the two outer bays plain brick and the center three bays stuccoed with a central pediment supported by four pilasters. The buildings also feature broken pediments over the central doors and a low-hipped roof. The original platted lots were oversized in comparison with fifty-foot wide house lots. The Flournoys may have intended to place apartments in this area from the beginning of the subdivision. Originally, a row of thirteen historic garages occupied the space behind the units facing Wildwood Avenue. Newer apartments have now replaced these, and new units have been constructed behind the original units on Stark Avenue.

Managing apartments was an important function of the Flournoy Realty Company for more than seventy years. When Josiah (Joe) Flournoy, John's grandson, joined the firm before World War II, he was assigned to work at Fort Benning. His job consisted of meeting the incoming officers and signing them up to live in company's apartments. Flournoy Realty had trouble selling lots on Dixon Drive, but with the build-up at Fort Benning in 1940, the south end of Dixon Drive became a logical place for small apartments and duplexes. In 1941, the Queen's Terrace Apartment was built on Dixon Drive. The two-story brick building features two pedimented wings joined by a porch. Another apartment

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7—Description

building with decorative ironwork on integral porches was built across the street the next year at 1503 Dixon Drive.

Throughout the historic district many historic residential outbuildings such as garages and sheds remain intact. These outbuildings were not individually identified within the district but remain an integral part of the overall historic character of the neighborhood.

HILTON

In 1838, Dr. Lovick Pierce, a Methodist minister and later bishop, built a simple four-room house at the site. It faced northeast toward the present Fifteenth Street and was accessed by a drive coming from Macon Road approximately where Dixon Drive and Fifteenth Street now join. William Waters Garrard, a cotton merchant, bought the property in 1855, and, according to family tradition transformed the house into a villa he had admired while traveling in Italy during the early 1850s. Garrard reversed the orientation of the house so that the back became the front, and added a one room deep, two-story section to the new front of the house. To complete the remodeling the new portion was covered with stucco, scored, and painted pink to resemble ashlar, and all of the appropriate Italianate details were added to the house.

The Garrard family named the house Hilton and lived there until 1887 when W. W. Garrard's sons, W. W., Jr., and Lewis Ford, sold it to Muscogee Real Estate Company. Lewis Garrard was also a primary stockholder in Muscogee Real Estate Company. In 1887, when Muscogee (later Flournoy) Real Estate Company was assembling land for their large East Highlands tract, the firm purchased the Hilton estate (28 acres for \$24,000) from the Garrard family. Hilton was one of the premier houses in Wynnton. The company retained twenty-two acres, and in 1917, when they began selling lots in Wildwood Circle, they sold the Hilton house and six acres to Annie K. Small. Two years later she sold it to the Bickerstaff family where the ownership has remained until the present.

The name of the house became the name of the adjacent road and later the name of a subdivision, Hilton Heights, to the north of Wildwood Circle (outside of the district). Located at 2505 Wynnton Road, which is block seven of the Wildwood Circle plat, the Hilton estate was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on January 20, 1972. In 1983, a fire consumed the house. However, the foundation of the house, a brick outbuilding that was used as a kitchen and slave quarters, stone retaining wall, and historic plantings still remain intact.

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):

ARCHITECTURE
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
LITERATURE

Period of Significance:

1838 - 1952

Significant Dates:

1838—construction of the Hilton house and the Bedell-Stark-Browne House
1887—the Belt Line streetcar route circling the eastern suburbs of Columbus was built along Wildwood Avenue
1890—construction of John F. Flournoy's house Hillcrest
1911—creation of the Wildwood Circle subdivision
1925—Columbus city limits expanded to include the Wynnton area (including Hillcrest-Wildwood Circle)
1927-1944—Carson McCullers lived and wrote at 1519 Stark Avenue

Significant Person(s):

McCullers, Carson (1917-1967)

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

Allen, Parker A. – builder, Columbus, GA
Biggers, Sr., James J.W. – architect, Columbus, GA
Buck, C.W., and Son – builder, Columbus, GA
Butts Lumber Company – builder, Columbus, GA
Dudley, David R. – builder, Columbus, GA
Duncan, F. Roy – architect, Columbus, GA
Harris, W.B. – builder, Columbus, GA
Hickman, Charles – architect, Columbus, GA
Hickman and Martin – architects, Columbus, GA
Lockwood, Thomas Firth – architect, Columbus, GA
Lunsford, W.C. – builder, Columbus, GA
Martin, Jr., John C. – architect, Columbus, GA
Mothershed, A.J. – builder, Columbus, GA
Whitaker, W.B. – builder, Columbus, GA

Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)

Located east of downtown Columbus, the Hillcrest-Wildwood Circle Historic District is an excellent example of an early-to-mid-20th-century, residential neighborhood characterized by one-and two-story houses, mainly in the early 20th-century Revival styles and many architect-designed.

The Hillcrest-Wildwood Circle Historic District is significant in the area of architecture for its excellent collection of intact houses representing common mid-19th to mid-20th-century house types and styles found in Georgia as identified in Georgia's Living Places: Historic Houses in Their Landscaped Settings. The mid-to-late 19th-century houses in the district include the 1838 Bedell-Stark-Browne House, which was constructed in 1838 as a Greek Revival-style Georgian cottage and later remodeled in the Colonial Revival style in 1926-1927 by architect T. Firth Lockwood, and the 1890 Hillcrest house built for John F. Flournoy, which is an excellent example of high-style Queen Anne—Eastlake architectural style. The district is also significant in the area of architecture for its excellent collection of early-to-mid-20th-century house types and styles that were typically built in Columbus' early suburbs. Common house types include Georgian cottage, Georgian house, bungalow, English cottage, English house, and ranch. Common house styles in the district include Colonial Revival, English Vernacular Revival, Mission/Spanish Revival, and Craftsman. Several historic apartment buildings and multi-family dwellings are also located within the district. The earlier ones are good

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

local examples of the garden-type apartment building, while Hillcrest Apartments (1945) presages the mid-20th-century apartment complex. Many of the houses in the district were designed by Columbus' leading architects including examples by Charles Hickman, T. Firth Lockwood, John C. Martin, Jr., James J.W. Biggers, Sr., the firm of Hickman and Martin, and F. Roy Duncan.

The district is significant in the area of community planning and development as an excellent example of a residential neighborhood that first developed as a streetcar suburb and later as an automobile-oriented suburb in Columbus. In the 1880s, a streetcar line was constructed along Wildwood Avenue (the western boundary of the district) to serve the Wynnton area. Although platted in 1911, the sale of lots in Wildwood Circle along the streetcar line peaked from 1918 to 1925. Due to inadequate drainage, the eastern portion of the district was replatted in 1925 and developed slowly until a second peak in building occurred in the 1940s with the construction of multi-family dwellings for officers stationed at nearby Fort Benning. The district is also significant for John Frances Flournoy's estate and his development of the Wildwood Circle subdivision. Flournoy was a pioneer in developing middle- and upper-class neighborhoods in Columbus as a partner in the Muscogee Real Estate Company, later the Flournoy Real Estate Company. After purchasing the Columbus Railroad Company (streetcar line) in 1887, Flournoy's company proceeded to develop the Wildwood Circle neighborhood as well as nearby Wynnton Place, Park Place, St. Elmo Place, and Peacock Woods subdivisions. Flournoy's company greatly influenced residential development east of downtown Columbus.

The district is nationally significant in the area of literature for the childhood house of Carson McCullers (1917-1967), the renowned novelist and playwright, located at 1519 Stark Avenue. McCullers lived in the house from 1927 to 1934 and often returned to the house from the late 1930s through 1944 to recover from her frequent illnesses. Many of McCullers' most important works were conceived, written, or rewritten in the house including The Heart is a Lonely Hunter, Member of the Wedding, and Ballad of the Sad Cafe.

Born on February 19, 1917 as Lula Carson Smith, Carson McCullers moved to 1519 Stark Avenue with her family when she was ten years old. The migration of her family in Columbus was similar to many other families. McCullers' first home was in the downtown area at 423 Thirteenth Street, the house of her maternal grandmother, Mrs. Lula Carson Waters. Seeking to improve her daughter's education and her circumstances, Margarite Waters Smith rented a house at 2417 Wynnton Road so that McCullers could enter Wynnton School in 1925, the first year it became a public school. Mrs. Smith had earlier purchased a lot in the DeLaunay Survey that she sold for \$3,500 in 1927 at the same time she purchased the family home at 1519 Stark.¹⁴ The name of her husband, jeweler Lamar Smith, Sr., does not appear on any of these deeds.

Later in life McCullers sometimes complained of the meager circumstances of her childhood, but her brother Lamar, Jr. pointed out that they lived in an upper-middle class suburb. Her mother who

¹⁴ Deed Book 70, 534.

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

always expected her daughter to be famous was indulgent of the neighborhood children, and even though the Smith house was a fun place for children, Carson felt alienated from her more affluent peers. They formed clubs that excluded her or only included her because she could play the piano. A back-alley (the only one in Wildwood Circle) ran behind her house, and later in life she remembered hating to see those girls, who shunned her, walking or running together down her back alley.

McCullers left Columbus at age seventeen in 1934 to study writing in New York at Columbia and New York universities, but the house on Stark Avenue continued to be important to her as a place where she could write and recover her health. In 1935 in Columbus, Carson met Reeves McCullers, a U.S. Army Ranger stationed at nearby Fort Benning. She decided to marry Reeves McCullers on the spur of the moment, and they were wed in the living room of her family's home in 1937. Reeves and Carson had a tumultuous marriage resulting in numerous breakups, a divorce, and a remarriage followed by additional separations until Reeves' death in 1953. During one separation in 1940, Carson McCullers and moved to 7 Middagh Street in Brooklyn, New York City. The building at 7 Middagh Street was a popular rooming house for noted writers and artists of the day; tenants included W.H. Auden, Gypsy Rose Lee, and Richard Wright. During this time, McCullers would also periodically spend time at Yaddo Artists Colony in Saratoga Springs, New York.

Despite her alienation from Columbus and her increasingly bohemian life style, Stark Avenue remained a refuge for Carson. From the late 1930s until her father's death in 1944, she frequently returned home, especially to recover from her frequent illnesses. Many of Carson's most important works were conceived, written, or re-written in her childhood home. The importance of Columbus and her home on Stark Avenue is eloquently described in her unfinished autobiography: "I loved my home with its garden and the old familiar furniture...but on the whole Columbus gave me that same tranquility and calm that was so necessary to my work."¹⁵ In the fall of 1936, McCullers was bedridden and recovering from a stroke at the house on Stark Avenue when she began working on The Heart is a Lonely Hunter. Also during her stay in Columbus during 1936, her first short story "Wunderkind" was published in the December 1936 issue of Story magazine. In the fall of 1939 in Columbus, she began envisioning The Member of the Wedding. This work is perhaps her most autobiographical and many of the characters resemble neighbors from her childhood. Columbusites, however, were not fond of McCullers drawing upon her hometown as inspiration for her work, and she received criticism from "people in her hometown who saw negative reflections of themselves in the characters of the novel [Reflections in a Golden Eye]." ¹⁶

Throughout her life, McCullers suffered from many illnesses. While recovering from her a stroke in 1941, she wrote her most celebrated short story, "A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud.", at the house on Stark Avenue.¹⁷ After the death of her father in 1944, Carson's mother sold the house on Stark Avenue

¹⁵ Dews, p. 33.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

¹⁷ Mrs. Smith sold the home after the death of her husband in 1944, and she purchased a home for she and Carson in Nyack, N.Y. Various conversations with Thornton Jordan, retired literature professor at Columbus State University, who

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

and purchased a house in Nyack, New York. McCullers did not live full time at the house in Nyack, and throughout the mid-1940s, McCullers moved numerous times including a stay in Paris, France, in 1946, until a stroke in 1947 brought her back to the United States. In 1949, McCullers went to Columbus to visit stating "I must go home periodically to renew my sense of horror."¹⁸ She returned to France for a time with Reeves in 1952. McCullers spent the last decade of her short life confined to a wheelchair; her work declining due to her failing health. Carson died on September 29, 1967 in Nyack, New York. Thornton Jordan, a retired literature professor at Columbus State University and a Columbus native, purchased the house to preserve it as Carson's house.

National Register Criteria

The Hillcrest-Wildwood Circle Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under National Register Criterion A for as an excellent example of an antebellum estate that was subdivided into a single-family residential neighborhood in the early 20th century.

The district is eligible under Criterion B at the national level for the childhood home of Carson McCullers, where many of her most important and influential works were written. The house at 1519 Stark Avenue is associated with the most productive time of McCullers' life and is associated as the place where she wrote her most important, and most autobiographical, works including The Heart is a Lonely Hunter, Member of the Wedding, and Ballad of the Sad Cafe. From 1934 when she moved out of her house until 1944 when the house was sold, McCullers lived a bohemian life and never lived in another particular place for very long; yet she returned time and time again to Columbus to write and recover from health problems. McCullers lived in a house with her mother in Nyack, New York, from about 1953 to her death in 1967, however her productive career declined sharply due to her continuing health problems.

The district is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C for its excellent examples of mid-19th- and early 20th-century houses and apartment buildings representing common types and styles found in Georgia. Many of the houses were designed by prominent Columbus architects.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

N/A

now owns the McCullers house. Virginia Carr Spencer, The Lonely Hunter. A Biography of Carson McCullers (N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1975), 2-40, discusses her childhood in Columbus. Similar material can be found in Oliver Evans, The Ballard of Carson McCullers, A Biography (N.Y.: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1965) as well as the story about the Klan. The chronology appended to Carlos L. Dews, editor, Illumination and Night Glare, The Unfinished Autobiography of Carson McCullers (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999) life cites her travels in and out of Columbus.

¹⁸ Collected Stories of Carson McCullers, p. viii.

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Period of significance (justification)

The period of significance begins with the date of construction of the earliest extant houses, 1838, and ends with the end of the historic period, 1952.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

The contributing buildings within the district date from the district's period of significance and retain their historic integrity. The noncontributing buildings within the district were either built outside of the historic period or are historic properties that have lost their historic significance through alterations and/or additions. Throughout the district there are historic residential outbuildings such as garages and sheds. A few examples have been noted, but it is not possible to comprehensively inventory these outbuildings because their locations away from public rights-of-way at the rear of lots. Because they are small in scale and of secondary importance, they have not been designated as contributing or noncontributing, and they have not been included in the resource count (Section 3). However, they do contribute to the overall historic integrity and significance of the district.

Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

NOTE: The following historical narrative was prepared by John Lupold, Rebecca K. Williams, Lynda Kannady, Carroll Calhoun, and Julie Martin of the Department of History, Columbus State University. "Hillcrest-Wildwood Circle Historic District," draft National Register of Historic Places Form, July, 1999. On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia.

The most important historical developments in the Hillcrest and Wildwood Circle area, and in all of Wynnton area of Columbus from 1890 until 1937, revolve around John Francis Flournoy. His significance to the development of Columbus in the late 19th and early 20th centuries transcends the small area of this district. His streetcars allow the creation of the first suburbs in the area, and he created several of the most important subdivisions. Also, his political skills in the 1920s brought essential ingredients to the neighborhood: Columbus High School, Wynnton School as a public school, annexation to the city, and the building of the viaduct across the rail-yard. Such factors made the developments in the Wynnton area the city's most prestigious middle- and upper-class neighborhoods by the late 1920s.

Flournoy's roots ran deep in the Wynnton area of Columbus. He was the second son of John Manley and Mary Ann Gordon Flournoy, born on March 13, 1847 in his father's house just north of Wynnton Road between John Woolfolk's and John Banks's houses [all out of the district]. Flournoy's early schooling was at Wynnton Academy. He left the Wynnton area to continue his education at the University of Alabama. Flournoy joined the Confederate Army in 1864 as part of the Alabama Corps of Cadets and later transferred to Nelson's Rangers, a unit that included many Columbusites who later played prominent economic roles within the city.

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

After the war, Flournoy farmed in Russell County, Alabama, and later became a cotton factor in Columbus. His first wife, Rebecca Epping, was the daughter of a prominent Columbus businessman. Rebecca died in 1873, and Flournoy married his second wife, Mary Welch Reynolds, in 1881.¹⁹ By the mid-1880s, his income allowed him to invest in other business ventures such as the Columbus Southern Railroad, which was being built to break the Central of Georgia's monopoly on rail freight in and out of Columbus, but his most significant contributions were building street railroads and developing suburban real estate.

In 1887, John F. Flournoy and Louis F. Garrard bought the Columbus [street] Railroad Company and formed the Muscogee Real Estate Company. Garrard and Flournoy came from similar backgrounds. Both were born in the Wynnton area in 1847 and shared common experiences at Wynnton School, the University of Alabama, and in Nelson's Rangers during the Civil War.²⁰ Their shared corporate vision included three interrelated objectives: the building of a belt-line streetcar system that extended into the Wynnton area, the creation of a 45-acre suburban Wildwood Park [in the nearby National Register-listed Weracoba – St. Elmo Historic District], and the survey and sale of individual lots within a 250-acre tract, originally known as East Highlands.

Flournoy usually acted as the spokesman and president of these companies, while Garrard served as their counsel.²¹ The Muscogee Real Estate Company assembled the property in the Highlands development that stretched from Tenth Avenue to the west through the Weracoba and Wynnton areas to Wynnton Road. In the western part of East Highlands [outside of this district], some substantial, two-story houses were built nearer to town or to the streetcar line during the 1890s. The neighborhood developed slowly and took on a blue-collar or lower middle-class atmosphere with many railroad workers living there. The northern portion of East Highlands became a neighborhood of shotgun houses for African-Americans. Thus, the name East Highlands lacked prestige, and Flournoy dropped the name for the western part of his property and developed it as separate suburbs, one of which was Wildwood Circle.

Prior to the building of the Hillcrest House and the creation of the Wildwood Circle subdivision, this area contained three houses—the Bedell-Stark-Browne House [extant], the Chambers House [razed

¹⁹ Flournoy and Rebecca Epping had two children John Francis, Jr. and Rebecca (Hamburger). He and his second wife, Mary Welch Reynolds from Talledega County, Alabama, had seven children: Mallory Reynolds, Maud (Dixon), Josiah, Gordon, Mary Hannah, John Manley, and Walker Reynolds.

²⁰ Garrard married Annie Foster Leonard, Van Leonard's daughter in 1868, and eventually inherited Wildwood. Their wedding, held at Wildwood, was the last occasion that Jane Augusta Evans, the author of the novel, St. Elmo, visited Columbus. Garrard also briefly owned the St. Elmo house after the Civil War. The neighborhood north of Hillcrest and Wynnton Place was known as Garrard Woods.

²¹ Garrard had a distinguished career in law and politics, serving as speaker of the Georgia House (1882-83) and unsuccessfully seeking a U.S. Senate seat in 1894.

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

in 1965], and Hilton [burned circa 1990].²² The Wynnton Female Academy once stood on the lot where the Hillcrest House was later built.

The transformation of the area started with actions by the Flournoy and Garrard families. In 1885, Mary Flournoy, John's wife, purchased fourteen-and-a-half acres encompassing the old Chambers and Bedell-Stark-Browne homes from H. H. Epping, the father of her husband's first wife. She then sold that property to the Muscogee Real Estate Company in 1889.²³ In that year, she bought three acres from the trustees of the defunct Wynnton Female Academy. The school had functioned in that location earlier, but by the late 1880s, it had burned and the female students were attending Wynnton Academy on Wynnton Road [outside of the district]. The land she bought from the Female Academy became the site of Hillcrest.²⁴ In 1887 Lewis F. Garrard sold Wildwood, his family home, including twenty-eight acres, to the Muscogee Real Estate Company, in which he was a major officer. In 1890, Mary Flournoy had the Hillcrest House built on approximately ten acres of the land—the property within district that lies north of Seventeenth Street. By 1906 the next generation of Flournoys began building their houses within that ten acres to the south of the Hillcrest House and north of Sixteenth Street.

By 1908, Garrard and Flournoy's company began carving new subdivisions out of what had originally been called the western portion of East Highlands. These included the following suburbs and are dated according to when the Muscogee Real Estate Company created the initial plat for these neighborhoods.

1908 – Wynnton Place [outside of this district]

1910 – Park Place [part of the National Register-listed St. Elmo – Weracoba Historic District]

1910 – St. Elmo Place [part of National Register-listed St. Elmo – Weracoba Historic District]

1911 – Wildwood Circle

1922 – Peacock Woods [part of proposed Peacock Woods – Dimon Circle Historic District]

The sale of lots proceeded slowly prior to World War I. In 1917, the Muscogee Real Estate Company was reorganized as the Flournoy Real Estate Company, which later became Flournoy Realty. Perhaps that change energized the company and its sale of lots, since the first houses appeared in Wildwood Circle in 1918.

The Wildwood Circle subdivision was created in 1911. The subdivision was formed from the grounds of the Bedell-Stark-Browne House and the outer lands of the Wildwood estate and was divided into

²² All three of these houses are shown on the 1911 plat for Wildwood Circle.

²³ She purchased the Stark house, the Chambers house, and the surrounding land from Epping for She paid \$7,500 for the land in 1885 and sold it for \$22,500. Deed Books I, 509 & BB, 544.

²⁴ She paid \$1525 for the three acres. The trustees included her husband, John Francis Flournoy, and other prominent Columbus leaders—William G. Woolfolk, L. F. Garrard, G. J. Peacock, E. E. Yonge, W. A. Little, and George H. Hill.

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

156 suburban lots. But the company only sold lots in the western half of the subdivision, along the east side of Wildwood, both sides of Stark, and the west side of Hilton avenues. No lots were sold in the eastern half of the subdivision until after it was resurveyed in 1925.

The sale of lots and house construction boomed from 1918 until 1925 in the western portion of the suburb along Wildwood, Stark, and the west side of Hilton avenues. Thirty-one of the fifty-two (60%) extant historic structures in this portion of the suburb were built in the span of seven years. Then, another twenty-five years passed while the remaining twenty-one historic houses were built in the western portion of the district.

Even though the eastern portion of the subdivision [the eastern side of Hilton Avenue, Harding Drive, Dixon Drive, and Fifteenth Street] was platted in 1911, none of those lots were sold during the boom period of the early 1920s. As previously noted, the problem with the eastern side of the suburb probably involved inadequate drainage. Apparently a branch or creek shown on the 1911 plat as running along the back lot lines between the proposed Preston and Cooper Avenues carried enough water to create a moisture problem. This situation was remedied by building a culvert and redesigning the streets. Preston and Cooper avenues were never built as shown on the 1911 plat, but later appeared as road to the east of Wildwood Circle [outside of this district]. Instead, Dixon and Harding drives were created as shown on the 1925 plat. The main feature of Dixon was a large D-shaped median or park in the middle of the street, which contains the large culvert that confines the original branch.²⁵ This eastern portion of the subdivision became known as the Wildwood Circle Addition.

No houses appeared in the addition (or eastern side of the subdivision) until 1926 and only one in that year. The Flournoy Real Estate Company built four speculative houses in the addition in 1927, but by that year the Columbus economy, which was dependent on textile production, had turned downward and the sale of lots slowed in both the original and the additional sections of Wildwood Circle. Only two other structures were built in the entire old section of Wildwood Circle in 1927. One was Wildwood Court, the most upscale apartment in the Wynnton area, which Flournoy probably convinced Atlanta investor D. Lewenstein to build.

During the early 1920s, John Flournoy also played a broader role within the growth of Columbus. As a community leader he worked to sell the city in a broader sense. Camp Benning [outside of this district], which was organized very late during World War I, was located about a mile to the southeast of Hillcrest. The Flournoy family became very active in trying to secure a permanent installation to the south of the city. John's son, Mallory Reynolds Flournoy, acting through the Chamber of Commerce, is recognized as one of the leaders²⁶ in this effort, which resulted in the creation of Fort Benning in 1922.

²⁵ Becky Williams and Lynda Kannady's interview with Joe Flournoy, January 2000.

²⁶ A historic marker in front of Tranquilla recognizes this contribution to this effort even though he died in 1920. He had played a key role in selecting a more suitable site for a post to the south of town and in convincing the army to move to that site. Congress then reversed that action and ordered the facility to be closed. The future of the post remained in

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

John Flournoy also worked to represent the specific needs of his developing neighborhoods. By the end of World War I, Wildwood Park [in the nearby Weracoba – St. Elmo Historic District], the recreation facility he had created in the late 1880s, had become a liability rather than an asset. By 1919 its usage had declined. The worldwide influenza pandemic in that year led to strictures about avoiding crowds. Also in the early 1920s, the health department condemned the shallow lake as a public swimming facility, perhaps because of influenza as well as the presence of sewage in the water. Flournoy was able to sell the park to the city and a new city high school was built in a portion of the park. The presence of the school greatly enhanced the value of real estate in Flournoy's suburbs in this area.²⁷

Flournoy, however, could not reverse the economic downturn that struck the textile South in 1927. The sale of lots and building of houses lagged in both sections of Wildwood Circle after 1927. Only one structure was built in 1928 and another in 1929. Between 1930 and 1934, only six houses were constructed in the entire subdivision. Four of them were on Stark and Wildwood avenues, completing the historic fabric in the original section of the subdivision. Only two of them were in the additional section, on the east side of Hilton Avenue. No houses were built anywhere in Wildwood Circle from 1935 through 1938.

The Great Depression had an impact on Wildwood Circle and the income of the Flournoy's. Family members²⁸ still remember the cash flow problems during that era; they owned land, but derived little income from it. In 1936, the family patriarch, John Francis Flournoy, died. John's children inherited and divided the unoccupied portion of the ten acres of land around the Hillcrest House. Josiah created the small Hillcrest subdivision of ten lots on his land between Carter Avenue, Moss Drive,

doubt until 1922.

²⁷ The Flournoy Realty Company was trying to sell the park by 1924. In the same year, the Columbus School Board decided to move the downtown high school from Eleventh Street to a more suburban location. This issue created an intense competition between rival real estate interests over the new site. Flournoy initially offered to sell 45 acres for \$100,000, while the Rose Hill developers proffered free land in that neighborhood. After many debates, the school board decided (six to five) to reject the offer of free land in Rose Hill, opting instead to buy 36 acres of Wildwood Park for \$65,000. Again by a close vote (three to two), the city commissioners supported the decision of the school board. The opponents of the Wildwood site started a petition drive and forced a referendum on this question in December of 1924. The Wildwood faction won a close and hotly contested election, probably the city's first where voters received free automobile rides to the courthouse. This decision, as its Rose Hill opponents realized, enhanced the real estate value and prestige of the Weracoba – Wynnton area. Flournoy also served as a trustee for Wynnton Academy, which in the early 1920s, spent \$70,000 expanding and modernizing that facility. When the city annexed Wynnton in 1925, an action certainly lobbied for by Flournoy, Wynnton School became a public facility and a magnet for young middle-class families seeking a new home site. These actions, some implemented because of Flournoy's specific actions, made the Wynnton area the place to live. In terms of prestige and land values, it surpassed Rose Hill and other potential suburbs. The city purchased the 36 acres of land in three separate tracts in December 19, 1924. Deed Book 70, pages 298 & 303; Deed Book 71, page 64.

²⁸ Interview with Josiah Flournoy, the grandson of John F. Flournoy.

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Wildwood Avenue, and Seventeenth Street, but these lots did not begin to sell until 1942; houses were built on all of these lots by 1955. Rebecca Flournoy Hamburger created four lots on the south side of Moss Drive (Hillcrest Annex), and houses were built there in 1950. Mattie Flournoy, who owned Tranquilla, did not subdivide her property and kept her front acreage intact.

World War II—its outbreak in Europe (1939), America's involvement (1942), and the post-war boom (after 1945)—had a very positive impact on the real estate interests of the Flournoys. The sale of the fourteen lots created by Josiah and Rebecca Flournoy illustrates their changing economic fortunes. The same was true of the Wildwood Circle Addition (or the eastern portion of that subdivision). Fifteen structures were built in this section between 1939 and 1942. Two of these were small apartment houses and two were duplexes; several of the tenants were U.S. Army officers. Fort Benning was an important factor in the local economy at that point. In 1942, a duplex was built at 1530-32 Stark on one of the last vacant lots in the older section of Wildwood Circle.

Riding the post-war boom, the last nineteen historic structures appeared in Wildwood Circle between 1945 and 1951. Thirteen of these were houses: all (four) of the homes along the north side of Fifteenth Street between Hilton Avenue and Dixon Drive, four on the west side of Hilton Avenue, and five on Dixon Drive. Apartment buildings and duplexes continued to be built. In 1945, the upscale, Colonial Revival-style Hillcrest Apartments were constructed along Wildwood Avenue, Sixteenth Street, and Stark Avenue and were probably the city's most modern apartments when they were built. During the same year, a smaller apartment complex occupied the southeastern lot at corner of Stark and Thirteenth Street. Probably because Thirteenth Street had become a thoroughfare, this piece of property, which has its longest axis along Thirteenth, had not sold. A smaller apartment house filled an original lot at 1510 Wildwood; its minimalist Colonial Revival-style blended with the houses being built along Dixon Drive. Two other duplexes built in 1951 at 1510-1512 Dixon Drive and 2528-2530 Harding completed the historic fabric of the neighborhood.

Apartments continued to appear in Wildwood Circle after 1960. Two of the older houses on Stark Avenue were razed and replaced by multi-unit housing. The 1965 Hobbs' Apartments at 1550 Stark Avenue were built at the site of the original two-story Kirven house (non-extant, circa 1920). Immediately to the south, in the about the same year, a smaller complex at 1540 Stark Avenue occupied the site of the Chambers House (non-extant, 1830s). The larger Colonial Revival home at 1416 Stark was converted into an apartment. The rear portion of that lot was subdivided, and three, two-story townhouses apartments at were built there (2312, 2313, & 2314 Fifteenth Street).

Across the street, the two-story Marabar Apartments at 2305 Fifteenth Street and the two-story, nonhistoric townhouses at 1319 Hilton Avenue completed the building of apartments in Wildwood Circle. Two more non-historic, single-family houses were built in the 1960s and 1970s: 1539 Hilton Avenue and 1570 Dixon Drive.

9. Major Bibliographic References

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form **Continuation Sheet**

Section 9—Major Bibliographic References

Previous documentation on file (NPS): () 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:
- (X) previously listed in the National Register Hilton, Muscogee County, Georgia
- () 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):

ME-C-2043
ME-C-2045 – ME-C-2050
ME-C-2213 – ME-C-2214
ME-C-2216 – ME-C-2218
ME-C-2220 – ME-C-2230
ME-C-2252
ME-C-2255 – ME-C-2265
ME-C-2272 – ME-C-2275
ME-C-2299 – ME-C-2314
ME-C-2335 – ME-C-2361

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 68 acres.

UTM References

Point	Zone	Easting	Northing
A)	16	691719	3595091
B)	16	691971	3595094
C)	16	692467	3594883
D)	16	692454	3594621
E)	16	692282	3594439
F)	16	691911	3594439

Verbal Boundary Description

The National Register boundary of the Hillcrest-Wildwood Circle Historic District is indicated on the attached tax map drawn with a heavy black line, drawn to scale.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the intact and historical property associated with the development of the neighborhood.

11. Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Office

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city or town Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303
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- () **property owner**
- () **regional preservation planner**
- () **consultant**
- (X) **other:** faculty, students, and staff of the Department of History, Columbus State University

Property Owner or Nomination Sponsor Name and Address

name (property owner or contact person) Brian Turner, President
organization (if applicable) Wildwood Circle Homeowners Association
mailing address 1417 Stark Avenue
city or town Columbus **state** Georgia **zip code** 31906
e-mail N/A

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Name of Property: Hillcrest-Wildwood Circle Historic District
City or Vicinity: Columbus
County: Muscogee
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: December 2000

Description of Photograph(s):

Number of Photographs: 34

- 1 of 34: Hillcrest House, 1652 Carter Avenue; photographer facing north.
- 2 of 34: View of 1634 and 1644 Carter Avenue; photographer facing northeast.
- 3 of 34: 1620 Carter Avenue (noncontributing); photographer facing northeast.
- 4 of 34: 1617 Carter Avenue; photographer facing northwest.
- 5 of 34: 1672 Wildwood Avenue; photographer facing north.
- 6 of 34: View of Wildwood Avenue; photographer facing north.
- 7 of 34: 1520 Wildwood Avenue; photographer facing northeast.
- 8 of 34: View of 1408 and 1416 Wildwood Avenue; photographer facing north.
- 9 of 34: 1316 Wildwood Avenue; photographer facing northeast.
- 10 of 34: 1306 Wildwood Avenue; photographer facing northeast.
- 11 of 34: 1303 Stark Avenue; photographer facing north.
- 12 of 34: 1300 Stark Avenue; photographer facing north.
- 13 of 34: View of 1319 and 1401 Stark Avenue; photographer facing southwest.
- 14 of 34: 1410 Stark Avenue; photographer facing east.
- 15 of 34: 1416 Stark Avenue; photographer facing northeast.

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

- 16 of 34: 1503 Stark Avenue; photographer facing north.
- 17 of 34: 1502 Stark Avenue; photographer facing northeast.
- 18 of 34: Carson McCullers' childhood house, 1519 Stark Avenue; photographer facing northwest.
- 19 of 34: Georgia State Historical Marker in front of Carson McCullers house, 1519 Stark Avenue; photographer facing north.
- 20 of 34: Hillcrest Apartments, corner of 16th Street and Stark Avenue; photographer facing northwest.
- 21 of 34: 2393 16th Street (noncontributing); photographer facing northeast.
- 22 of 34: 1561 Hilton Avenue; photographer facing southwest.
- 23 of 34: View of Hilton Avenue; photographer facing northwest.
- 24 of 34: 1417 Hilton Avenue; photographer facing northwest.
- 25 of 34: 1411 Hilton Avenue; photographer facing west.
- 26 of 34: 1305 Hilton Avenue; photographer facing northwest.
- 27 of 34: 1636 Dixon Drive; photographer facing north.
- 28 of 34: View of Dixon Drive; photographer facing southwest.
- 29 of 34: View of Dixon Drive; photographer facing northeast.
- 30 of 34: View of Harding Drive; photographer facing northwest.
- 31 of 34: View of 1510 and 1514 Hilton Avenue; photographer facing northeast.
- 32 of 34: View of 15th Street; photographer facing west.
- 33 of 34: 1500 Dixon Drive; photographer facing northeast.
- 34 of 34: Site of former Hilton House; photographer facing north.