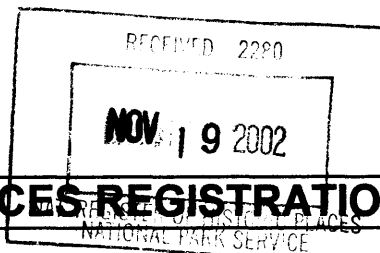


1600



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 Allen Mercantile Company

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 102 Main Street

city, town Climax () vicinity of

county Decatur code GA 087

state Georgia code GA zip code 31734

() not for publication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	1	0
sites	0	0
structures	0	0
objects	0	0
total	1	0

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of previous listing: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Robert C. Luce
Signature of certifying official

11.14.02
Date

for 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

Edson H. Beall 12/31/02

() determined eligible for the National Register

() determined not eligible for the National Register

() removed from the National Register

() other, explain:

() see continuation sheet

for

Keeper of the National Register

Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

COMMERCE/TRADE: department store

Current Functions:

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

Materials:

foundation	BRICK
walls	BRICK
roof	ASPHALT
other	N/A

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

Located in extreme southwest Georgia, the Allen Mercantile Building is located on Main Street in the small, rural town of Climax in Decatur County, Georgia. The building is located on the west side of Main Street, which runs north-south through the town, and is adjacent to the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad. The Allen Mercantile Company building is one of only two historic Main Street commercial buildings remaining in Climax.

The Allen Mercantile Company building is an excellent example of a one-story, brick, commercial structure built in the early 1900s in southwest Georgia (photograph 1). The rectangular, free-standing building was constructed in 1903 and features a single storefront with simple Italianate-style details. The brick load-bearing walls are common bond. The front (east) façade features a parapet with brick corbeling and simple brick detailing. The storefront features two large, bay display windows flanking the recessed front entrance. The display windows retain their original transoms above, and there is simple brick detailing beneath the display windows. The storefront also retains its original cast-iron columns flanking the central entrance. The columns feature a simple embossed design. The recessed front entrance retains its original single-light and wood-paneled double doors and tongue-and-groove ceiling (photograph 2).

The south side of the building has two side entrances; both are recessed with a corbelled brick segmental arch over single-light and wood-paneled double doors (photograph 3 and 5-7). The entrance on the left side of the south wall features a transom above the doors. The north wall of the building also features two side entrances similar to the entrances on the north side—a single door and a double door (photograph 4). The north exterior wall also features two parallel grooves that run the entire length of the building, which were used as space to insert wooden boards used for nailing

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7--Description

advertisements to. Also on the north wall, a now-faded painted rectangle represents the remains of an outdoor movie screen used in the 1930s and 1940s. Traveling companies projected "moving picture" shows on the exterior wall for an outdoor audience.

The interior of the building is comprised of one large room (photographs 8 and 9). The original floor-to-ceiling wood storage shelves line the long north wall and a portion of the south wall (photograph 10). The interior retains its historic finishes and hardware including plaster walls and ladder rails along the shelves. The original wood tongue-and-groove ceiling and floors remain. Little modification has been made to the building as evidenced by the c.1905 historic photograph (attachment 1). In the 1970s, a small restroom was built in the back of the store and the shed-roof front porch was removed.

There is no landscaping on the lot. The lot immediately north of the property was historically vacant and is currently vacant. During the historic period, wagons parked in the vacant lot. Across the street, the area formerly occupied by several historic commercial buildings has been converted into a town park with a modern community pavilion and jogging track.

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
COMMERCE

Period of Significance:

1903-1952

Significant Dates:

1903—construction of the building

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

N/A

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Statement of significance (areas of significance)

Located on Main Street in the small, southwest town of Climax in Decatur County, Georgia, the Allen Mercantile Company is significant as one of only two historic Main Street commercial buildings remaining in Climax. The free-standing brick building is located on a prominent lot on Main Street adjacent to the railroad and served as a general store for the community from its construction in 1903 through the mid-1960s.

The Allen Mercantile Company building is significant in the area of architecture as an excellent example of a historic free-standing, one-story, brick commercial building built in the small, rural towns of South Georgia in the early 1900s. The building is essentially unchanged on the exterior and interior. The building features simple Italianate-style brick corbeling and details. The storefront retains its bay display windows, recessed entrance, transoms, cast-iron columns, and original double doors. The interior of the building retains its historic finishes and materials including plaster walls, tongue-and-groove ceiling and floor, hardware, and store shelves.

The building is significant in the area of commerce as a general merchandise store which is representative of local commercial activity during the early 1900s through the mid-1960s in Climax. Ira Albert Allen (1869-1924) and Walter Samuel Allen (1873-1931) operated the Allen Mercantile Company in this building from around 1903 until 1916. The Allen Mercantile Company offered a broad array of dry goods, groceries, hardware, and farm supplies for the residents of Climax and the surrounding rural area. The store also housed the Climax post office from 1905 until the 1930s. Although the Allen brothers went bankrupt in 1916, the building continued to house the post office until the 1930s. After being sold by the bank, the store continued to operate under the ownership of John P. Herring. In the 1930s, the store once again was operated by the Allen family. Inez Allen, daughter of Ira, reopened the company in the 1930s in the building and kept it open until the 1960s.

National Register Criteria

The Allen Mercantile Company building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as an excellent example of an early 20th-century brick commercial building. The building is also eligible under Criterion A as an important center for commerce in the small South Georgia town of Climax and its rural vicinity and as the location of the Climax United States Post Office.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

N/A

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Period of significance (justification)

The period of significance for the Allen Mercantile Company is from the date of construction in 1903 through 1952, the end of the historic period, because the building functioned as an important general store in the small rural town of Climax through the mid-1960s.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

The Allen Mercantile Company building is only one building on the property and is contributing.

Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

NOTE: The following developmental history was prepared by Carole Hester Gibbs. "Allen Mercantile Company," Historic Property Information Form, November 13, 2000. On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia.

The merchants in the Allen Mercantile Company building were part of the development of the town of Climax, located in the eastern part of Decatur County, Georgia. Decatur County was created in the southwest corner of the state in 1823. Prior to the Civil War, the area that was to become Climax was primarily agricultural, home to yeoman farmers and plantation owners.

An important component to Georgia's economic recovery after the Civil War was the improvement and expansion of railroad systems in the state. State endorsement of bonds aided and promoted railroad construction. This expansion enabled deep southwest Georgia to become connected with other rail lines in Georgia as well as out-of-state lines in Alabama and Florida. In 1867, the Atlantic and Gulf Railroad Company extended its Savannah-Thomasville railroad westward to Bainbridge. In the 1870s, the line was extended further west to the Chattahoochee River, connecting with the Southern Alabama Railroad. In the early 1880s, the Savannah, Florida and Western Railway Company, the successor to the Atlantic and Gulf, built a rail line from Bainbridge Junction (about 8 miles east of the city of Bainbridge) to the junction of the Flint and Chattahoochee rivers in Florida. The railroad bed followed the high Fowlstown ridge that runs the length of Decatur County. In Poor's Railroads of the United States for 1900, this 30.4 mile branch line is listed as the Bainbridge Junction, Georgia-Chattahoochee, Florida line of the Georgia Division of the Savannah, Florida and Western Railway Company. The town that developed at Bainbridge Junction was designated Climax by the railroad because the elevation at almost 300 feet above sea level was the highest point between Savannah and the Chattahoochee River.

Early Decatur County records refer to a town survey of Climax reportedly drawn by the railroad. The lot on which the Allen Mercantile Company building stands is lot number one on the town survey, on the main street of the town and across the street from the railroad depot (since moved). The Allen Mercantile Company offered a broad array of dry goods, groceries, hardware and farm supplies for the farmers, families and households in Climax and the surrounding area during the early 1900s. According to town tax records, the store's stock was valued at \$4,000 in 1909 and \$8,000 in 1912.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Climax as a town owes its existence to the railroad and its prosperity was linked to the rise in importance of rail transportation in Georgia's commerce. Agricultural products could be shipped economically by rail. Fast rail transportation created markets for products that formerly were too perishable for long trips. The services and maintenance associated with railroad workers and the railway junction fueled the town's economy. Numerous passenger and freight trains created a need for lodging and food at a hotel. During World War I, troop trains filled with young soldiers always drew a crowd to the front porch of the Allen Mercantile Company to wave them on their way. The Allen Mercantile Company was a vital part of this commercial activity.

Postal records in the National Archives show that a post office in the Climax area was first established April 30, 1868 but was discontinued June 14, 1870. The post office was re-established March 13, 1882 and served about 100 people in the sparsely populated rural area. However, when the railroad branch line was built, both the economy and population expanded. By 1903, the post office in Climax was serving a population of 3,000. By 1905, when the town of Climax was incorporated, rural free delivery in the area was offered. The post office was housed in the back area of the Allen Mercantile Company building until the 1930s. The store's location was central to two vital community activities—the railroad and the U.S. mail.

Climax grew in population and in business establishments during the early 1900s. In the Young and Company's Business Directory of Georgia (1909-10), the population of Climax was listed as 200 persons. Twenty individuals are listed with their business or professional interests. Ira Albert Allen is one of five men listed as engaged in general merchandise. The business, professions, and trades of the other persons listed in the directory reflect the importance of agriculture, naval stores, and the railroad to the economy of the area: three sawmills, two physicians, and two grocery stores as well as a turpentine still, cotton gin, fertilizer plant, dry goods store, furniture store, blacksmith shop, livery stable, and hotel. The Allen Mercantile Company was in the midst of Climax's commercial center. The hotel was located at its rear, the barbershop was next door, and other general merchandise stores were across and down Main Street. In addition, the Allen brothers were leaders in the political and educational life of Climax as well as being involved in business and economic interests of the town. Ira Albert Allen served as mayor of Climax and was a member of the Decatur County Board of Education. Walter Samuel Allen was a member of the Board of Trustees for the Climax Consolidated School.

The town of Climax thrived as long as railroads were a main source of transportation. As more rural dirt roads were paved and truck lines became more competitive with railroads, the commerce in Climax began to decline. Travel to larger commercial centers by automobile became easier. The main road between Bainbridge and Thomasville, now known as US Highway 84 was first paved in the late 1920s. The time and expense of an east-west trip across South Georgia by automobile and truck was considerably reduced. After World War II, the trends that dominate American business and commerce today accelerated. Larger markets, franchises, mass distribution centers, and discount stores have pulled business away from little towns like Climax with small businesses such as the Allen Mercantile Company.

9. Major Bibliographic References

Brunton, Yvonne. Grady County, Georgia. Danielsville, GA: Heritage Papers, 1981.

Cox, Frances. Decatur County, Georgia: Past and Present. Roswell, GA: W.H. Wolfe Associates, 1991.

Decatur County, Georgia. Deed Book G-9, p. 645.

Gibbs, Carole Hester. "Allen Mercantile Company," Historic Property Information Form, November 13, 2000. On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia.

Jones, Frank S. History of Decatur County. Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Company, 1971, 1996.

Page, Robert E., III. History of Climax. 1996.

Poor, Henry V. Railroads of the United States for 1868-69. New York: H.V. and H.W. Poor, p. 303-304

Poor, Henry V. Railroads of the United States for 1883. New York: H.V. and H.W. Poor, p. 473-474

Poor, Henry V. Railroads of the United States for 1900. New York: H.V. and H.W. Poor, p. 378-379

Town of Climax. Tax Records. 1909-1951.

Town of Climax. Charter of Incorporation. 1905.

Young and Company. Business Directory of Georgia. 1909-1910.

Interviews:

Carole Gibbs interviewed the following persons:

Clifford Wells, life long resident of Climax, Georgia and retired mail carrier, February 12, 2000 in Climax, Georgia.

Francis Allen, former postmaster of the US Post Office in Cairo, Georgia and nephew of Ira Albert Allen and Walter Samuel Allen, February 13, 2000 in Cairo, Georgia.

Marjorie Harrell Grover, life long resident of Climax, moving to the house next door to the Allen Store in 1931, at 10 years of age. Mrs. Grover has a scrap book collection of Climax memorabilia. It contains an excellent photograph of the Allen Store building and the railroad depot, featured in the Bainbridge Post Searchlight.

Alma Hart, Administrator for the Town of Climax, February 14, 2000 in Climax, Georgia.

Jack McGlamery, several discussions in Climax, Georgia as well as telephone conversations to his home in Marietta, Georgia.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9—Major Bibliographic References

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

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DR-CL-40

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property **Less than one acre.**

UTM References

A) Zone 16 Easting 74550 Northing 3418452

Verbal Boundary Description

The National Register boundary is indicated on the attached plat map with a heavy, black line, drawn to scale.

Boundary Justification

The National Register boundary is the current legal boundary including the right-of-way and comprises the historic acreage associated with the building.

11. Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Office

name/title Gretchen Brock/National Register Coordinator
organization Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
mailing address 156 Trinity Avenue, S.W., Suite 101
city or town Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303
telephone (404) 656-2840 **date** November 8, 2002
e-mail gretchen_brock@dnr.state.ga.us

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

name/title Carole Hester Gibbs
organization N/A
mailing address 1103 Javelin Court
city or town Columbia **state** South Carolina **zip code** 29212
telephone (803) 781-1791
e-mail N/A

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

Property Owner or Contact Information

name (property owner or contact person) Alfred Earl Hester, Jr.
organization (if applicable) N/A
mailing address 473 Harrell Mill Road
city or town Climax **state** Georgia **zip code** 31732
e-mail (optional) N/A

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

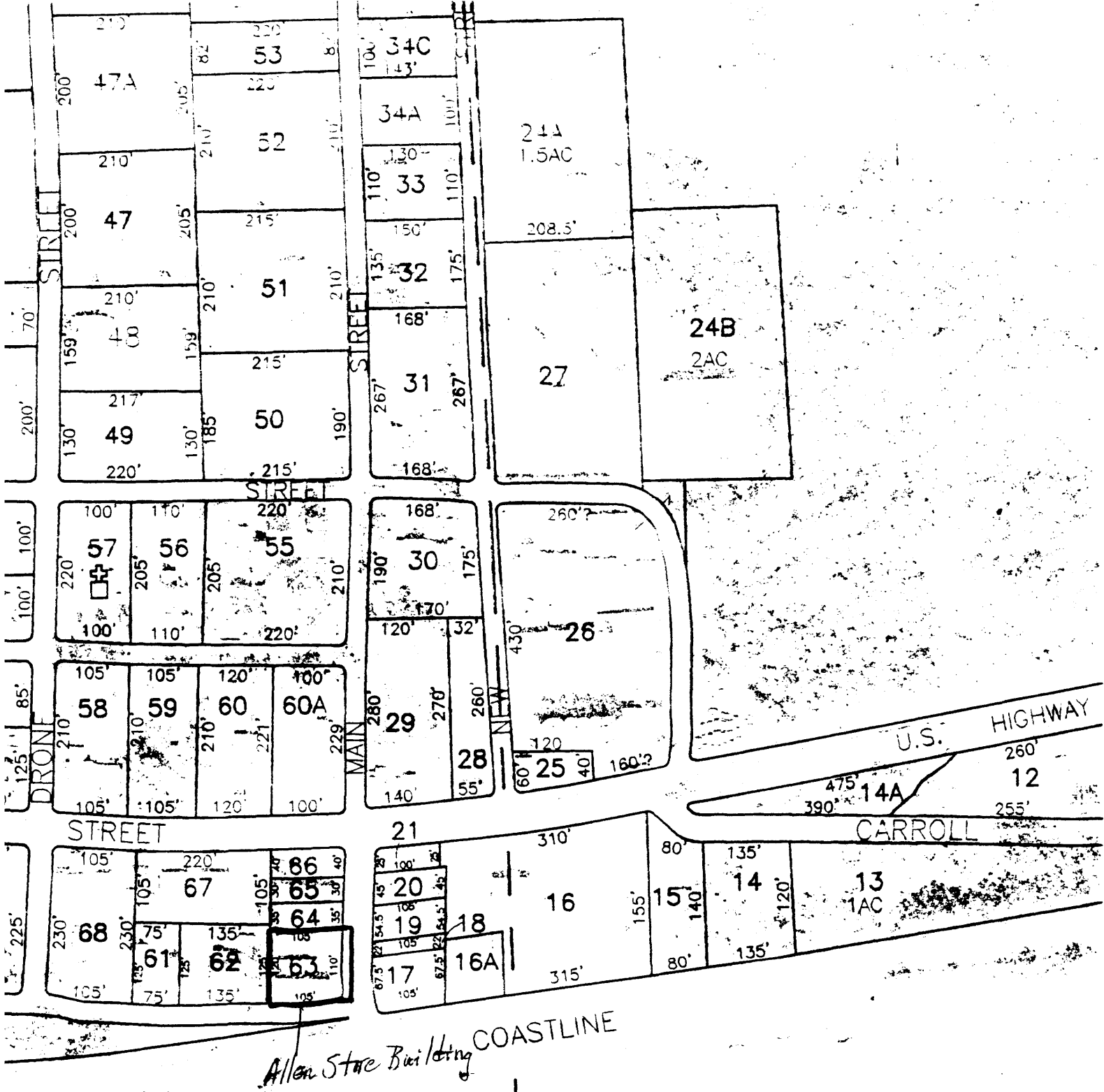
Name of Property: Allen Mercantile Company
City or Vicinity: Climax
County: Decatur
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: September 2001

Description of Photograph(s):

Number of photographs: 10


1. Front (east) façade; photographer facing west.
2. Detail, front (east) façade; photographer facing northwest.
3. South façade and setting; photographer facing northwest.
4. North façade and setting; photographer facing southwest.
5. Rear (west) and south facades; photographer facing northeast.
6. Detail of side entrance, south façade; photographer facing north.
7. Detail of south façade; photographer facing north.
8. Interior; photographer facing west.
9. Interior; photographer facing east.
10. Interior, detail of store shelving; photographer facing southwest.

(HPD WORD form version 11-03-01)



**ALLEN MERCANTILE BUILDING
DECATUR COUNTY, GEORGIA
SITE MAP**

NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY: 

NORTH: 

SCALE: 1" = 200'

SOURCE: DECATUR COUNTY TAX ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

ALLEN MERCANTILE BUILDING

DECATUR COUNTY, GEORGIA

FLOOR PLAN

PHOTOGRAPH/DIRECTION OF VIEW: ①

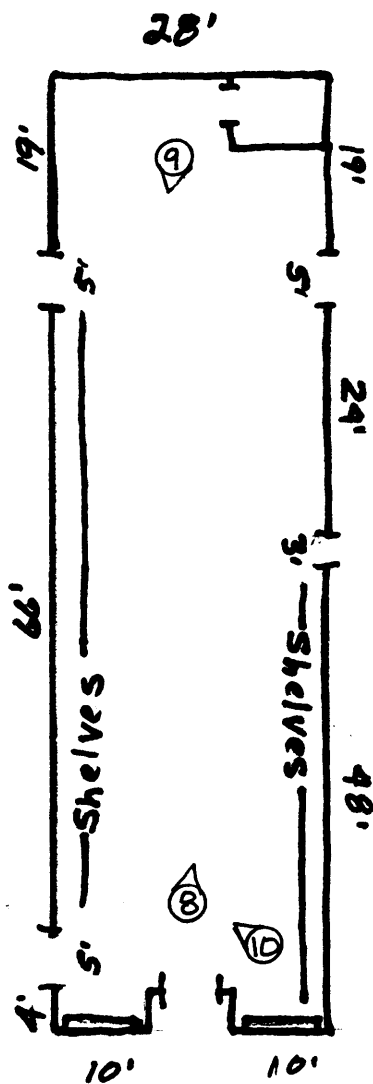
NORTH: →

SCALE: NOT TO SCALE

SOURCE: PROPERTY OWNER



⑤



⑦

⑥

②

①

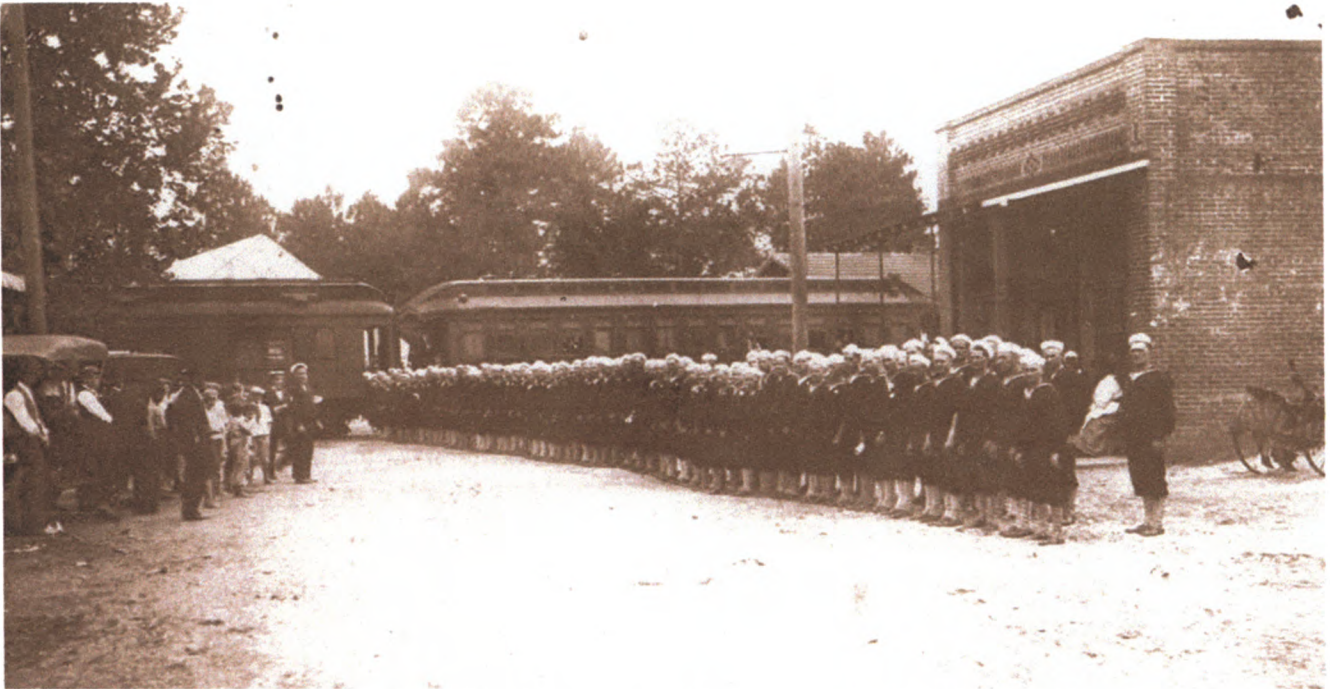
Allen Store Building
Climax, Georgia

③

④

prepared by Certe H. Gibbs

Attachment 1
Allen Mercantile Company
Decatur County, Georgia



Historic Photograph: Allen Mercantile Company (right), World War I era



Historic Photograph: Interior of Allen Mercantile Company, c. 1905