

HISTORIC RESOURCES OF HARTWELL, HART COUNTY, GEORGIA

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY #19

I. IDENTIFICATION

HISTORIC NAME: Alexander Stephens Skelton House
CURRENT NAME: Balback Residence
STREET ADDRESS: 214 Athens Street
CITY: Hartwell
PRESENT OWNER: Michael J. Balback
MAILING ADDRESS: 214 Athens Street
CITY: Hartwell
STATE: Georgia
ZIP CODE: 30643
CURRENT USE: residence
ACREAGE: two city lots (approximately one acre)
U.S.G.S. QUADRANGLE: Hartwell, Georgia
U.T.M. REFERENCE: Z17 E321340 N3802310
V.B.D. OR TAX MAP NUMBER: H-24-3-26

II. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND PRESENT CONDITION:

This house is a one and one-half story, frame, Craftsman-inspired structure. It features a wide gable roof with a shed porch on the principal facade. The porch extends beyond the width of the structure to form a covered port cochere or car port. The porch is supported by squat, Tuscan columns set on brick piers. A shed roof dormer containing three pairs of 6/1 windows extends almost the full width of the gable roof. The entrance is centered on this facade and is flanked by a pair of 6/1 windows. Additional 6/1 windows and 6-pane fixed windows dominate the principal facade.

The interior of the house features a tight arrangement of rooms focusing on a central entry/stair foyer. The front rooms are merged together through the use of wide, unobstructed openings. Interior features include wood floors, plaster walls, and decorative wood moldings. Alterations include the removal of a rear wall to enlarge the kitchen and the installation of a sliding glass door.

The house is situated on two city lots. Original landscape features include remains of a rock wall, concrete forms, random foundation plantings, and mature trees. An historic frame garage is situated to the rear of the house.

The property is in good condition.

PHOTOGRAPH NUMBER: 80

III. HISTORY

ORIGINAL OWNER: Alexander Stephens Skelton
 ORIGINAL USE: residence
 ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Leila Ross Wilburn (pattern book design)/Temple family (contractors)
 HISTORIC ACREAGE: extended originally to Smith Street
 DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1918
 DATE(S) OF ALTERATIONS: (recent)

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE (FROM ORIGINS TO PRESENT):

Alexander Stephens Skelton (1878-1976) and his wife Caroline Nabors Skelton (1883-1981) built this structure as their residence circa 1918. Will Temple built the structure from pattern book plans provided by Leila Ross Wilburn, an Atlanta architect. Alexander "Steve" Skelton practiced law and served as Solicitor General of the Northeast Georgia Judicial Circuit. The Skelton family were early settlers of nearby Elbert County. Portions of Elbert County were used in the creation of Hart County. "Carrie" Skelton was a school teacher from Laurens, S.C., who came to Hartwell to teach. Mr. and Mrs. Skelton were civic leaders in Hartwell active with numerous organizations including the DAR, the golden clubs, Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, and the Baptist Church. The couple raised their family in this structure and resided here until their death. Descendants have recently sold the house to Mr. and Mrs. Michael J. Balback.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA: B, C
 AREA(S) OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Social History
 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL):

Architecturally, this structure is significant as a good local example of the Craftsman/Bungalow style of domestic architecture. Important characteristics of this house include its low massing, broad gable roof, wide front porch with squat columns, wide overhanging roof eaves, varied fenestration, and, on the interior, its open arrangement of rooms focusing on an entry/stair foyer. Somewhat unusual are the short Tuscan porch columns and the boxed cornices; most Bungalow houses feature Craftsman-style bracketed eaves and exposed rafter ends. The structure's architectural importance is enhanced by its associations with Will Temple and Leila Ross Wilburn. Will Temple and his family, as designers and builders, are responsible for numerous structures within the multiple resource area. Leila Ross Wilburn, a female architect of Atlanta, developed and distributed pattern books which were used to design several

structures in Hartwell and numerous domestic structures across Georgia.

The property is also significant in landscape architecture. Formal landscape design features from the early 20th century are evident in the rock walls, paved drive, concrete garden forms, and historic vegetation. Although once typical of yard landscaping, these features rarely survive today, and their presence both complements the house which they surround and stand as examples of early 20th century domestic landscaping practices.

The property is significant in local social history for its association with the Skelton family. Mr. and Mrs. Steve Skelton were active civic leaders in Hartwell community, belonging to and contributing to several organizations which comprised the social and civic life of middle-class white citizens in Hartwell during the early 20th century. In addition, Ms. Skelton taught school in the community and Mr. Skelton practiced law.

CONTRIBUTING/NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES:

Contributing building(s): 1
 Contributing structure(s): 2 (garage plus yard landscaping)
 Non-contributing structures: 1 (non-historic outbuilding)

V. SOURCES

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS: Historic Structures Field Survey: Hart County, Georgia

SOURCES OF INFORMATION: Temple Lumber Company, records;
 Interviews: Mrs. Medora Walker, Hartwell, and Mr. Michael Balback, current owner.

FORM PREPARED BY:

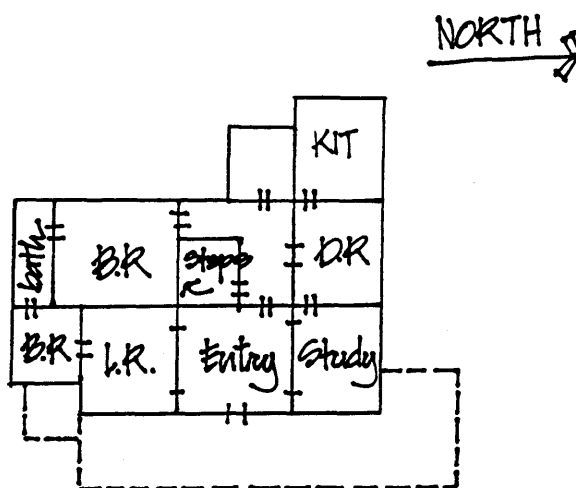
Dale Jaeger
 Georgia Mountains Area Planning and Development Commission
 Gainesville, Georgia

Donald Rooney
 Historic Preservation Consultant
 Atlanta, Georgia

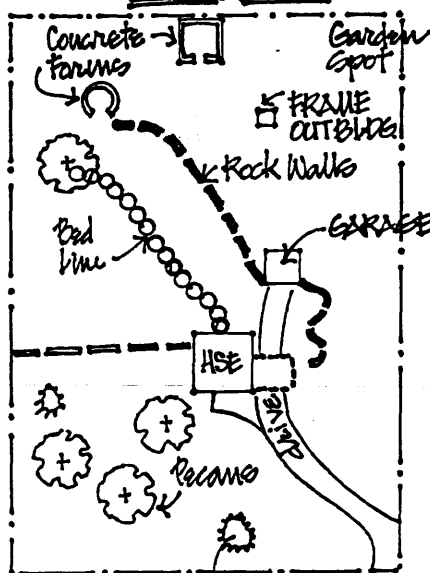
Richard Cloues
 Historic Preservation Section, Department of Natural Resources
 Atlanta, Georgia

VI. SITE PLAN/SKETCH MAP/FLOOR PLAN

Attached sketches are intended only to help illustrate the nominated property. No scale is provided or implied, unless otherwise noted. Boundary markings are simply general indications of the extent of the nominated property; the actual boundary description, unless otherwise noted, is the current legal description of the property which coincides with the current tax map number cited in Section I of this form. Also, note that the orientation of the various sketches differs from sketch to sketch; each is provided with a north arrow for clarity.



FLOOR PLAN



SITE PLAN