

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic John A. Davis House

and/or common Albany Little Theatre

2. Location

street & number 514 Pine Avenue not for publication

city, town Albany vicinity of congressional district 2nd- Dawson Mathis

state Georgia code 013 county Dougherty code 095

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. Ed Rudderman, President
Albany Little Theatre, Inc.

street & number 514 Pine Avenue (P.O.Box 552)

city, town Albany vicinity of state Georgia 31702

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Superior Court

street & number Dougherty County Courthouse

city, town Albany state Georgia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title NONE has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date _____ federal state county local

depository for survey records _____

city, town _____ state _____

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The John A. Davis House/Albany Little Theatre is a two-story, brick, Italianate Villa, dating from the mid-nineteenth century, with a turn-of-the century Neoclassical front porch and a contemporary theater attached to the rear. It stands on a small city lot in a residential neighborhood near downtown Albany.

The main body of the John A. Davis House -- the 1853 Italianate Villa part of this building -- is square in plan, cubical in massing, two stories high, and hip-roofed. Centrally located on the front (north) facade is a projecting, square-sectioned, two-story tower containing the front entry on its ground floor. A similar tower is located to the rear of the east side of the house. Windows and doorways are tall and narrow, with flat-arched brick lintels. On the front facade, two ground-floor windows have been converted into doors; upstairs windows feature shutters. The cornice consists of a brick frieze set off by a brick beltcourse, wooden brackets, and broad eaves. The entire house, including foundations, is constructed of brick laid in common bond.

The interior of the house consists of a central stair hall flanked by rooms at either floor level. On the ground floor, the rooms on either side of the hall feature double sliding doors; upstairs, the four rooms communicate only with the hall. Window frames range from relatively simple-eared architrave moldings to pedimented cornices. Fireplaces present a variety of Classically-inspired mantels. High baseboards and thick crown moldings finish off the rooms. Walls and ceilings are plaster, and the floors are hardwood. The central hall is divided into a front foyer and rear stairway by a screenwall consisting of pilasters, an Ionic column, a paneled parapet wall, and an entablature. The stairway is of the half-turn-with-landing configuration.

The Neoclassical front porch was added to the house shortly after the turn of the century. It consists of a projecting two-story central portico flanked by recessed one-story porches. The portico, attached to the front tower, features three monumental Corinthian columns at each front corner supporting a massive entablature with modillioned cornice. The porches feature similar, but smaller, Corinthian columns supporting a dentilled entablature. These porches run across the full width of the front of the house and wrap around the east side. Where the one-story porch passes through the two-story portico, it is surmounted by a balustrade.

The theater was added to the rear of the house in the mid- to late-1960s. It is built of brick, about three stories high, and is very plain and utilitarian in its character and appearance. Inside the theater is contained an auditorium and a stage. The auditorium has a tile floor and an exposed wood-truss ceiling. The stage, raised four steps above the auditorium floor, features a Neoclassical proscenium with paired pilasters at either end and a dentilled entablature above. The theater extends virtually from one side of the lot to the

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DESCRIPTION

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other and acts as a screen behind the house. Its construction entailed no structural changes to the house other than closing the windows in the rear (south) wall.

When originally built in 1853, the John A. Davis House consisted of an Italianate Villa with its central brick tower flanked by low, one-story wooden porches with Italianate detailing. Davis' son, Joseph, added the Neoclassical portico and porches during the first decade of the twentieth century. He also opened up the four ground-floor rooms into two larger parlors and modernized the services and utilities. The Albany Little Theatre restored the house and added the theater in the mid- to late-1960s.

The grounds around the John A. Davis House/Albany Little Theatre consist of a front lawn with a large street tree and shrubbery, very narrow side yards, and a rear yard surfaced for a parking lot. The boundaries of the nominated property coincide with the city lot on which this building stands. The John A. Davis House/Albany Little Theatre stands in the middle of a block subdivided into relatively small lots and developed with late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century residences.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Local History
Specific dates	c.1853, 1905	Builder/Architect	unknown	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The John A. Davis House/Albany Little Theatre is significant in architecture and local history.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The John A. Davis House/Albany Little Theatre is significant to the architectural history of Georgia primarily because it is an example of the Italianate Villa style of architecture which is relatively rare in this state. The Davis house featured -- and still evidences, despite alterations -- the square plan, cubical mass, and low hip roof characteristic of the Italianate Villa style. Relatively tall, narrow windows and doorways, and the interior end chimneys are also characteristically Italianate. Even more important are the details, including the brackets under wide eaves on the exterior and the eared and pedimented window surrounds and wide crown moldings on the interior, which reflect Italianate influences. The floor plan, too, with its central hall and flanking rooms (unaltered upstairs), represents Italianate-design principles. Italianate residential architecture, like that of this house, is relatively rare in Georgia because of the predominance of the Greek Revival in the antebellum period and the lack of residential building activity during and immediately after the Civil War -- the period of time when the Italianate style was popular nationally. Thus, the John A. Davis House/Albany Little Theatre is an important and early example of this relatively rare style of architecture in Georgia.

The John A. Davis House/Albany Little Theatre is also significant architecturally because of its brick construction. Brick construction is relatively rare in the antebellum residential architecture of Georgia; most early- to mid-nineteenth-century houses were constructed of wood, using traditional braced-frame techniques. Thus, the house is an important example of the use of alternative building materials and construction techniques.

The turn-of-the-century Neoclassical front porch is architecturally significant in its own right. Dating from the first decade of the twentieth century and contrasting with the Italianate style of the house to which it is attached, it reflects changing tastes in architectural style during the passage of half a century. A fine Neoclassical design, it also is an indicator of the resurgence of interest in the Classical traditions at the turn of the century, a re-

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Draft nomination, 1973, by Mrs. Whitfield Gunnels of Albany, and additional research Carole Stevens, Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr. and Mrs. L.C.Schatz.
 "History of the Albany Little Theater", typescript, by Louise Whiting of Albany.
 Thronateeska Chapter, DAR, History and Reminiscences of Dougherty County, Georgia (1924)

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Albany West, Georgia

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	6
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7	6	9	4	8	0
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3	4	9	6	9	8	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

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 Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Boundary is marked by a heavy black line on the enclosed tax map, #AA-6, Block 6, Parcel 17A. This is all that the current owners own and thus all that is being nominated.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., Historian ; Richard Cloues, architectural historian

organization Historic Preservation Section date February 29, 1980
Department of Natural Resources

street & number 270 Washington St. telephone (404) 656-2840

city or town Atlanta state Georgia

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Elizabeth A. Lyon
 Elizabeth A. Lyon

title Acting State Historic Preservation Officer date 8/1/80

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u>W. Ray</u>	date <u>10/16/80</u>
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest: <u>W. D. D.</u>	date <u>10/7/80</u>
Chief of Registration	

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surgence expressed not only in new construction but in additions and alterations like this as well. These remodelings were sometimes simply the result of changing tastes and, thus, testify to the power of new architectural images. In other cases, they result from a change in ownership as well. In the case of the John A. Davis House/Albany Little Theatre, the changes resulted from both, and the passage of property from one architecturally aware generation to another is vividly chronicled on the front facade.

The contemporary theater attached to the rear of the house is of no architectural significance per se; it is simply an example of non-detracting adaptive re-use.

LOCAL-HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

In local history, it is significant as the home of John A. Davis, one of the most prominent and influential citizens of Albany.

The home was built around 1853 by Martha Ryals, who transferred ownership to her son, Newton P. Brinson, in 1857. He was in his early twenties and a dry-goods merchant in the firm of Beers and Brinson. Shortly after the Civil War, he sold the house to John A. Davis.

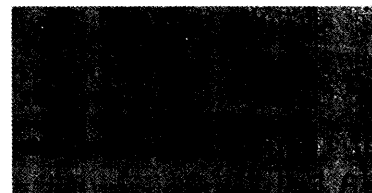
Davis (1832-1905) was a Georgia native who moved to southwest Georgia with his parents. After moving to Albany to practice law, he married, in 1851, Laura C. Hampton, and they raised eight children. He was a man of rich influence in the financial, religious, educational and entertainment fields of Albany and in the state. He had served with the Commissary Department of the Confederate States of America. After serving as local counsel for the Central of Georgia Railroad, he organized the First National Bank of Albany in 1886 and was its first president. He represented the county in the constitutional convention of 1887 and was chairman of the Executive Committee of the Georgia Bankers Association, beginning at its organization in 1891. Davis was known as the "Nestor of Georgia Bankers."

The house has seen many important events due to Captain Davis' sponsorship of the Chautauqua Association of Albany. Many of the prominent state and national figures who came to town were entertained here. The most significant event associated with the house was the reception given former President of the Confederacy Jefferson Davis in 1884. Davis and his famous daughter, Winnie, were received at the train depot with a twenty-one-gun salute; Davis spoke to the assembled masses, and then, with two military companies as escorts, went in procession to the house. Jefferson Davis took his seat in the great hall, and people filed by to shake his hand.

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Captain Davis' wife died in 1899 and after his own death in 1905, the house passed to their son, Joseph S. Davis, who was also involved with the Chautauqua Association. The house left the family a decade or so later when the Masonic Lodges No. 24 and 591 purchased it and occupied it for a meeting hall for four decades. They added a dining room. In 1965, it was purchased by James Barnett to save it from destruction. He, in turn, sold it to the Albany Little Theatre, Inc., that same year. This group, organized in 1932, held its first production here on February 15, 1966.