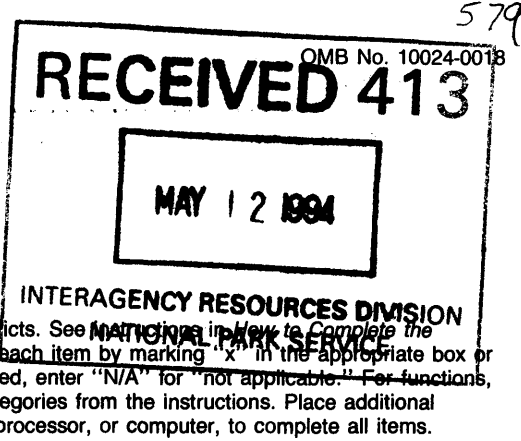


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Cox Furniture Store

other names/site number Simonson Opera House, Edwards Opera House, New Baird Theater

2. Location

street & number 19 S.E. First Avenue N/A  not for publication

city or town Gainesville N/A  vicinity

state Florida code FL county Alachua code 001 zip code 32601

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility 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  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
Suzanne P. Walker / Deputy SHPO 4/29/94  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources  
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain:)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Edson H. Beall Date of Action 6.10.94  
Entered in the National Register

Cox Furniture Store  
Name of Property

Alachua, Florida  
County and State

RECEIVED

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture/Theater

Commerce and Trade/Specialty Store

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant

Vacant

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style/Masonry Vernacular

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

roof Metal

other Brick

Metal

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Cox Furniture Store  
Name of Property

Alachua, Florida  
County and State

### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

#### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

#### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

#### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

#### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

#### Period of Significance

1887-1939

#### Significant Dates

1887

1906

1939

#### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

#### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

#### Architect/Builder

Goin, Sanford

#### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

Cox Furniture Store  
Name of Property

Alachua, Florida  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property Less than one

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

1	7
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3	7	1	8	2	0
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3	2	8	0	6	6	0
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Zone Easting Northing

3 

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Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title W. Carl Shiver, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date February 17, 1994

street & number 500 South Bronough Street telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Kenneth and Linda McGurn

street & number 101 S.E. 2nd Place telephone (904) 372-6172

city or town Gainesville state Florida zip code 32601

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Cox Furniture Store  
Gainesville, Alachua County  
Description

Section number 7 Page 1

Summary Paragraph

The Cox Furniture Store is a three-story, commercial brick building located at 19 S.E. First Avenue in downtown Gainesville. Its distinguishing features are a mansard roof, 9/9 light double hung sash windows with segmental arches located on the second story, and a suspended canopy over traditional storefront units on the ground story.

Supporting Narrative

Built in 1887 as a two-story business block containing retail stores on the ground floor and an opera house on the second floor, the Cox Furniture Store building has undergone several significant alterations. Early photographs show a rather plain vernacular structure with a flat roof surrounded by a dentilated parapet that was higher on the north facade than on the east elevation. In the center of the north facade, rising above the parapet, was a gabled head mast. A one-story canopy supported by metal posts extended the width of the north facade and ran a short distance along the east elevation. A third story was added to the building in 1906 to provide additional space for the opera house, by then known as the New Baird Theater. The original flat roof and parapet were removed to make way for the new upper story, which was fitted with a mansard roof that featured arched dormers. The new third story had a series of small windows. Those on the north elevation were rectangular, while those on the east had segmental arches. A scenery loft was added in the southeast corner of the roof at this time, and a series of small wood sash windows were set in the third floor north and east facades.

In 1938 a structural steel frame was installed within the exterior masonry walls to strengthen the structure which was being adapted for use as a retail furniture store. The triple sash windows that occupied the second story of the north were replaced with double sash windows similar in height and shape to those found on the east elevation. The exterior brick was painted white and an electric elevator was installed in the southeast corner of the building where the scenery loft of the theater had been.

The Cox Furniture Store is on the corner of SE First Avenue and SE First Street, across from the Alachua County Administration Building. It occupies a prominent position in

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2Cox Furniture Store  
Gainesville, Alachua County  
Description

downtown Gainesville and, because of its height and unusual roof, it is a highly visible landmark. The building covers virtually the entire site with the exception of a small alley to the rear. Brick sidewalks, reproductions of Gainesville's original street lights, and plantings of trees and shrubbery in a corner island set off the building on the north and east sides. (Photos 1, 2, 3, 4)

The masonry vernacular structure measures 60 by 100 feet at the base and is approximately 52 feet tall from grade to roof cornice. The mansard roof, which is supported by seven heavy timber trusses, is covered with standing seam metal sheeting. There is one arched dormer on the north slope of the roof and three similar dormers on the east slope (Photos 15, 5). No other historic structure in downtown Gainesville has a mansard roof. A narrow dentilated cornice marks the juncture of the exterior walls and soffit of the roof. (Photo 5). The exterior brick remains painted and is in good condition.

There are eight rectangular 6/6 wooden sash windows on the north facade of the third floor, while the east facade features five slightly smaller, widely spaced 6/6 wooden sash windows set in segmental arch openings. Above these windows on both elevations is a narrow brick stringcourse. A somewhat wider beltcourse is found beneath all but the center two windows on the north facade. There is a more elaborate corbelled beltcourse below the third floor windows on the east elevation (Photos 6, 7). This feature survives from the period before the third story was added to the building. There are eight 6/6 light double sash windows set in segmental arch openings in the second story of the north facade and twelve similar windows found on the the east facade. A continuous label molding extends above the windows on the east facade (Photos 3, 6).

The north facade of the first floor is divided into three major bays. The central entrance bay contains a curved display window set between two glass paneled doors. Short masonry pilars separate the center bay from the two flanking bays which contain projecting display windows. Transom lights extend the width of the facade above the cantlevered canopy that shelters the sidewalk on the ground story. The transom lights have been painted over. On the east facade a double, wood and glass panel is flanked by a pair of nine light fixed windows. Both the doorway and windows are framed by "classical" pilasters that have fluted shafts and plain capitals and bases. Two more nine light

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 3Cox Furniture Store  
Gainesville, Alachua County  
Description

show windows are found in the wall north of the entranceway and a 24 light show window is located toward the southern end of the building (Photos 3, 8, 9). A cantilevered canopy also runs the width this elevation. A dentilated cornice runs the length of both elevations just above the show window level, and a similar motif decorates the bottom of each large show window.

The west side of the Cox Furniture Store abuts a two-story brick building (Photo 1). The south elevation is separated from the adjacent two-story brick building by a narrow alley. An entrance to the freight elevator is located at the rear of the alley, and the enclosed elevator shaft rises above the roofline on the west facade (Photo 10).

At present, the interior is all open space, with no partitions. The ceiling of the first floor is thirteen feet high above the floor level. The ceiling of the second floor is fifteen feet high, and the coved ceiling of the third floor is eleven feet high (Photos 11, 12, 13, 14). The first floor is open with square columns evenly spaced from front to rear (Photos 11, 12). Steel columns support the ceiling of the second floor (Photo 13). The steel I beams and columns, installed in the 1939 renovation, form the framework which supports the second and third floors. Some water damage from roof leaks can be seen in the third floor ceiling (Photo 14). The brick walls have been plastered in some areas but some areas remain exposed. The flooring is of narrow, diagonal wood boards, much of it having been carpeted for many years.

There is one set of stairs at the front of the building which allowed customer access to the second and third floors. Another set to the rear were service stairs used by personnel of the furniture store. A large freight elevator located in the southwest corner of the building served all three floors of the furniture store (Photo 16).

The Cox Furniture Store, which has stood vacant for several years, is being adapted by new owners. The first floor will contain a restaurant and retail shops, while the second and third floors will be used as offices by the owners. The exterior will remain largely unchanged, and all work is being done according to the Standards of the Secretary of the Interior established for the rehabilitation of historic buildings.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Cox Furniture Store  
Gainesville, Alachua County  
Photographs

Section number 7 Page 4

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Photographs

The information in 1-5 is the same for all photographs

1. Cox Furniture Store
2. 19 S.E. 1st Ave., Gainesville (Alachua County), Fl
3. Murray D. Laurie
4. 1993
5. Mcgurn Investment Company
6. North Facade, Looking Southwest
7. No. 1 of 16
  
6. North Facade, Looking Southeast
7. No. 2 of 16
  
6. East Facade, Looking Southwest
7. No. 3 of 16
  
6. S.E. 1st Street, Looking North from S.E. 2nd Avenue
7. No. 4 of 16
  
6. Detail of Dormer, Looking West
7. No. 5 of 16
  
6. Detail of Second Story Windows, East Facade, Looking West
7. No. 6 of 16
  
6. Detail of Third Story Window, East Facade, Looking West
7. No. 7 of 16
  
6. Detail, East Entrance, Looking West
7. No. 8 of 16
  
6. Detail, East Facade Display Window, Looking West
7. No. 9 of 16
  
6. West Elevation, Third Story Wall and Elevator Shaft,  
Looking Northeast
7. No. 10 of 16
  
6. Interior, First Floor, Looking North
7. No. 11 of 16
  
6. Interior, First Floor, Looking South
7. No. 12 of 16



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Cox Furniture Store  
Gainesville, Alachua County  
Photographs

Section number 7 Page 5

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6. Interior, Second Floor, Looking South  
7. No. 13 of 16

6. Interior, Third Floor, Looking North  
7. No. 14 of 16

6. Interior, Attic, Looking North  
7. No. 15 of 16

6. Interior, Third Floor, Elevator Door, Looking South  
7. No. 16 of 16

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetCox Furniture Store  
Gainesville, Alachua County  
SignificanceSection number 8 Page 1Summary Paragraph

The Cox Furniture Store is significant under criteria A and C at the local level in the areas of Commerce and Architecture. The style and scale of the building reflects the early development of the Gainesville commercial district. The structure was built in 1887 as the Simonson Opera House and was an entertainment center in downtown Gainesville until the 1920s. From 1939 to 1991 the building housed the largest and most successful furniture store in Gainesville. It is an excellent example of a masonry vernacular commercial building of the type constructed in the United States during the period from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries.

Historical Context

The City of Gainesville was founded in 1854 when the board of Commissioners of Alachua County decided to move the county seat from Newnansville to the right-of-way of the Florida Railroad. The railroad company was in the process of constructing the state's first major rail link between the east and west coasts, starting at the city of Fernandina on the Atlantic Ocean and terminating at Cedar Key on the Gulf of Mexico. Since there was a potential for local market centers to develop along the railway, the Florida Railroad Company decided to establish five depots along the route to accommodate the shipment of local agricultural products and to encourage new settlements that would be beneficial to the railroad. The depot site selected in Alachua County was destined to become the city of Gainesville.

The new settlement was named in honor of General Edmund P. Gaines, who had served in the War of 1812 and later commanded forces during the Seminole Wars in Florida. The new town site was roughly square and contained 103 acres. The interaction of the rail line and the original town plat provided a framework for the future expansion of the community. The central business district of retail stores, offices, and hotels grew up around the courthouse square, with the first residences located nearby. To the south of the square, manufacturing concerns and warehouses took advantage of lots established for them along the railroad.

The Florida Railroad was completed in 1859, but Gainesville scarcely had time to enjoy the economic benefits brought by the new transportation route before the outbreak of the Civil War

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetCox Furniture Store  
Gainesville, Alachua County  
SignificanceSection number 8 Page 2

brought further development of the city to an end. The community did not experience its first real economic boom until the 1880s. Gainesville was only a village of 269 residents in 1860, but by 1890 the permanent population had grown to nearly 3,000 persons. Expansion of the city continued into the first decade of the 20th century, stimulated by the railroad which supported the shipment of local agricultural products, particularly cotton. Phosphate, timber, and naval stores also formed the basis for the local economy, as did the production of bricks and ironware.

The commercial center of Gainesville during the 1880s consisted largely of wooden buildings that had grown up around the courthouse square. These were subject to fires, and by the end of the century had been largely replaced by brick structures. The dilapidated old wooden warehouses along the railroad were also replaced by masonry structures. By the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century, Gainesville began to lose its importance as a regional shipping center. The growth of cotton waned in the area, and further expansion of Florida's rail network prompted the establishment of competing commercial centers in other parts of the state. The further expansion of Gainesville was assisted, in spite of this fact, by the establishment of the University of Florida, whose continued growth over the succeeding decades became the keystone of the local economy.

Historic Significance

When the fire that swept through downtown Gainesville in 1886 destroyed the wood frame opera house named Roper's Hall, the site on which it had stood did not remain empty for long. By May of 1887 the structure had been replaced by a two-story brick building the second floor of which housed J. Simonson's new opera house. The first floor contained a saloon and a cigar store. Simonson offered his patrons a wide selection of entertainment, including plays, concerts, and variety acts. As time passed Simonson made various improvements to his theater to make his patrons more comfortable. Around 1893 Simonson sold the property to J. F. Edwards, who renamed it Edwards Opera House. The ownership and name changed once again in 1906 when Eberle Baird purchased the building containing the opera house. Baird was the owner of Baird Hardware, a prosperous business which had opened for business in 1890.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetCox Furniture Store  
Gainesville, Alachua County  
SignificanceSection number 8 Page 3

Baird made the first major structural change in the building in 1906 when he added a third story to provide balcony space for the opera house, thereby increasing the seating capacity to 1,000. The flat roof of the original structure was replaced with an imposing mansard roof featuring elegant arched dormers containing paired arched louvers. The lower two stories of the building remained largely unaltered. Renamed the New Baird Theater, the renovated opera house was Gainesville's center for a wide variety of stage and musical productions until the 1920s.

In 1908, Baird leased the theater to Louis Kalbfield, who staged the operas "Martha" and "The Bohemian Girl" for Gainesville audiences during his first season as manager of the theater. Kalbfield added "moving pictures" a year later, but the staple of Baird Theater entertainments continued to be stage shows, productions by local groups, and events sponsored by the University of Florida. Renowned personalities appeared on its stage, among them William Jennings Bryan, who addressed an entranced audience in 1912. The building was leased to a new manager as a movie house in 1925. However, the Baird Theater was not able to compete with newer movie theaters in Gainesville, and closed around 1929.

The Opera House Block had always had other tenants in addition to the Theater, and it occupied an important position in the commercial life of the town. The saloon on the southeast corner of the first floor was closed in 1904 when the county went dry. It was replaced by a drugstore, J. W. McCollum and Co., Prescription Druggists, that occupied the address for 35 years. A succession of businesses operated out of the other two stores on the first floor through the 1920s. These included a grocery store, a tailor, a bakery, and a beauty shop. Lawyers' offices, an insurance agency, and a photographer's studio were on the second floor. These businesses continued to occupy the building even after the theater closed.

A renovation and reuse of the building was prompted by a fire in 1938 that destroyed most of the structures on the block of South Main Street near the courthouse. Among the structures that were burned was the furniture store owned by Daniel R. Cox. In 1939, Cox purchased the building containing the defunct Baird Theater as his new business location. The pioneer furniture dealer had purchased the Gainesville Furniture Company in 1917 and changed its name to the Cox Furniture Store. It was the largest furniture store in Gainesville, and Cox also set up

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetCox Furniture Store  
Gainesville, Alachua County  
SignificanceSection number 8 Page 4

retail outlets in Ocala, Cross City, Lake City, Orlando, and Tallahassee. He also purchased a warehouse building at 609 South Main Street in 1925 to store his overflow inventory of stock. The building is still standing and was nominated to the National Register in 1993.

Cox hired architect Sanford Goin to prepare plans for the renovation of the building. Goin had designed a number of important buildings in Gainesville, including the Gainesville High School, several Gainesville churches, and the University of Florida Baptist Student Center. Changes to the structure included the removal of the theater from the second and third floors and the reinforcement of the original brick bearing walls with steel framing. The stage flys gallery that rose above the roof on the southeast corner was removed and an electric elevator installed at the southwest corner of the building. The Cox Furniture Store operated from this downtown location until 1991, when the company went out of business and closed the store. The building has remained vacant since then but is in the process of being renovated, using the federal tax incentives for the rehabilitation of historic structures.

Architectural Significance

The exterior of the Cox Furniture Store still largely reflects the type of brick vernacular commercial building that was erected in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It anchors a block made up of one and two-story brick stores dating from the same period. In its original configuration, the flat roof, the parapet on the main facade, and the restrained decorative brickwork were in keeping with the prevailing style of stores and business blocks seen throughout the country. The addition of the third floor to the opera house in the early 20th century signaled a bolder architectural approach, and the mansard roof with its curving dormers struck a note of elegance befitting the city's leading theater.

Even when changing tastes in entertainment ended its use as a theater in the mid-1920s, the building continued to contribute to the architectural character of downtown Gainesville. It was so successful in this respect, that, when it was purchased in 1938 by the Cox Furniture Company, few changes were made to the exterior. Every study of Gainesville historic buildings has included this as one of the city's most outstanding local architectural landmarks.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Cox Furniture Store  
Gainesville, Alachua County  
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Section number 9 Page 1

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 1

Cox Furniture Store  
Gainesville, Alachua County  
Boundary Description and  
Justification

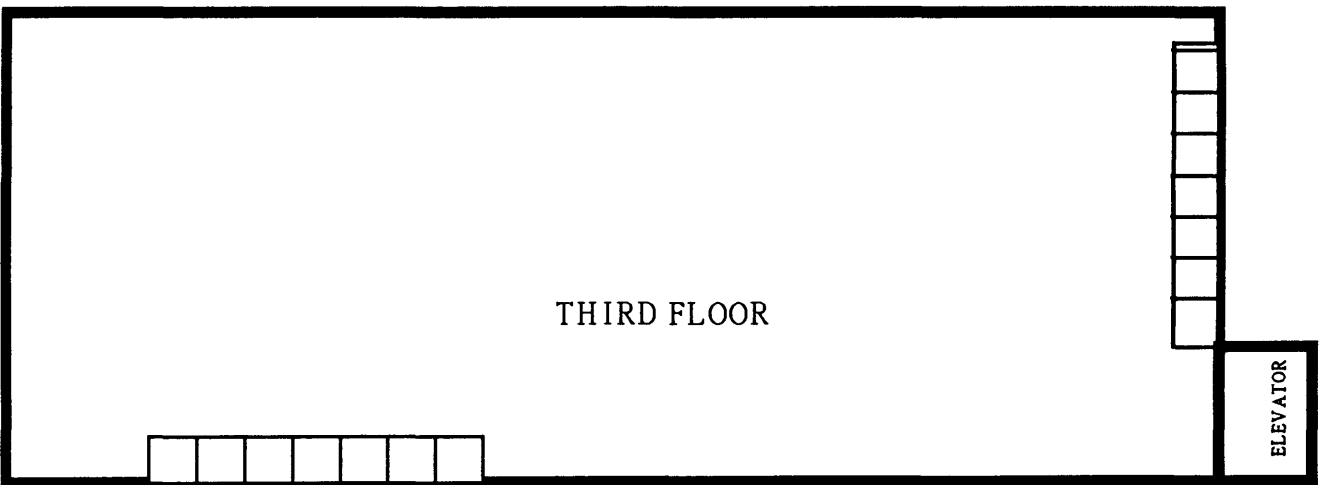
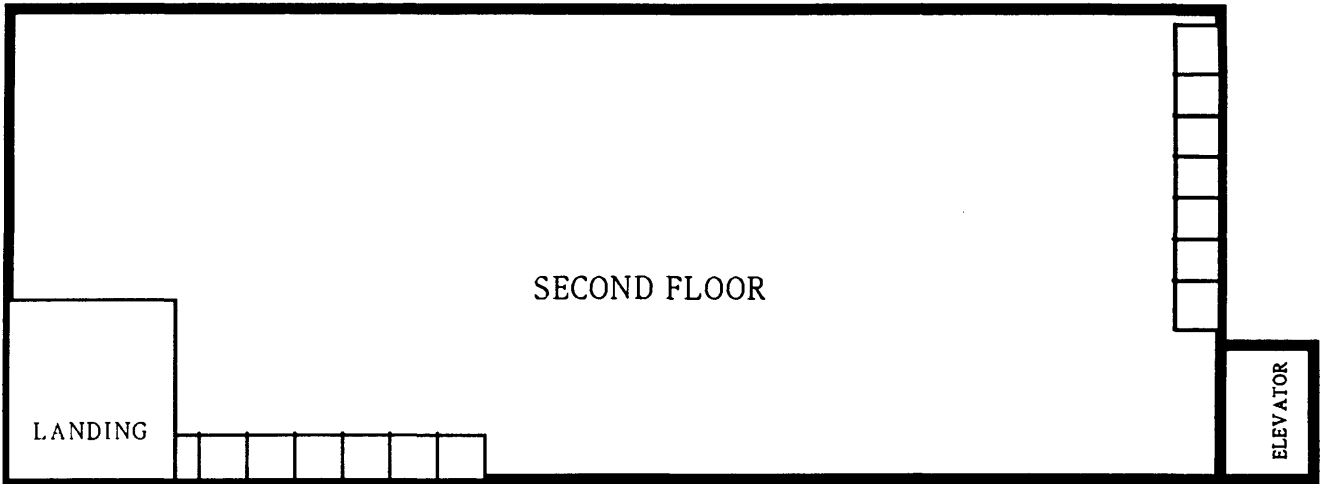
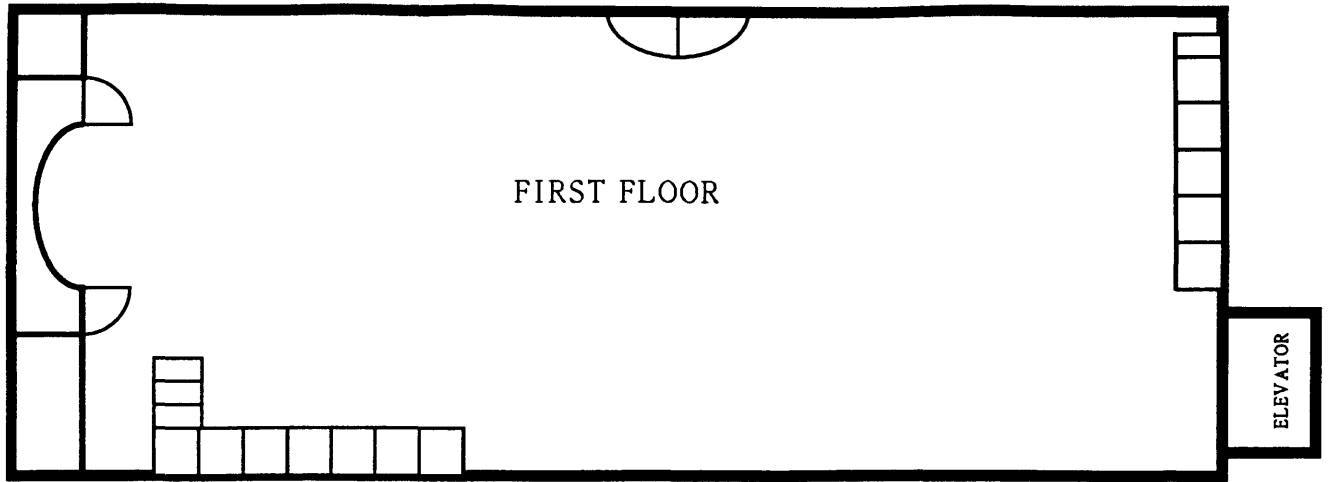
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Boundary Description

Begin at the Northeast corner of Lot 4, Block 3, Range 2 of the Original Survey of Gainesville, Florida as recorded in Deed Book H, Page 383 and in Plat Book A, Page 61; thence run West along the North boundary of said Lot 4 and South right of way line of Union Street (S.E. First Avenue) 60.00 feet to the Northwest corner of said Lot 4; thence run South along the West boundary of said Lot 4 114.00 feet; thence run East, parallel to said North boundary 60.00 feet to the East boundary of said Lot 4 and the West right of way line of East Main Street (S.E. First Street); thence run North along said East boundary and West right of way line 114.00 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

The above described boundary encompasses all historic resources associated with the Cox Furniture Store.



COX FURNITURE STORE GAINESVILLE, FL

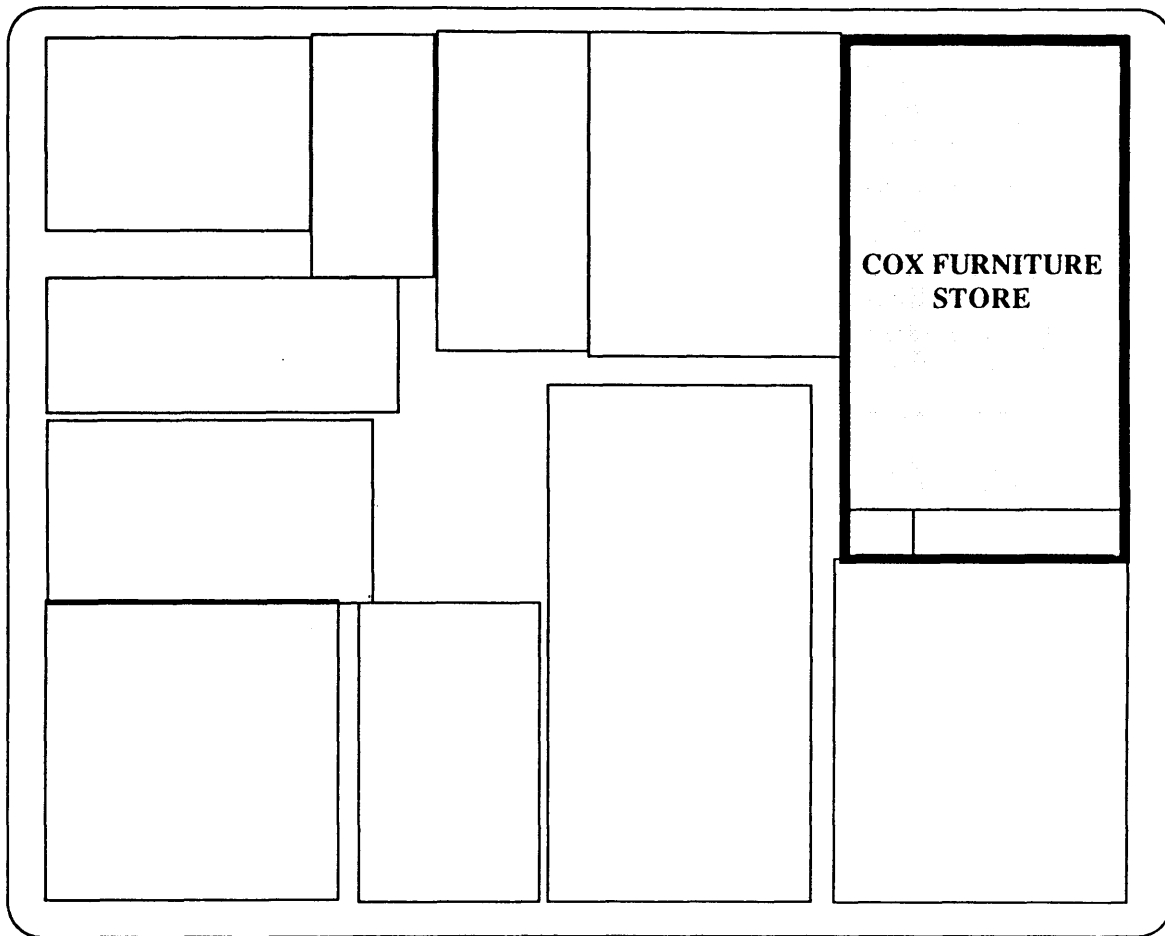
FLOORPLAN





S. E. First Avenue

S. Main Street

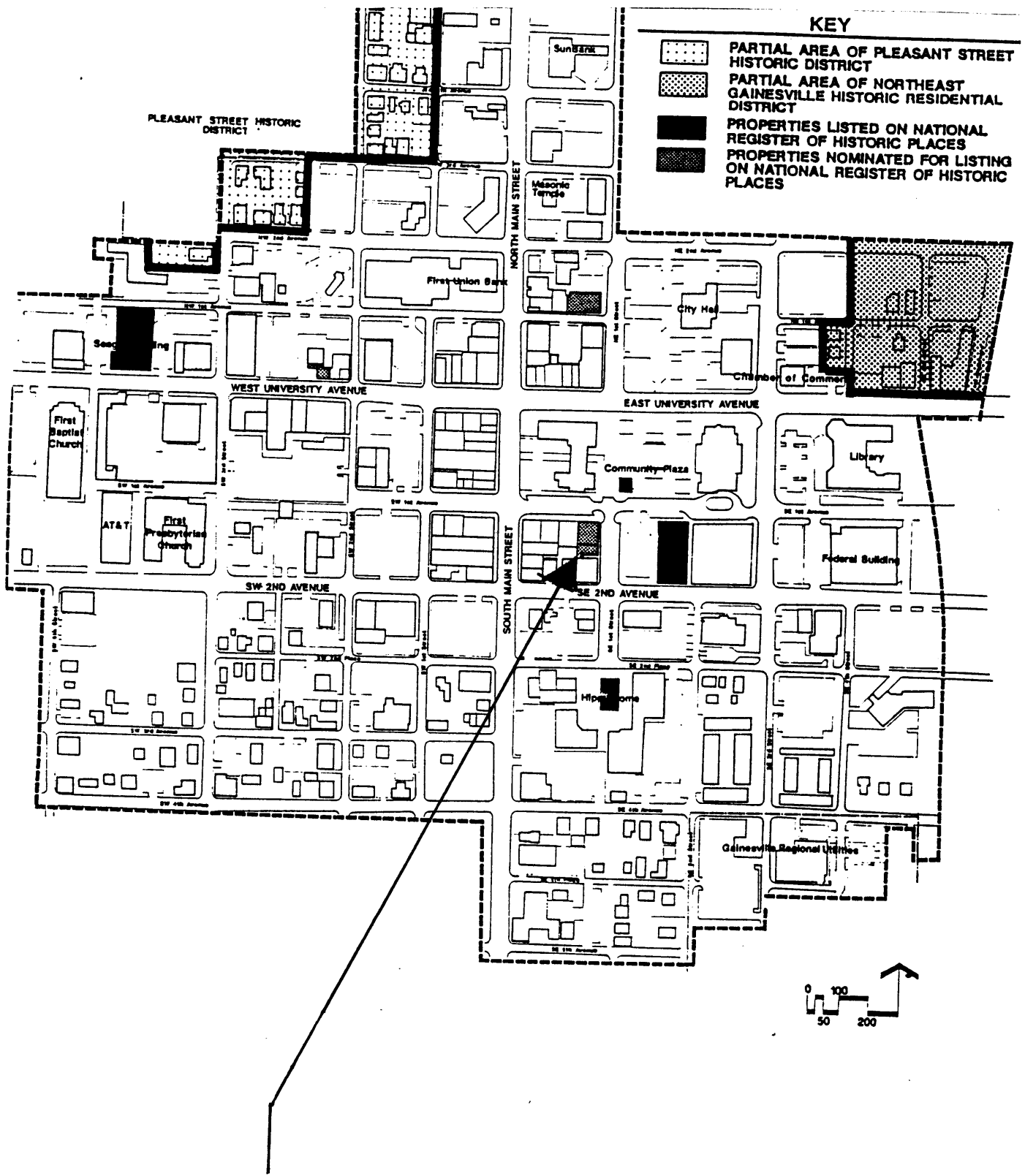


S. E. First Street

S. E. Second Avenue

COX FURNITURE STORE GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA

SITE MAP



COX FURNITURE STORE      GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA

LOCATION MAP