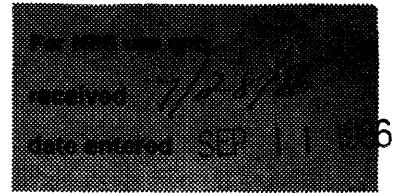


**United States Department of the Interior  
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**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



BENSON STREET-FOREST AVENUE

Continuation sheet RESIDENTIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT Item number

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BENSON STREET-FOREST AVENUE RESIDENTIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

Name: Benson Street-Forest Avenue Residential Historic District

Location:

Along Benson Street and Forest Avenue beginning near the town center and extending south, including properties along several side streets, Linder Street, Holland Street, and Alford Road, in Hartwell, Hart County, Georgia.

Acreage: Approximately 75 acres

Verbal Boundary Description and Justification:

The boundary of the Benson Street-Forest Avenue Residential Historic District is identified by a heavy black line on the attached map. This boundary encompasses an intact historic residential neighborhood in Hartwell to the southeast of the commercial district. Surrounding land uses include non-historic residential properties to the east, south, and west; the mill village to the west; and commercial uses to the north.

UTM Reference: (A) Z17 E322260 N3802880  
(B) Z17 E323000 N3801980  
(C) Z17 E322230 N3801720  
(D) Z17 E321860 N3802240

Contributing/Non-contributing Resources:

Contributing buildings: 46  
Non-contributing buildings: 14

Photograph Numbers: 16-35

Description:

The Benson Street-Forest Avenue Residential Historic District encompasses several blocks of intact historic housing in the southeast section of Hartwell. The district is adjacent to the three other proposed historic districts: it is bordered by the mill village on the west and the commercial district on the northwest; one corner of the Franklin Street-College Avenue Residential Historic District abuts it on the north. The district is formed by properties fronting on Benson Street and Forest Avenue, the major streets in the district. The properties are joined into a single district through rear property lines. Two residences on Holland Street (a side street on Benson), three residences on Linder Street (a side street of Forest

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which forms a cul-de-sac), and one residence on Alford Street (a side street connecting Benson and Forest) are also included in the district.

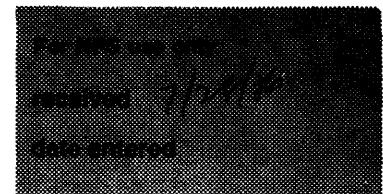
Buildings in the district, with the exception of several brick residences and one dwelling of molded brick, are wood-framed, detached, single-family houses. The historic structures range in size from large, rambling, Victorian Eclectic "mansions" (by Hartwell standards) to small vernacular cottages. Styles represented in the district include Greek Revival, Victorian Eclectic (with some Gothic Revival and Queen Anne detailing), and Bungalow/Craftsman. Forest Avenue contains the most intact grouping of historic dwellings in the district. Benson Street contains scattered groupings of historic dwellings which have been separated by the construction of non-historic dwellings in former side yards. The single Greek Revival-influenced building is a small, one-story frame house at the north end of Benson Street which features a pedimented entrance porch of Greek Revival design, Doric columns, a boxed cornice and returns, dentil molding, and an entrance door with a transom and side lights. Victorian Eclectic residences are well-represented in the district and range from modest cottages with Victorian-era embellishments to "mansions" with design features from Queen Anne and Neo-classical styles. The single Gothic Revival-influenced residence features a steeply pitched roof with twin wall dormers on the front facade, rounded-arched windows on the second floor, and weather-board siding. The plain-styled Victorian cottages are concentrated on Forest Avenue and include one- and two-story dwellings with simple Victorian porch detailing. There is one plain-styled dwelling which served as servants quarters to the rear of the Skelton House on Benson. The elaborate Victorian Eclectic "mansions" are concentrated along Benson Street but are separated by later historic and non-historic dwellings. Examples in the district include the Skelton House, with its asymmetrical massing and Neoclassical-inspired two-story entrance portico, and the McCurry House and the Linder House, with their one-story wraparound porches and Queen Anne-influenced massing, turrets, and trim. Even though the number of elaborate Victorian Eclectic mansions are limited within the district, their visual impact establishes a distinct character of large Victorian homes. Houses with Bungalow/Craftsman influences are scattered throughout the district. Two Craftsman-style cottages are located on Benson Street. The Benson-Teasley Residence is a textbook example of this style with a wide pitched roof, roof dormer, wide bracketed eaves, and a one-story porch with square columns set on brick bases. A number of earlier houses in the district have been updated with later Bungalow/Craftsman-style porches.

Most of the houses are situated in the center of their lots at uniform setbacks from the streets. The front yards are uniformly but informally landscaped, which creates a continuous streetscape. The inconsistent size of lots illustrates the piecemeal subdividing from the original large tracts. Two residences still retain much of their original land. This land, located to the rear of the structures, resembles its historic appearance with pecan-grove plantings and open land. Pecan trees are scattered throughout the district and serve as a unifying landscape element.

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The streets in this district are an extension of the original city plan.

Non-contributing properties in this district are primarily non-historic houses on relatively small lots. Most of these houses were built in the non-historic period on small lots sliced off the edges of larger lots associated with historic houses.

Statement of Significance: NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA B, C

Architecture. The district is significant as one of three intact historic residential areas in Hartwell and one which contains many of its oldest and grandest houses. It documents the building materials, types, styles, and construction technologies typically found in small northeast Georgia towns in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The district contains one of Hartwell's few extant antebellum houses. It provides excellent examples of a variety of Victorian Eclectic and Bungalow/Craftsman residences. Among the Victorian Eclectic houses are a number with considerable Queen Anne detailing including balconies, turrets, bay windows, tall chimneys, and decorative shinglework. Other smaller Victorian Eclectic-style houses provide examples of modestly detailed cottages with a minimum of porch and gable-end trim. A number of the Craftsman-style dwellings and some earlier houses "updated" with Craftsman-style porches were constructed by the Temple family, Hartwell's extremely important family of builders, building-supply dealers and architects whose business shaped the community's built environment.

Community Planning and Development. The Benson Street-Forest Avenue Residential Historic District is significant in terms of community planning and development as an example of one of Hartwell's earliest in-town residential neighborhoods. It illustrates the incremental development of an area on the edge of the original gridded town center that developed as Hartwell's population grew and early landholdings were subdivided in the last years of the 19th century and in the early 20th century; this incremental development pattern is typical of the growth of many Georgia county seats in the late 19th century. J. B. Benson, one of Hartwell's founders and the man for whom the major street in the district is named, originally owned the majority of the land in the district. After his death in 1892, the "Benson Estate Lands" were subdivided, first into large lots and, later, in some cases, into smaller ones. The situation of the district on a high plateau documents the typical location of early residential areas on desirable high ground. The layout of Benson Street at an angle to the city's early gridiron street pattern reflects its origin as a main route to the neighboring town of Elberton.

Social History. The Benson Street-Forest Avenue Residential Historic District is significant for its associations with many significant individuals who played a prominent role in Hartwell's history. The oldest house in the district is that of J. B. Benson, one of Hartwell's founders, who built the town's first house, stocked the first goods, served as the first postmaster, and later served as a state senator

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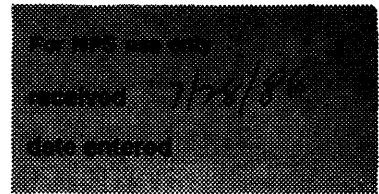
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BENSON STREET-FOREST AVENUE

Continuation sheet RESIDENTIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT Item number

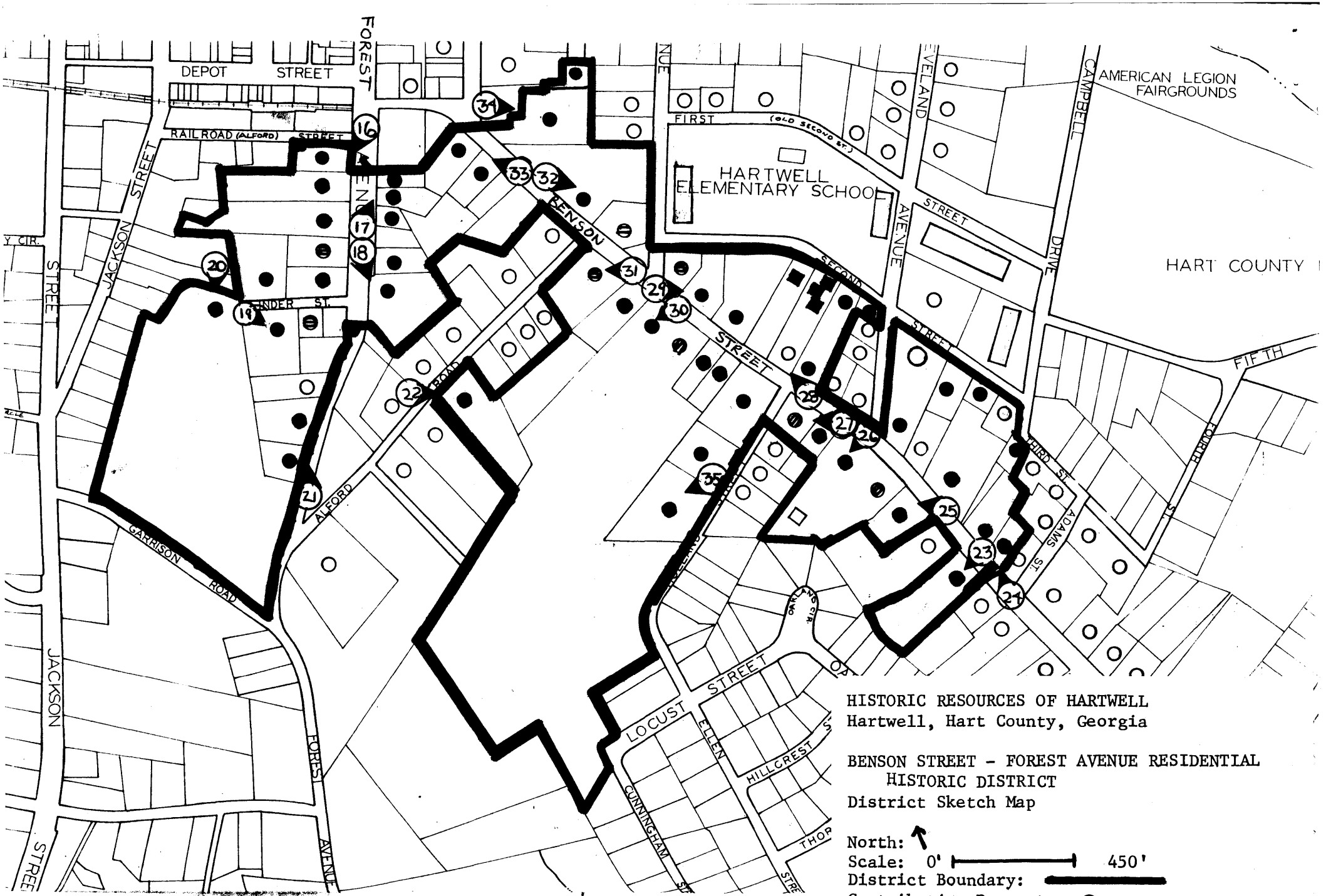
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and representative. Other influential individuals who lived in the district include Clarence Linder, president of a local bank; Claude and Clate Hernden, pharmacists; Judge Carey Skelton, Solicitor General for Georgia and Judge of the Fourth Circuit; S. W. Peek, the owner of a plant nursery; and A. J. Richardson, a lawyer and mayor of Hartwell. These men and the other middle-class citizens who lived in the district contributed much to the development of the community.

Period of Significance: 1854-1930

Form Prepared By: See cover form, Section 11.



HISTORIC RESOURCES OF HARTWELL  
Hartwell, Hart County, Georgia

BENSON STREET - FOREST AVENUE RESIDENTIAL  
HISTORIC DISTRICT  
District Sketch Map

North: ↑  
Scale: 0' ————— 450'

District Boundary: —————

Contributing Property: ●

Non-historic Property: ◌

Intrusion: ○

Photograph Direction and Number: ②

