

the century conducted an impressive business as is evidenced in the handsome residence situated behind the store, his imposing grave site in Magnolia Cemetery, and a lengthy obituary attesting to his prominence and modest economic achievements.

Criterion C - Architecture:

Ward's Corner Store in Greenville is significant as an excellent local example of a late 19th century vernacular store building in a small town residential community. Country corner stores are a folk derivative of typical Greek Revival country store buildings which abounded in the Deep South during the mid-19th century. A building type that is becoming increasingly rare, the late 19th century versions, built primarily between 1880 and 1910, generally resemble one story frame shot-gun houses with front facing gables, departing however, with the incorporation of projecting bay-like display windows. This example, built c. 1885, has suffered little alteration and is the best maintained small commercial resource dating from the 19th century in any Greenville residential neighborhood.

Description:

Ward's Corner Store is situated on a relative large corner lot that is set well above the paved street. Also included on the lot is a late 19th century residence c. 1880-85 and a small storage building.

The store building (c. 1885) is a narrow one-story frame structure with a front-facing gable roof. The building is set on brick piers, although the foundation in front has been completely faced with bricks which also incorporate center entrance steps.

The double door entrance of the building is recessed under a gable roof supported by four square porch supports. Projecting display windows covered with vertical planked shutters flank the door, while a vent opening, which may have once contained a transom surmounts the entry. This late 19th century version of vernacular Greek Revival country store buildings typical of the mid-19th century in the Deep South has suffered little alteration, and is the best maintained small commercial resource of its type and period remaining in Greenville.

Deeply recessed on the lot and just south of the store building is a late 19th century one-story frame vernacular house with a brick exterior-end chimney, typically constructed in Central Alabama between 1880 and 1915. The shed roof porch supported by bracketed posts and the addition of the turn of the century gable roof wing, which abuts the front east side of the residence, reflects the desire of the owner to up-date the residence.

Still farther south and behind the residence is a simple frame storage building with a gable roof.

Historical Summary:

Frank Ward (1857-1925) acquired this historic corner store lot from Patrick and Sarah Pryor in 1884. A prominent A.M.E. Zion minister, Ward was apparently very influential and well respected in the Greenville community. His

endeavor as a professional seeking to achieve economic independence during the late 19th century parallels the beginning of a movement for economic independence among blacks.

Observing the success of others during the "age of heroic business enterprise, blacks became frustrated in their efforts to participate in the development of the businesses of whites. Beginning with a program of "Negro business enterprise," black leaders began to search for an escape from poverty and achieve economic independence by entering independent business and manufacturing themselves.

The mental conditioning for this movement was best articulated by John Hope in 1898 of Atlanta who before the 4th Annual University Conference stated that the poverty-bound plight of blacks was due in part to the competition between the races for employment in the new and developing fields. Blacks were charged to not only "enter into the business life in increasing numbers" but, the mass of blacks were urged to "patronize businesses conducted by their own race, even at some slight disadvantage."

By the end of the century many blacks were engaged in numerous types of businesses. The most prominent blacks were generally professionals who sought to combine their professional activities with business pursuits. It appears that clergymen were often the most successful at accomplishing this intermixture; however, by the turn of the century with the establishment of National Negro Business League organized by Booker T. Washington in 1900, black business enterprises attempted by many blacks, skilled and professional, increased substantially by 1907.

Because Ward's Corner Store was indeed a neighborhood enterprise it gained a popularity that lasted throughout the 1960's. Offering the only establishment or institution for completely informed interaction and socialization, the store came to serve a purpose beyond its obvious functions.

When Frank Ward died in 1925 after suffering a stroke while giving the "Invitation to Discipleship" in a local church, a lengthy obituary appeared in the local newspaper and referred to him as "A Prominent Negro Preacher." According to the article, Ward had been ill well over a year. It also stated that Ward had many friends among the whites in the community; that he had for some years "run a small store"; and finally that he had in his safe \$1,600 in cash. Today, the grave sites of Ward and his wife are the most imposing in Magnolia Cemetery.

After Ward's death, his wife Sallie (1873-c. 1930) continued to run the business during the early 20th century. The Ward property was then purchased by Mrs. Nobie Price who also conducted a neighborhood grocery business from this building. The building was then leased out during the '60s and was known for its week-end fish fries evidencing that throughout the 20th century, the building continued to serve as a social center, reaching beyond its obvious purpose.

Today the property remains in Mrs. Price's family with her two daughters, Mrs. Ruby Womack and Mrs. Nobie Howze assuming ownership.