

HISTORIC RESOURCES OF HARTWELL, HART COUNTY, GEORGIA

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY #11

I. IDENTIFICATION

HISTORIC NAME: John Underwood House
 CURRENT NAME: Rucker Residence
 STREET ADDRESS: 825 South Jackson Street
 CITY: Hartwell
 PRESENT OWNER: Walter Rucker Estate, c/o Mrs. Thelma Rucker
 MAILING ADDRESS: 825 South Jackson Street
 CITY: Hartwell
 STATE: Georgia
 ZIP CODE: 30643
 CURRENT USE: residence
 ACREAGE: 4.5 acres
 U.S.G.S. QUADRANGLE: Hartwell, Georgia
 U.T.M. REFERENCE: Z17 E321600 N3801630
 V.B.D. OR TAX MAP NUMBER: H-26-1-11

II. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND PRESENT CONDITION:

This house is a one-story, frame, Victorian-eclectic residence. It features a steep pyramidal roof with multiple projecting gables covering one-story bays. A shed-roofed porch supported with turned posts extends around two sides of the structure. The entrance is marked by a pediment in the porch and a gabled dormer directly above. A central hall extends the depth of the structure and leads to a second shed-roofed porch at the rear. Internal chimneys provide one fireplace to each of the four rooms. Interior features include tongue-and-groove paneling on the walls and ceilings, wood flooring and simple mantels and moldings. Exterior weatherboarding has been covered with asphalt siding; some windows have been replaced.

The house is situated on 4.5 acres and is oriented toward Jackson Street. Mature trees and a variety of foundation plantings surround the house. The majority of the property is open field.

The property is in fair condition.

PHOTOGRAPH NUMBER: 72

III. HISTORY

ORIGINAL OWNER: John & Dollie Underwood
 ORIGINAL USE: residence
 ARCHITECT/BUILDER: unknown
 HISTORIC ACREAGE: 13.4 acres
 DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: ca. 1916-1917
 DATE(S) OF ALTERATIONS: 1952

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE (FROM ORIGINS TO PRESENT):

According to deed records, this property was once part of the Wyatt McMullan Estate and was sold to C. E. Matheson and E. E. Satterfield in February 1916 for \$175. John Underwood purchased the 13.4 acre tract later that year for \$300. This structure was apparently built soon after Underwood's purchase. Underwood was employed at the Hartwell Mills as an overseer; this was an unusual position for a member of Hartwell's black community during this era. His wife, Dolly, maintained the household and a family garden on the property.

Underwood sold some of his acreage for development. When the property was transferred from Underwood's widow to Walter and Ellie Mae Rucker in 1948, the parcel contained only 4.5 acres. A survey made at this time shows two outbuildings located at the rear of the property. The buildings' functions are uncertain as no visible evidence remains of the structures. The property is now in the ownership of the Walter Rucker estate. A daughter, Thelma Rucker, now resides there.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA: B, C

AREA(S) OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Black/Social History

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL):

This property is important in local black/social history due to its association with John Underwood. Underwood was the original owner of the structure and its original 13.4 acre tract. He was employed as an overseer at the Hartwell Cotton Mills. In the early 20th-century it was highly unusual for a small-town black resident to obtain this level of prominence in the operation and management of a major community business. It was also unusual for a black citizen to own such a relatively large tract of land. Land ownership of this magnitude, and a vocation involving supervisory responsibilities in a major business, mark John Underwood as a distinguished black resident of Hartwell.

Architecturally, this structure is significant as an example of Victorian-eclectic design. The intact condition of the structure, with the exception of newer applied siding and windows, contributes to its importance. The structure also is the most elaborate residence in the multiple resource area which was built and owned by a black. It provides an important architectural example of an unusual kind of house associated with a prominent figure in the black community.

CONTRIBUTING/NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES:

Contributing building(s): 1

V. SOURCES

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

SOURCES OF INFORMATION: Interview with Mrs. Thelma Rucker; Hart County Courthouse, records.

FORM PREPARED BY:

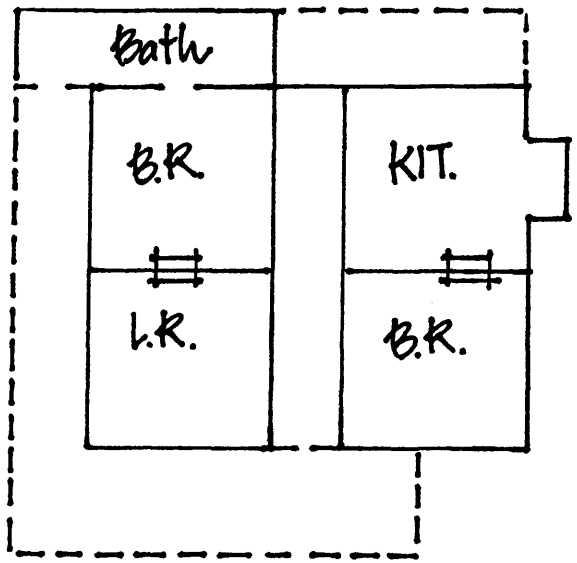
Dale Jaeger
Georgia Mountains Area Planning and Development Commission
Gainesville, Georgia

Donald Rooney
Historic Preservation Consultant
Atlanta, Georgia

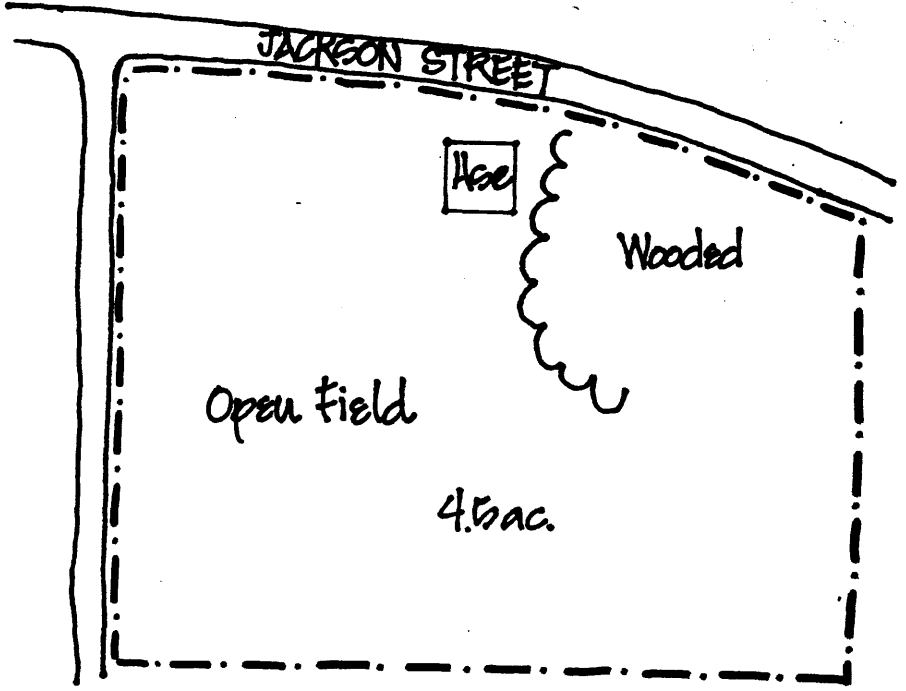
Richard Cloues
Historic Preservation Section, Department of Natural Resources
Atlanta, Georgia

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

