

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in "Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms" (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name                      Smith-Nelson Hotel  
other names/site number        Nelson Hotel

305

### 2. Location

street & number    118 South Main Street  
city, town        Reidsville  
county            Tattnall                      code GA 267  
state Georgia       code GA                      zip code 30453

( ) vicinity of

( ) not for publication

### 3. Classification

#### Ownership of Property:

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-federal

#### Category of Property:

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

Number of Resources within Property:	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>
buildings	1	1
sites	0	0
structures	0	0
objects	0	0
total	1	1

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of previous listing: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination 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 the National Register criteria. ( ) See continuation sheet.

Richard Clover

2-15-01

Signature of certifying official

Date

for W. Ray Luce  
Division Director and Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

In my opinion, the property ( ) meets ( ) does not meet the National Register criteria. ( ) See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency or bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

Edson A. Beall

3/29/01

( ) determined eligible for the National Register

( ) determined not eligible for the National Register

( ) removed from the National Register

( ) other, explain:

( ) see continuation sheet

[Signature]

Keeper of the National Register

Date

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## 6. Function or Use

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### Historic Functions:

DOMESTIC/HOTEL/INN

### Current Functions:

DOMESTIC/HOTEL/INN

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## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification:

OTHER/FOLK VICTORIAN

### Materials:

<b>foundation</b>	Brick
<b>walls</b>	Wood
<b>roof</b>	Metal
<b>other</b>	N/A

### Description of present and historic physical appearance:

Located in Tattnall County, the Smith-Nelson Hotel is a large, two-story, wood-framed, weatherboarded building occupying a corner city lot near the commercial downtown of Reidsville. The Georgian-type building, built in 1908, features a hipped roof with center gables, interior corbeled chimneys, two-story rear ell, single two-over-two double-hung-sash windows, and wrap-around porch. The wrap-around porch features Folk Victorian detailing with machine-turned wood porch posts and decorative brackets.

The first floor of the main facade (photograph 2) contains a central entry door flanked by side lights and two-over-two, double-hung-sash windows on each side (photograph 6). The second floor contains a central double window, echoing the width of the front door, that is flanked by two windows on each side. The second floor windows are two-over-two double-hung-sash. The east facade (photograph 3) of the main block of the house contains two doors flanked by two-over-two double-hung windows. The second floor contains one door flanked by one window on one side and two windows on the other side. Each floor of the facade of the rear ell contains two doors and two windows. The rear facade (photograph 4) contains two windows on each floor. The west facade (photograph 5) contains four two-over-two double-hung sash windows on each floor. The one-story kitchen ell (photograph 5), added in the 1950s, extends from the west facade of the rear ell. The wrap-around porch extends the length of the main and east facades and features Folk Victorian detailing with machine-turned posts and balusters and decorative brackets. Other details include decorative gable vents and porches on the east facade of the rear ell and on the north facade of the kitchen ell. Each porch features Folk Victorian details echoing the wrap-around porch.

The interior features a two-story Georgian floor plan consisting of a central hallway with two rooms on either side. The house also features a rear ell with side porch and a 1950s addition which houses a kitchen. The technique of tongue-and-groove paneling is utilized throughout the house; the pine

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### Section 7--Description

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cladding is laid in horizontal, diagonal, and vertical patterns along the walls, ceilings, and wainscoting. Other historic interior features include paneled wood doors, window and door surrounds, mantels, trim, and floors.

The front facade door enters into the central hallway located on the main floor (photograph 7). The hallway features tongue-and-groove pine walls laid in a chevron pattern (photograph 7) and tongue-and-groove ceiling. As the Georgian plan indicates, two rooms are located on each side of the central hallway. The first floor parlor (A on the floor plan) contains vertical wall cladding. The mantle in the parlor features an overmantel supported by Ionic columns (photograph 8). The room opposite the current parlor, also originally a parlor, today is used as an office (B on floor plan). It has vertical tongue-and-groove cladding. The fireplace mantle is supported by simple neoclassical columns. The two rear rooms on the first floor are used as bedrooms. The bedroom located behind the office (C on floor plan) includes vertical wall cladding (photograph 9), while the bedroom located behind the parlor (D on floor plan) features vertical cladding above wainscoting and diagonal cladding below the wainscoting. Each of these two rooms includes a simple wood fireplace mantle. Small interior-corner bathrooms were added to two bedrooms on the first floor (C and D on floor plan). The rear ell of the first floor contains living and dining areas (photographs 10 and 11), a bedroom, and a kitchen. Each room has vertical tongue-and-groove cladding. The 1950s addition contains the hotel kitchen and laundry room. The stairway, located in the hallway separating the main block of the house from the rear ell, contains vertical and horizontal tongue-and-groove wall cladding (photograph 11).

The central hallway on the second floor features vertical and horizontal tongue-and-groove cladding. The four rooms flanking the hallway are used as bedrooms. The room located in the northeast corner (F on floor plan) includes vertical wall cladding. The fireplace is surrounded by marble tile and has a mantle supported by classical columns and features a swag design (photograph 14). The bedroom located in the northwest (E on floor plan) corner contains horizontal cladding. The fireplace is surrounded by marble and has a neoclassical mantle similar to the one located in the bedroom opposite it. The bedroom located in the southeast corner of the second floor (H on floor plan) features vertical wall cladding. As in the other bedrooms, the fireplace is surrounded by marble tile and has a simple neoclassical mantle (photograph 12). The southwest bedroom (G on floor plan) has horizontal cladding. The mantle is supported by neoclassical columns and features a swag design (photograph 13). The rear ell of the second floor contains a bedroom and a bathroom. The walls are tongue-and-groove laid in a vertical pattern. The fireplace has a simple mantle supported by fluted pilasters. Bathrooms were added to the southeast bedroom (H on floor plan) and the bedroom contained in the rear ell (owner's bedroom on floor plan).

The house is situated near the edge of the street; the setting of the building features foundation plantings and mature trees and a nonhistoric greenhouse.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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**Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:**

nationally       statewide       locally

**Applicable National Register Criteria:**

A       B       C       D

**Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):**  N/A

A    B    C    D    E    F    G

**Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):**

Architecture and Commerce

**Period of Significance:**

1908-1950

**Significant Dates:**

1908

**Significant Person(s):**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation:**

N/A

**Architect(s)/Builder(s):**

Zach Smith

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### Section 8--Statement of Significance

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#### **Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)**

The Smith-Nelson Hotel has been an important community landmark building in downtown Reidsville for over 90 years. The hotel is significant in the area of architecture as an excellent intact example of a Georgian-type house with Folk Victorian-style elements adapted for use as a small hotel. According to *Georgia's Living Places* study (1991), "Possibly the single most popular and long-lived house type in Georgia, the Georgian cottage is named not for the state but for its floor plan, associated with 18th century English Georgian architecture. The Georgian plan consists of a central hallway with two rooms on either side. The plan shape is square or nearly so; the roof is usually hipped but sometimes gabled; and chimneys are sometimes in the exterior walls but usually in the interior of the house, between each pair of rooms. Houses of this type were built in almost all periods of Georgia's history, well into the 20th century, but the greatest concentration is between 1850 and 1890. Most surviving examples are found in the Piedmont region." "Except for its two-story height, the Georgian house has all the characteristics of the Georgian cottage. Although the two-story house is less numerous than the one-story cottage, particularly in rural settings, it too was popular from the first decades of the 19th century well into the 20th. Most examples of the type, however, were built in the periods 1850-1860 and 1900-1930, chiefly in the larger towns and cities." The character-defining features of the architectural type of the building include its two-story height, overall square massing, and first- and second-floor central hallways with two rooms located on either side. The character-defining features of the architectural style include the wrap-around porch with decorative machine-turned porch posts and brackets. The Georgian house was built throughout Georgia and popular from the first decades of the 19th century well into the 20th, although two-story examples are much less common than one-story cottages. The Folk Victorian style is well represented throughout Georgia and popular from the 1870s to the 1910s. Adding to the building's architectural significance is its high degree of material integrity including exterior weatherboards, windows, and trim and interior tongue-and-groove paneling, doorway and window molding, and fireplace mantels. The property is significant in the area of commerce for its historic function as a hotel. Prior to the construction of the existing hotel, the original owners, the Smith family, had constructed a hotel on the same site in 1905 to serve visitors to Reidsville, the county seat. Shortly after construction was completed on the 1905 hotel, it burned to the ground. With the insurance money, the Smith family constructed another hotel in 1908 on the same site of the burned hotel. The Nelson family, in-laws to the Smith family, moved to Reidsville in 1913 and took over the management of the hotel. The Smith-Nelson Hotel was one of only two hotels serving the county seat from the late 19th century to the early 20th century (the other hotel, the Alexander Hotel, was listed in the National Register on June 17, 1982). The Smith-Nelson Hotel served a significant function as a place for visitors, who needed to conduct business at the county courthouse, traveling by train to stay in Reidsville. Many small towns in Georgia had hotels like this one; the Smith-Nelson Hotel is an excellent intact example of this type of community landmark building.

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### Section 8--Statement of Significance

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#### National Register Criteria

The Smith-Nelson Hotel is eligible under National Register Criterion A in the area of commerce for its significant function as a hotel and Criterion C in the area of architecture as an excellent example of a Georgian-type house with folk Victorian-style elements adapted for use as a hotel.

#### Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

N/A

#### Period of significance (justification)

The period of significance represents the period in which the hotel was constructed and operated as a hotel.

#### Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

The hotel is the one contributing resource on the nominated property. There is a nonhistoric greenhouse on the nominated property.

#### Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

**\*\*The following history was prepared by Jerry & Sharon Walker and Robin Nail, "Smith-Nelson Hotel," Historic Property Information Form, March, 1998. On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia.**

Zachary Smith (1850-1930) and his wife, Mary Jane Nelson Smith (1857-1924), moved their large family from North Carolina to a farm in the Shiloh community near Reidsville in 1893. By mid 1905, Zachary Smith is said to have accumulated property valued at several thousand dollars, after having come to Georgia with little money.<sup>1</sup> As early as 1903, Smith was recognized as one of the county's "best and most progressive farmers."<sup>2</sup> In that year, with the aid of his son, Joseph Wilson (1875-?), he grew 13 bales of cotton, 800 bushels of corn, peas, potatoes, pinders, fodder, hay, and the like, and raised "more than enough meat to run his farm another year."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Tattnall Journal, July, 1905.

<sup>2</sup>"One of Tattnall's Good Citizens: A Man Who Lives at Home and Boards at the Same Place." The Tattnall Journal, November 19, 1903. P. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

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In addition to farming, Zachary Smith worked in the sawmill business and was known as a "fine contractor and builder," as well as "one of the finest workmen in this section of the state."<sup>4</sup> He built a number of residences, stores, and churches throughout the county by late 1903. These included the "pretty Shiloh church [sic], which stands... as a monument to his ability as a finished [sic] workman"<sup>5</sup> (extant); a seven-room residence for Mr. J.B. Jones, Jr.; a church at Cedar Crossing; a "handsome," two-story house for *The Tattnall Journal* editor, George G. Folsom; and a "pretty home" for Mr. Leonard Brewton near Manassas. By November, 1903, Smith had been engaged to construct a large hotel for Mrs. M.E. Morris (exact location unknown), which was expected to "be an ornament to that section of the county [Tattnall]."<sup>6</sup> In an article entitled "One of Tattnall's Good Citizens," *The Tattnall Journal* profiled Zachary Smith as follows:

Mr. Smith by his good work, honest and fair dealings has won the respect and confidence of the good people of Tattnall county [sic], and when a man wants a nice building he is never satisfied until he sees Zachary Smith, and when the contract is let, the building is put up just as represented, and if any changes, a little better. Zachary is a good citizen, an honest workman, a kind neighbor, and our only regret is that we have not more such men in our county.<sup>7</sup>

According to a July 10, 1905 article in the *Savannah Morning News* written by Col. W.T. Burkhalter of Reidsville, Smith purchased *The Tattnall Journal* newspaper and all related real estate, including the newspaper office and the adjacent editor's house, from E.C. Collins in 1905.<sup>8</sup> Collins acquired the newspaper and property for \$5,000 on November 28, 1904 from former editor George G. Folsom and his wife, Lula.<sup>9</sup> In an ironic twist, it appears that Smith obtained, as part of the deal, the two-story residence which he built for Folsom. Burkhalter goes on to write that Zachary Smith sold one-half interest in *The Tattnall Journal* to Folsom. It seems that after publishing the newspaper for eight years, Folsom retired in November, 1904 due to ill health. Having regained his health by June, 1905,

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>The Tattnall Journal, July, 1905.

<sup>9</sup>Tattnall County, Georgia. Clerk's Office. Deed Book U, p. 219.



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Folsom re-entered the newspaper business, once again as editor of *The Tattall Journal*. Smith became the business manager.<sup>10</sup> Col. Burkhalter went on to praise the new partnership as follows:

... the people of Tattall county [sic] may expect, and will get the best paper it is possible to publish. Mr. Smith has a spirit about him to excel in everything he goes at, and our big fat editor [Folsom] has never been downed yet in the newspaper business. The two gentlemen will each vie with the other to do his part, and the people will enjoy the fun in getting the news from all the entire county.<sup>11</sup>

Several weeks earlier in their first edition as business partners, Smith and Folsom pledged the following:

... we will not take up your time and our space in the paper in telling what we propose to do, but suffice it to say that we are going to do our best, our very best to give the good people of Tattall a clean, newsy and up-to-date paper, and we promise as long as the name Zachary Smith and Geo. Folsom remain at the mast-head no vulgarity, profanity or whiskey advertisements will ever appear in the columns of *The Tattall Journal*. We shall use our utmost endeavors to treat every one [sic] fair, and should we ever do one of our readers an injustice or treat them unfairly it will be the fault of our heads and not our hearts, for we love the people of old Tattall and expect to live and die among them ...

We are yours to serve,  
Zachary Smith  
Geo. Folsom<sup>12</sup>

Zachary Smith moved his family to Reidsville from the nearby Shiloh community in late August, 1905. According to *The Tattall Journal*, they planned to open an "up-to-date hotel in the large and

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<sup>10</sup>The Tattall Journal, June, 1905 and July, 1905.

<sup>11</sup>The Tattall Journal, July, 1905.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., June 15, 1905.

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commodious building formerly owned by Mr. Geo. Folsom<sup>13</sup> on September 1, 1905 in time for city court visitors. The building was repainted and "handsomely furnished throughout"<sup>14</sup> in preparation for guests. Located near downtown one block from the Tattnall County Courthouse, the Zachary Smith Hotel focused its advertising on jurors and others who traveled to Reidsville for court at a time when a trip to town required an overnight stay. The hotel was also located closer to the railroad depot than any other lodging in town, thus giving it a definite advantage.<sup>15</sup> Traveling salesmen, referred to as 'drummers,' and the general traveling public are said to have regarded the Smith establishment as "one of the best hotels in this section of the state."<sup>16</sup> The hotel also offered a place for dining where the food served was of the highest quality available.<sup>17</sup> Mrs. Zachary Smith was reputed to have been an excellent baker. At some point, the Smith's oldest son, Joseph, his wife Daisy (Strickland) and Joseph's sister, Lula Adaline (1881-?), are believed to have assisted with or possibly taken over operation of the hotel.<sup>18</sup>

Sometime between 1905 and 1908, the Smith Hotel was destroyed in a deliberately set fire. According to Zachary Smith's granddaughter, Miriam Hogan, he was compensated for the loss by his insurance company<sup>19</sup> and constructed a new hotel on the same site in 1908. Plans were to complete and open the new Smith Hotel in time for the April term of superior court in Reidsville;<sup>20</sup> however, the interior was not completed until about September.<sup>21</sup> The new Smith Hotel was to be much larger and more "commodious" than its predecessor, with the capability of accommodating both roomers and

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<sup>13</sup>"New Hotel for Reidsville," Ibid., August 17, 1905.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Letter from Paul A. Nelson, Dallas, Texas to Betty Clemens, Reidsville, Georgia, May 28, 1990.

<sup>16</sup>"A New Hotel for Reidsville," The Tattnall Journal, January 30, 1908.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., August 17, 1905.

<sup>18</sup>Letter from Miriam Stanley Hogan, Bartow, Florida to Mrs. Betty Clemens, Reidsville, Georgia, May, 1991.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>The Tattnall Journal, January 30, 1908.

<sup>21</sup>"The Smith Hotel," Ibid., September 1908.

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boarders. It was also to be furnished throughout "with every comfort and [modern] convenience that can be found in the city."<sup>22</sup>

Although the interior of the new Smith Hotel was not completed for some months, it appears that lodging and meals were available at the hotel as early as late May or early June, 1908. Zachary Smith had received a large shipment of new furniture from Savannah by May 28 and was "fast getting his hotel in shape."<sup>23</sup> He sought visitors coming to Reidsville for city court the following week with advertising such as "If you want something good to eat, a nice bed and clever treatment stop at the Smith hotel [sic]."<sup>24</sup> Whether due to Smith's frequent use of *The Tattnall Journal* to generate interest in his hotel, his reputation as an innkeeper, or a combination of the two, the newspaper reported that the hotel was indeed crowded with satisfied guests that next week who were "loud in their praise for the nice accommodation and the good eating they received."<sup>25</sup>

Sometime before 1913, Reidsville's first telephone exchange was installed in the Smith Hotel. The then teenage daughter of Zachary Smith, Vera Esther (1893-1991), served as the first operator and made the city's first call through the switchboard located at the hotel.<sup>26</sup>

In 1908, Smith sold his 202 acre farm in Tattnall County to W.B. Smith, possibly his son William Bradford (1877-?) for \$2,200. The purchase price included all the crops grown on the farm in 1908 (corn, potatoes, peas, cotton, cotton seed fodder, and the like), livestock (30 cows, 15 hogs, one large black mare mule, and one large black horse mule), farm implements, and a two-horse wagon.<sup>27</sup>

The next year on January 18, 1909, Zachary Smith issued E. Widincamp a quit claim deed for one acre of property in Reidsville. While the boundary description matches that of the 1905 transfer between Collins and Widincamp, it is uncertain whether the hotel was included as it is not specifically mentioned.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>"Reidsville Still Growing," *Ibid.*, January 30, 1908.

<sup>23</sup>"Smith Hotel Ready for Business," *Ibid.*, May 28, 1908.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup>"A Nice Dinner," *Ibid.*, June 4, 1908.

<sup>26</sup>Hogan letter.

<sup>27</sup>Tattnall County, Georgia. Clerk's Office. Deed Book X, p. 229.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 269.

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Robert Madison Nelson (1860-1929), brother of Mary Jane Nelson Smith, moved to Georgia from North Carolina with his family in 1889. For unknown reasons, the Nelson family began operating the Smith Hotel at some time in 1913. The Nelsons were in the hotel business in Glennville and Claxton<sup>29</sup> (possibly nearby Hagan or Bellville instead)<sup>30</sup> prior to moving to the Tattnall County seat. According to an advertisement in *The Tattnall Journal*, R.M. Nelson was proprietor of the Nelson House in Glennville in 1908.<sup>31</sup>

The next recorded legal transaction involving the hotel occurred when E. Widincamp sold the one-half acre property, along with several other parcels of land in Reidsville to Joshua Beasley for \$5,000 on September 15, 1916.<sup>32</sup> Just over a year later on October 11, 1917, R.O. DeLoach purchased the Zachary Smith hotel lot and improvements from Beasley for \$2,500.<sup>33</sup>

The Nelsons apparently resided in and ran the Smith Hotel for its various owners before R.M. Nelson acquired the property on March 21, 1923. He had entered into an agreement in 1919 with R.O. DeLoach to purchase the one-half acre hotel property for \$2,500. Also on March 21, 1923, H.C. Dubberly, A.W. DeLoach, J.C. Beasley, and C.M. Stanfield gave up any interests they had in the property via a quit claim deed issued to Nelson.<sup>34</sup>

A grandson of R.M. Nelson, Paul A. Nelson, lived in the Nelson Hotel for a while in 1925 and recalled many fond memories of his grandparents. He especially remembered his grandmother's family style meals. Nelson went on to recall that his "Grandfather Nelson's main task seemed to be to socialize with the 'drummers,' ..."<sup>35</sup> who gathered in the parlor after supper to smoke cigars and cigarettes and tell stories until bedtime.

R.M. Nelson died on November 9, 1929 at the age of 69, while serving as a delegate to the District Assembly of the Nazarene Church in Columbus, Georgia. In his obituary, Nelson was described as "one of the most widely known men in this county [Tattnall]," who with Mrs. Nelson operated the

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<sup>29</sup>"In Memoriam", The Tattnall Journal, March 27, 1930.

<sup>30</sup>Nelson letter.

<sup>31</sup>"Nelson House," The Tattnall Journal, May 28, 1908.

<sup>32</sup>Tattnall County, Georgia. Clerk's Office. Deed Book DD, pp. 140-41.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., Deed Book EE, p. 169.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., Deed Book LL, pp. 547-48.

<sup>35</sup>Nelson letter.

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Nelson Hotel, "one of the most widely known country hotels in this section of Georgia."<sup>36</sup> A memorial tribute printed several months after Nelson's death acknowledged how "Our little town of Reidsville was shocked at the sad and sudden news. To know Brother Nelson was to love him, he was of such a sweet disposition."<sup>37</sup> In addition to his wife of nearly 50 years, Katherine Garland Nelson, R.M. Nelson was survived by eleven of their twelve children.<sup>38</sup> Since Nelson died intestate, his wife received one-half interest in the Nelson Hotel property as did the children together.

Following her husband's death, Mrs. R.M. Nelson continued to operate the Nelson Hotel.<sup>39</sup> In late 1929, R.M. Nelson's eleven children jointly gave their mother a quit claim deed to their share of the property. However, on March 26, 1931, Mrs. Nelson conveyed the hotel property, which had a \$1,200 lien against it, to her son L. Roy Nelson of Ware County for the sum of \$5.00.<sup>40</sup> By sometime in April, 1931, Roy Nelson and his wife Mary Elizabeth (Mary Lizzie) moved from Waycross to Reidsville to run the Nelson Hotel.<sup>41</sup>

It appears that various members of the Nelson family and its heirs owned and operated the hotel for approximately the next 50 years. However, during the Depression, there were discrepancies regarding the title. In December, 1934, the Glennville Bank foreclosed on L.R. Nelson due to several then outstanding liens against the hotel on which he had defaulted.<sup>42</sup> Nelson claimed to have transferred the property to his wife in February, 1933 via a deed of gift which was either lost or misplaced without recording, thus, making the foreclosure invalid. The dispute between Nelson and the bank was resolved in late 1935. On December 10, 1935, Mrs. R.M. Nelson issued a quit claim deed to her daughter-in-law, Mary E. or Mrs. L.R. Nelson. Then on February 14, 1936, L.R. Nelson had a deed prepared to confirm his earlier transfer of the hotel property to his wife, Mary E. Nelson.<sup>43</sup> Mary E. Nelson went on to pay the Glennville Bank \$2,012 in May, 1936 to remove the bank's claim

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<sup>36</sup>"R.N. Nelson Passed Away at Columbus," The Tattnall Journal, November, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., March 27, 1930.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., November, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup>"50 Years Ago," Ibid., April 9, 1981.

<sup>40</sup>Tattnall County, Georgia. Clerk's Office. Deed Book XX, p. 81.

<sup>41</sup>The Tattnall Journal, April 9, 1981.

<sup>42</sup>Tattnall County, Georgia. Clerk's Office. Deed Book 3-C, pp. 226-28.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., Deed Book 3-D, p. 540.

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to the property. It appears that despite the bank's foreclosure and subsequent dispute, the Nelsons continued to reside in the hotel.<sup>44</sup> It was not until 1945 that all other claims or debts incurred against the Nelson Hotel were paid, and the title was cleared.<sup>45</sup>

The next transaction involving the hotel occurred on January 1, 1938 when Mary E. (Lizzie) Nelson returned two adjacent lots, with the Nelson Hotel as part of the transaction, to her husband, L.R. (Roy) Nelson.<sup>46</sup> Nelson is believed to have retained ownership of the property for the next eight years before selling it to two of his sisters, Mrs. Bessie N. Smith and Mrs. Lela N. Kelly on January 1, 1946. Each purchased one-half undivided interest in the Nelson Hotel property for \$3,500 plus interest, which included all furniture, furnishings, and equipment. Three years later on February 3, 1950, Bessie N. Smith sold one-half interest to another sister, Mrs. H.P. (Ethel) Mattox for \$4,000. As before, the sale included one-half interest in all furniture, furnishings, and equipment, but this time, the electric refrigerator, kitchen cabinet, three piece living room suite, and piano were omitted.<sup>47</sup> Later that year on June 10, 1950, Mrs. Lela Nelson Kelly and Mrs. H.P. Mattox deeded 635 square feet of the property to the adjacent Kennedy Chevrolet Company.<sup>48</sup>

According to the Smith/Nelson family history, the three Nelson sisters, Bessie, Lela, and Ethel, managed the hotel. There seems to be a discrepancy as to when, however. Family history states that they ran the hotel after their parents, with Roy (L.R.) and Mary Lizzie Nelson taking over its operation in later years. Given the sequence of ownership, it appears more likely that the reverse is actually true, that Roy and Mary Lizzie operated the hotel for a number of years (after his parents) before his sisters became proprietors. A fourth Nelson sister, Blanche N. Sperry is also supposed to have run the hotel,<sup>49</sup> but it appears that she did not own it as no record was found indicating her ownership.

On December 16, 1950, Mrs. H.P. (Ethel) Mattox sold her undivided one-half interest in the Nelson Hotel to her four children, Lela Belle Mattox Forbes, Dorothy Mattox, Reuben Mattox, and Robert Mattox for \$4,000.<sup>50</sup> The next year on September 1, 1951, Ethel (Mrs. H.P.) Mattox purchased for

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 539.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., pp. 542-44.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., Deed Book 3-F, p. 372.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., Deed Book 3-S, p. 219.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 496.

<sup>49</sup>Smith, Bradford. Untitled Smith Family History, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup>Tattnall County, Georgia. Clerk's Office. Deed Book 4-E, p. 307.

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### Section 8--Statement of Significance

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\$5,000 the remaining one-half interest in the hotel property from her sister, Lela N. Kelly,<sup>51</sup> who had obtained the property from their sister, Bessie N. Smith's heirs.<sup>52</sup> On November 30, 1984, Ethel Mattox's children gave a quit claim deed to their mother's estate for their combined one-half interest in the Nelson Hotel property to allow the executor to combine it with their mother's one-half interest in order to settle the estate.<sup>53</sup> The hotel is believed to have ceased operation in the mid 1980s.

Several transactions involving the hotel property occurred during the 1980s and 1990s. The Nelson Hotel reopened as a bed and breakfast inn in 1997.

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., Deed Book 3-U, pp. 2 and 10.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., Deed Book 4-E, p. 309.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., Deed Book 159, p. 325.

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## 9. Major Bibliographic References

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"50 Years Ago," The Tattnall Journal, April 9, 1981.

Georgia Department of Natural Resources. "Georgia's Living Places: Historic Houses in Their Landscaped Settings." 1991.

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Nail, Robin and Jerry & Sharon Walker. "Smith-Nelson Hotel." Historic Property Information Form, March, 1998. On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia.

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"Smith Hotel Ready for Business," The Tattnall Journal, May 28, 1908.

Smith, Bradford, comp. Untitled Zach Smith Family History, furnished by Miriam Hogan, n.d., p. 1; letter from Miriam Stanley Hogan, Bartow, Florida to Mrs. Betty Clemens, Reidsville, Georgia, May, 1991, p. 1.

Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Deed Book 159, p. 325.

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Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Deed Book 179, pp. 31-32.

Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Deed Book 189, pp. 78-80.

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National Park Service

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### Section 9--Major Bibliographic References

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- Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Deed Book 3-D, p. 539.
- Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Deed Book 3-D, p. 540.
- Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Deed Book 3-D, pp. 542-544.
- Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Deed Book 3-F, p. 372.
- Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Deed Book 3-M, pp. 601-604.
- Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Deed Book 3-O, p. 187.
- Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Deed Book 3-S, p. 219.
- Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Deed Book 3-S, p. 496.
- Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Deed Book 3-U, pp. 2 and 10.
- Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Deed Book 4-E, p. 307.
- Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Deed Book 4-E, p. 309.
- Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Deed Book U, p. 219.
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- Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Deed Book DD, pp. 140-141.
- Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Deed Book EE, p. 169.
- Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Deed Book LL, pp. 547-548.
- Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Deed Book XX, p. 81.
- Tattnall County, Georgia, Clerk's Office. Security Deed, Deed Book 3-D, p. 541.
- The Tattnall Journal, July, 1905.
- The Tattnall Journal, March 27, 1930.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Section 9--Major Bibliographic References**

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"The Tattnall Journal," The Tattnall Journal, June 15, 1905 and July, 1905.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS): (X) N/A**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been issued date issued:
- 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 #

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State historic preservation office
- Other State Agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other, Specify Repository:

**Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A**

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property** 0.34 acres

**UTM References**

A) Zone 17 Easting 394609 Northing 3550273

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary of the nominated property follows the current legal boundary which is indicted on the attached copy of Tattall County Tax Map R9, land lot 105, indicated by a heavy black line. On the north and east, the boundary extends to the inside (yard side) edge of the modern sidewalk.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary of the nominated property includes the intact parcel of land historically associated with the hotel and the front and side yards to the inside edges of the sidewalks.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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**State Historic Preservation Office**

**name/title** Holly L. Anderson, Survey and National Register Specialist  
**organization** Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**street & number** 156 Trinity Avenue, S.W., Suite 101  
**city or town** Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303  
**telephone** (404) 656-2840 **date** February 16, 2001

**Consulting Services/Technical Assistance (if applicable)** ( ) not applicable

**name/title** Robin B. Nail, Preservation Planner  
**organization** Heart of Georgia-Altamaha Regional Development Center  
**street and number** P.O. Drawer 1260  
**city or town** Baxley **state** GA **zip code** 31515  
**telephone** (912) 367-3648

( ) consultant  
(X) regional development center preservation planner  
( ) other:

(HPD form version 02-24-97)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
**Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

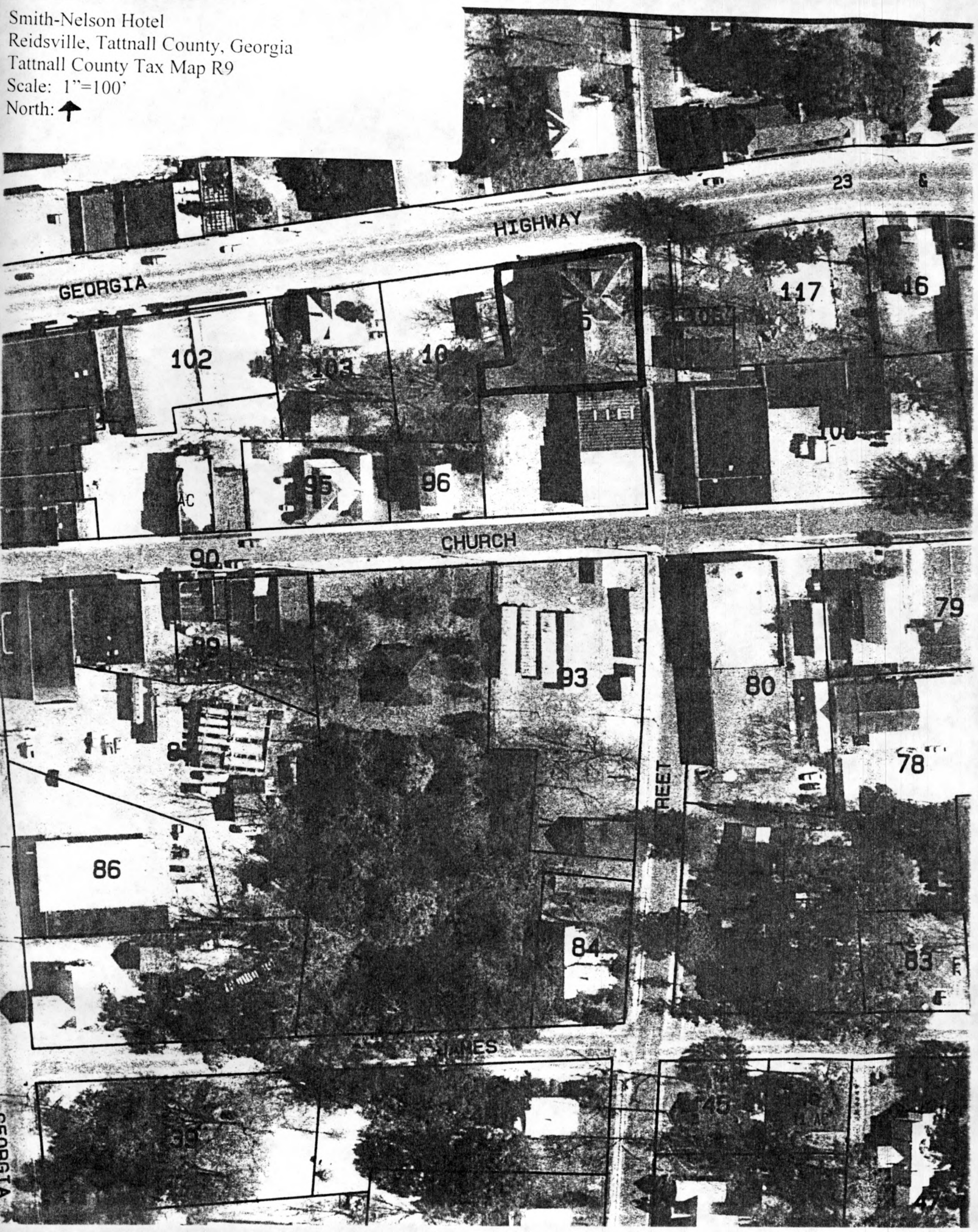
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**Name of Property:** Smith-Nelson Hotel  
**City or Vicinity:** Reidsville  
**County:** Tattnall  
**State:** Georgia  
**Photographer:** James R. Lockhart  
**Negative Filed:** Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**Date Photographed:** March, 1999

**Description of Photograph(s):**

- 1 of 14: Main facade and east facade; photographer facing southwest.
- 2 of 14: Main facade; photographer facing south.
- 3 of 14: East facade and rear facade; photographer facing northwest.
- 4 of 14: Rear facade; photographer facing north.
- 5 of 14: West facade and rear facade; photographer facing northeast.
- 6 of 14: Main entrance and porch; photographer facing southeast.
- 7 of 14: Interior, first floor, central hall; photographer facing north.
- 8 of 14: Interior, first floor, parlor; A on floor plan; photographer facing south.
- 9 of 14: Interior, first floor, bedroom, C on floor plan; photographer facing northwest.
- 10 of 14: Interior, first floor, dining room, kitchen; photographer facing southwest.
- 11 of 14: Interior, first floor, living room, stairway; photographer facing southwest.
- 12 of 14: Interior, second floor, bedroom H, on floor plan; photographer facing southeast.
- 13 of 14: Interior, second floor, bedroom, G on floor plan; photographer facing south.
- 14 of 14: Interior, second floor, bedroom F, on floor plan; photographer facing south.

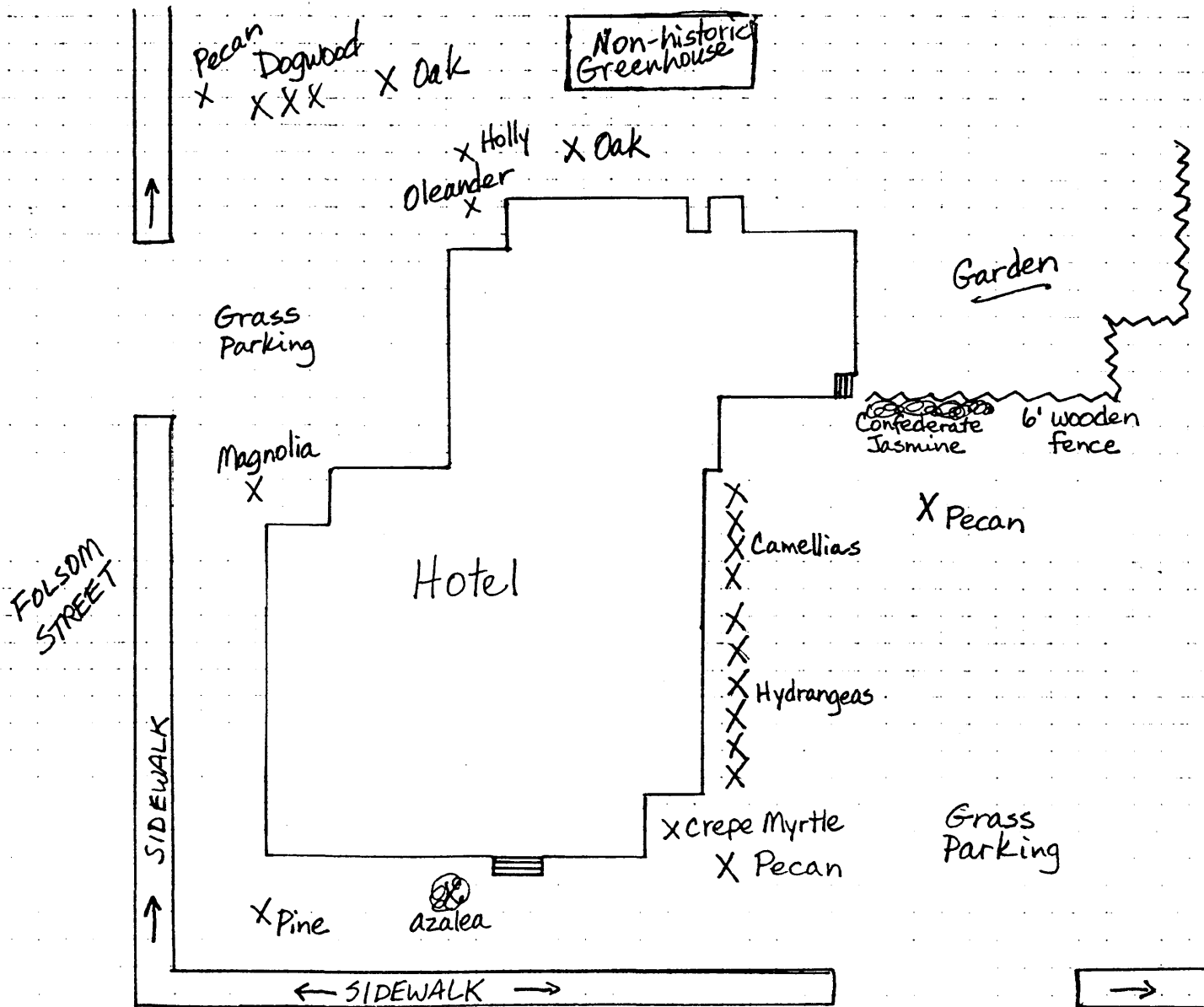
Smith-Nelson Hotel  
Reidsville, Tattnall County, Georgia  
Tattnall County Tax Map R9  
Scale: 1"=100'  
North: ↑



Smith-Nelson Hotel  
Reidsville, Tattnall County  
Site Plan  
Prepared by: Heart of Georgia-Altamaha Regional  
Development Center  
No Scale  
North: ↓



Nelson Hotel  
118 S. Main Street  
Reidsville, GA (Tattnall Co.)



S. MAIN STREET  
(GA 121/23)

NTS  
Prepared HofGA RDC  
3/98

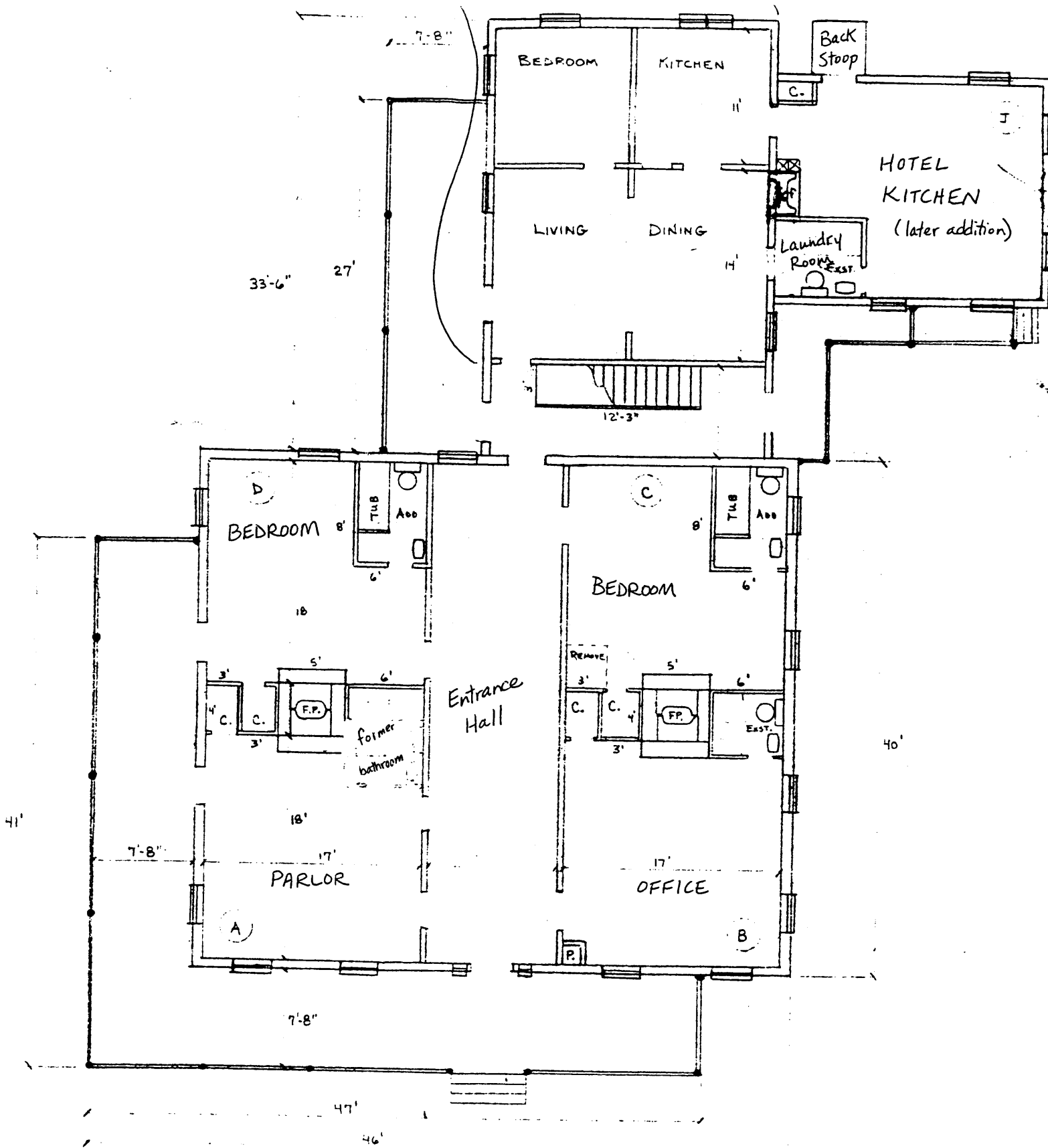
Smith-Nelson Hotel  
Reidsville, Tattnall County

First Floor Plan

Prepared by: Heart of Georgia-Altamaha Regional  
Development Center

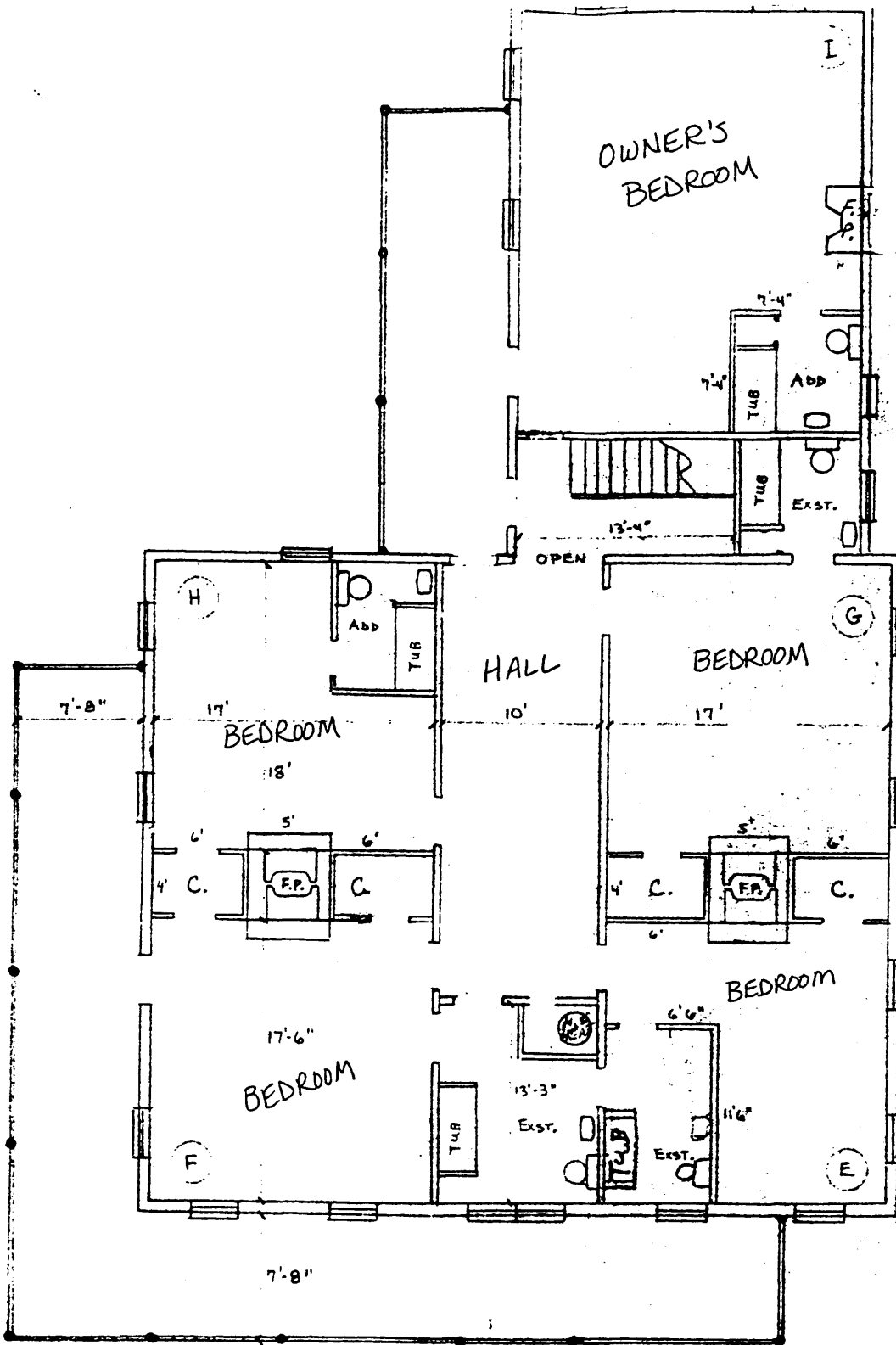
No Scale

North: ↓



FIRST FLOOR

Smith-Nelson Hotel  
Reidsville, Tattnall County  
Second Floor Plan  
Prepared by: Heart of Georgia-Altamaha Regional  
Development Center  
No Scale  
North: ↓



SECOND FLOOR