

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

413  
APR 13 1989

NATIONAL REGISTER  
**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 Thomson Commercial Historic District  
other names/site number

**2. Location**

street & number North of Hendricks St., south of Milledge & Journal  
Sts., east of Church St. and west of Cleveland St.  
city, town Thomson (n/a) vicinity of  
county McDuffie code GA189  
state Georgia code GA zip code 30824

(n/a) not for publication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	65	18
sites	0	1
structures	0	0
objects	1	0
<b>total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>19</b>

**Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0**

**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.

Elizabeth A. Lyon  
Signature of certifying official

5-16-89  
Date

Elizabeth A. Lyon  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer,  
Georgia Department of Natural Resources

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 Mark J. Burke June 9, 1989
- ( ) determined eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- ( ) determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- ( ) removed from the National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- ( ) other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_
- ( ) see continuation sheet \_\_\_\_\_

Entered in the  
National Register

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature, Keeper of the National Register      Date

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**6. Function or Use**


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**Historic Functions:**

COMMERCE/TRADE:business  
 AGRICULTURE:storage  
 TRANSPORTATION:rail-related  
 GOVERNMENT:city hall/fire station  
                   post office

**Current Functions:**

COMMERCE:business  
 TRANSPORTATION:rail-related  
 EDUCATION:library

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**7. Description**


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**Architectural Classification:**

LATE VICTORIAN:Italianate  
 LATE 19TH/20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS:commercial style  
 LATE 19TH/20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:classical revival  
   colonial revival

**Materials:**

foundation brick  
 walls brick, terra cotta  
 roof asphalt  
 other n/a

**Description of present and historic physical appearance:**

The Thomson Commercial Historic District consists of the concentration of historic commercial, warehouse, and transportation related buildings in downtown Thomson. These buildings date from the mid-19th century through the early 20th century. Most are one-to-two stories in height and are built of brick with uniform sidewalk setbacks and party walls. Many feature historic storefronts on their ground floor levels and decorative brickwork above. Three three-story buildings highlight the historic area. Other historic buildings in the district include a former municipal building, a former post office, a theater, and a railroad depot, and several small warehouses.

The commercial row buildings in the district comprise the area along the north side of the railroad track. Most of the one-story warehouses and some commercial buildings are found to the south of the tracks. The exterior building materials used for these warehouses are of brick, wood, and terra cotta. The interiors are of timber frame construction.

The buildings are late 19th and early 20th century one-, two-, and three-story buildings constructed of both red and buff colored brick and represent Neoclassical, Italianate, Colonial Revival and simple utilitarian commercial styles. Decorative brick cornices, transom and

segmental arched windows, and string courses are common design elements found within the district. Designs for structures developed more complexity as the community grew and developed. This is seen in some of the multi-story buildings and bank buildings.

The most common architectural styles in the district are the early 20th century commercial style buildings. The 1903 Masonic Lodge (photo #20) reflects this style and is located along Railroad Street. The lodge served an important function in the commercial and social activities of the town. The historic colonial revival post office, built in 1932, now serves as the McDuffie County Library. This red brick with white trim, free-standing building is located on the corner of Main and Milledge Streets. The 1914, red brick City Hall/Firehouse was actively used until the 1950's and is now used as an artist's studio. The two-story, Princess Theater is the oldest theater in Thomson and was in operation in the early 1920's. This building was constructed using a highly textured brick and laid in running bond with stacked coursing at piers and around the second floor windows.

Another contributing building to the district is the one-story, brick, wood, and corrugated metal cotton gin. Built as part of the McDuffie Oil and Fertilizer Company, it is located east of Greenway Street. Another group of one-story warehouses are located west of the current Main Street and are known as the G. T. Neal Cotton Seed Warehouses.

A contributing object is the granite statue of a women in a homespun dress carrying a banner of the Confederacy (photo #5). Known as the "Women of the Sixties," this statue is unique in that it honors the women who aided and supported the Civil War effort. Names of all the Confederate participants from the area are listed on either side of the monument's base. The statue was placed in Memorial Park between 1910 and 1920 and is located near the rail depot.

Pedestrian scale is maintained by the majority of buildings being at street level and directly accessed from the sidewalk. The relatively narrow Main Street right-of-way and minimal setback of buildings gives the Main Street an enclosed feeling. Visual linkage between the two opposing street facades is a product of this closeness. Other streets in the district have an even more enclosed feeling due to their narrow width. The only major area not conforming to this description is the space between the depot and the opposing buildings of Railroad Street. This space has historically been an open space for congregating and open-air warehousing of agricultural products like cotton. It is now used as a major downtown parking area.

Very little vegetation exists within the district due to the extensive paving of the streets. One section of Journal Street still consists of brick paving.

Historically, the commercial development on Main Street primarily focused on professional services, banking and more traditional domestic retail establishments. This was in contrast to the area between Main and Greenway Streets where the commercial activity was centered on agricultural goods and services. Main Street is designated as US 78 and GA 17 of the federal and state highway system. East Main Street is distinguishable by the raised sidewalk, indicating

where a former park lead from the Greenway Hotel (later Knox Hotel) to the depot.

All of the architecture is in scale with only four buildings over two stories in height. The remainder of the buildings are one and two stories in height. All of the buildings are of masonry construction in compliance with an ordinance passed in 1888 after a fire had destroyed a great many of the wood frame structures in the commercial district. The four exceptions are the Masonic Temple, the 1905 Neal Building, the 1913 Stacy Turner Building, and the 1914 City Hall/Firehouse.

The development of the Thomson commercial district was primarily to support the transportation center of the railroad with cotton as the main cash crop. The district retains a fairly intact concentration of buildings which represent a historic commercial/shipping center with the one-story, granite depot built in 1860, continuing to be the main focus for the district.

Intrusions on non-historic properties are small in number within the designated district because the boundaries have been drawn to exclude any such properties that fall at the edges. Other residential properties are non-contributing due either to their post-1938 age or severe changes.

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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  
 Commerce  
 Community Planning & Development  
 Politics & Government  
 Transportation

**Period of Significance:**

1854-1938

**Significant Dates:**

1854 - founding of Thomson

**Significant Person(s):**

n/a

**Cultural Affiliation:**

n/a

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

n/a

**Significance of property, justification of criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above:**

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

The Thomson Commercial Historic District represents a typical central business district in a small Georgia city. Thomson is located in east Georgia, 30 miles west of Augusta and 122 miles east of Atlanta.

**ARCHITECTURE**

In terms of architecture, the district is significant for its collection of late 19th and early 20th century commercial, warehouse and transportation related buildings. The buildings represent the typical small town commercial architecture of the turn-of-the-century and most design details are intact. The streetscape they present as a whole is also historically significant and has remained the same in Thomson since the early 1900's. Some of the styles represented in the district include Italianate, Classical Revival, Colonial Revival and simple utilitarian commercial styles. Pressed metal cornices, brackets, segmental arched or flat window heads, belt courses, corbels, and dentil moldings are common details found on these commercial structures. The decorative brickwork is minimal but well executed and many of the stores have retained details such as the large plate glass store fronts. The Stacy Turner Building is a fine example of a simple commercial style. This three-story, three-bay red brick building exhibits detailed brick belt courses. The upper facade is recessed between brick piers of segmental arched windows. Second story sashes are four over four and third story sashes are six over six. Decorative brick belt courses separate the second and third stories. The cornice is emphasized by oversized red brick dentils. Besides commercial buildings the district also contains other examples of important historic building types, including free-standing governmental buildings, a railroad depot and a theater. All represent important period architectural styles which are characteristic in historic central business districts in small Georgia cities. The district is also important for its collection of warehouse architecture. These large brick buildings represent the type of structures used as warehouses in the late 19th and early 20th century. The large warehouses are commonly of one-story brick or wood construction. The brick and wood frame cotton gin is built next to a warehouse as part of the former McDuffie Oil and Fertilizer Company. The former Union Cotton Warehouse is constructed using terra cotta as an exterior building material. The warehouse architecture with this district is characteristic of historic, commercial warehouse districts in small Georgia cities.

**COMMERCE**

In terms of commerce, the district is significant as Thomson's historic central business district. The majority of buildings housed a variety of stores, warehouses, offices and other places of business that provided day-to-day commercial activities including retailing, wholesaling, banking and professional services to the residents of Thomson and McDuffie County. Thomson's commercial establishments continue to fill the needs of the community in retail and service oriented capacities. The warehouses and cotton gin located near the

railroad tracks represent a specialized type of historic commercial center. The use of these buildings were for the storage and shipping of the area's lumber and agricultural products. These buildings contributed to the commercial and industrial activities of Thomson and McDuffie County during the late 19th and early 20th century. Primarily the location for storage and shipping, they included cotton, fertilizer, cotton oil and lumber warehouses and a cotton gin. These buildings and their relation to the railroad contribute to the historic development of Thomson as an important trading center.

#### COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

In terms of community planning & development, the district is significant for illustrating the way in which both a commercial center and an entire town developed along an early railroad stop in the Georgia countryside. The town was laid out along transportation routes rather than traditional axial or grid pattern development. Thomson follows the layout of the Georgia Railroad, and Main Street, which is the main road through the city. Because of this pattern, Thomson has no central town square or common area.

#### POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

In terms of politics & government, the district is significant for two important public buildings which served three different roles--the old Federal Post Office and the City Hall/Firehouse. The City Hall/Firehouse served in this capacity until 1956. These buildings represent the presence of federal and local government in Thomson during the early 20th century. They also illustrate the different levels of government and their day-to-day operations in the community.

#### TRANSPORTATION

In terms of transportation, the district is significant for containing 1860 Georgia Railroad depot. The depot was the center of activity for shipping and receiving goods and helps document the character and appearance of an early rail transportation facility. This granite structure replaced the original wooden depot at the same site. In 1905 a passenger station was added to the front of the freight building. The significance of Thomson in the area of transportation is evident in several areas. The development of the Georgia Railroad west from Augusta in the 1830's opened the "back country" of the state for increased settlement and agricultural development. The only major transportation route in the area prior to the railroad was the Wrightsboro Road. The junction of the Wrightsboro road and the new railroad was a logical point of development and place for commerce. The rail line made it possible to ship farm products into Augusta. The physical development of the town is seen in the linear development along the rail line east to west and along the Wrightsboro Road from south to north. The fact that the town developed around the depot and rail lines is attributable because it was a place of congregation and commerce. The depot served as the hub of commercial and as well as recreational activity. The Georgia Railroad construction began in Augusta in 1835 and reached Thomson by 1837. Lumber, cotton, peaches, and watermelons were shipped by rail from Thomson and the surround area. The depot represents the role that the Georgia Railroad played in the historical development of



Thomson and its central business district as a prosperous trading center.

### **National Register Criteria**

These areas of significance support this district's eligibility under National Register Criteria A and C.

This district meets National Register Criteria A for its contribution to the broad patterns of our history. This commercial district, as the core of a small southern town, reflects a great deal of the panorama of American life. The railroad depot reflects the town's origin as a rail stop on the Georgia Railroad line that runs from Augusta to Atlanta. The district reflects the variety of needs of a community in the late 19th and early 20th century. These historic buildings, arranged according to the railroad tracks, once housed general stores, specialty shops, cotton and oil warehouses, etc., all needed in day-to-day life by its citizens. This district also contains a Masonic Lodge, a former city hall/firehouse, a post office, and a theater, all aspects of a community's overall needs.

This district meets National Register Criteria C because of its architectural significance. The historic central business district contains a significant concentration of simple, historic commercial styles. This utilitarian style building was popularly used in early 20th century commercial development in Georgia. This district also contains examples of important historic architectural styles--including Italianate, Neoclassical, and Colonial Revival--that represent important architectural periods. The district contains an interesting assortment of early 20th century warehouse buildings which housed cotton, lumber, and other farm products awaiting shipping and a cotton gin utilized in cotton processing. All of these buildings and structures are characteristic of historic central business and warehouse districts in small Georgia cities.

### **Criteria Considerations (if applicable)**

n/a

### **Period of significance (justification, if applicable)**

1854 - founding of Thomson

1938 - 50 year cut-off

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**9. Major Bibliographic References**


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Jones, Dorothy M. "Historic District Information Form-Thomson Commercial Historic District." 1984. (On file at the Georgia Department of Natural Resources).

Previous documentation on file (NPS): (x) N/A

- ( ) 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 #

Primary location of additional data:

- (x) 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 19 acres

**UTM References**

- A) Zone 17 Easting 360830 Northing 3703940
- B) Zone 17 Easting 360720 Northing 3703720
- C) Zone 17 Easting 360240 Northing 3703610
- D) Zone 17 Easting 360230 Northing 3703890

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The Thomson Commercial Historic District in downtown Thomson, McDuffie County, is an area bounded generally by Church St. on the west, Milledge St. & Journal St. to the north, Cleveland St. to the east and Hendricks St. to the south. See attached map for a detailed boundary description.

**Boundary Justification**

The National Register District boundary is indicated by a heavy black line on the district sketch map and includes the most concentrated area of intact historic commercial, industrial, civic, and transportation related buildings in downtown Thomson.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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**name/title** Lisa Raflo, National Register Researcher  
**organization** Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Department of  
Natural Resources  
**street & number** 205 Butler Street, S.E., Suite 1462  
**city or town** Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30334  
**telephone** 404-656-2840 **date** 2/8/89

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**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ PHOTOGRAPHS Page 1

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Thomson Commercial Historic District  
Thomson, McDuffie County, Georgia

Photographer: James R. Lockhart

Negative: Filed with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Date: November, 1987

Description:

1 of 20: Thomson train depot, intersection of Main and Hendricks Street; photographer facing northeast.

2 of 20: South view of Thomson train depot from Main Street; photographer facing north.

3 of 20: Intersection of Main Street and Hendricks Street; photographer facing northwest.

4 of 20: Intersection of Main Street and Hendricks Street; photographer facing southwest.

5 of 20: Main Street businesses south of First Avenue; photographer facing northwest.

6 of 20: Railroad Street businesses east of Central Street; photographer facing northeast.

7 of 20: View of Main Street businesses north of First Avenue; photographer facing northwest.

8 of 20: View of Church Street south of First Avenue; photographer facing north.

9 of 20: Main Street businesses north of Journal Street; photographer facing northwest.

10 of 20: Main Street businesses at the intersection of 1st Avenue; photographer facing south.

11 of 20: Thomson-McDuffie County Library on Main Street; photographer facing northwest.

12 of 20: Main Street businesses at the intersection of Journal Street; photographer facing southeast.

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

PHOTOGRAPHER  
Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page 2

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13 of 20: View of Journal Street from the intersection of Central Street; photographer facing east.

14 of 20: Central Street businesses north of Scott Street; photographer facing north.

15 of 20: Journal Street businesses; photographer facing northeast.

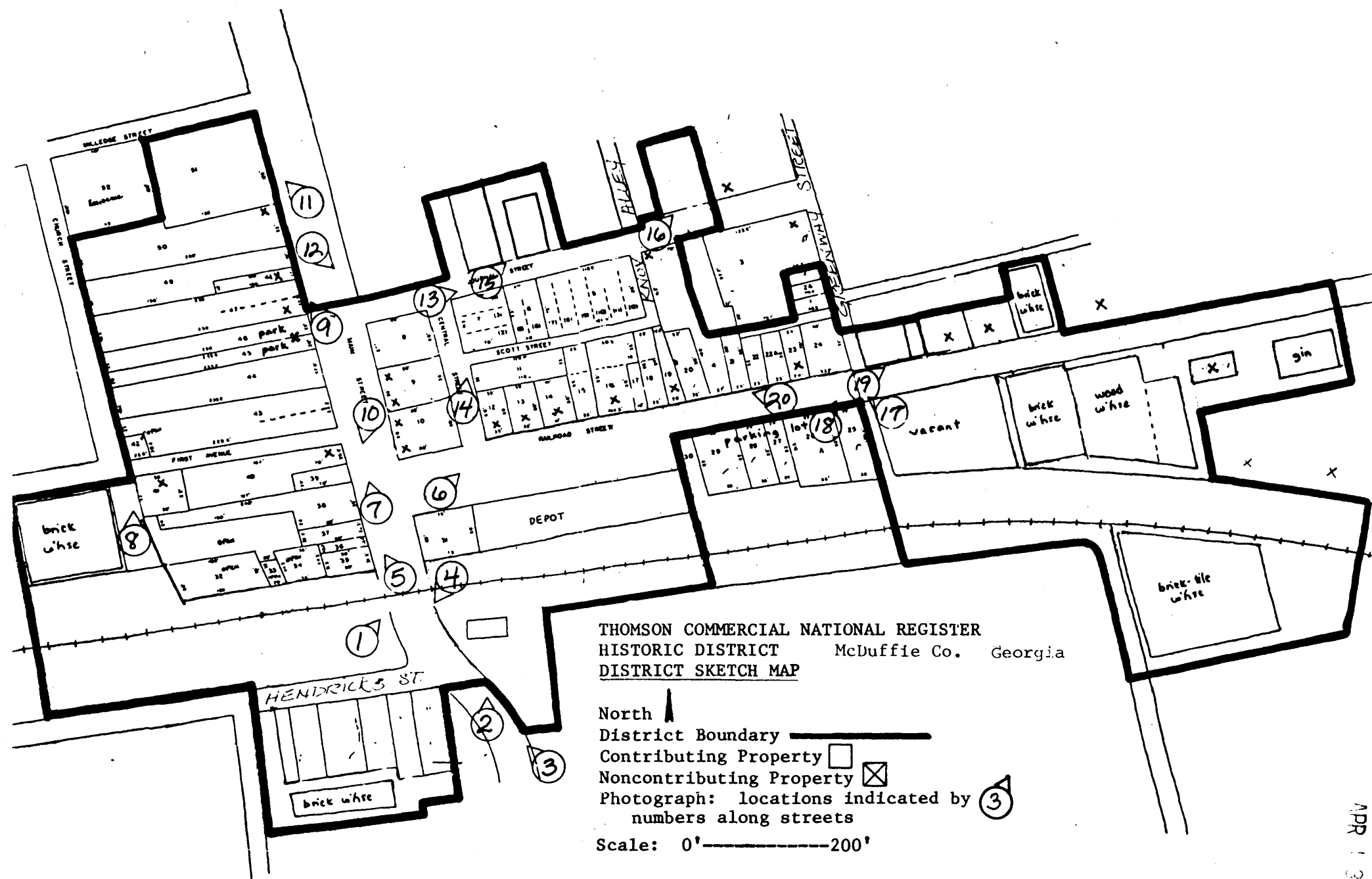
16 of 20: Journal Street businesses northeast of Knox Alley; photographer facing northeast.

17 of 20: Intersection of Greenway and Railroad Street; photographer facing northwest.

18 of 20: Intersection of Greenway and Railroad Street; photographer facing northeast.

19 of 20: View of Railroad Street east of Greenway Street; photographer facing northeast.

20 of 20: Railroad Street businesses west of Greenway Street; photographer facing northwest.



THOMSON COMMERCIAL NATIONAL REGISTER  
 HISTORIC DISTRICT McDuffie Co. Georgia  
 DISTRICT SKETCH MAP

North ↑  
 District Boundary —————  
 Contributing Property □  
 Noncontributing Property ⊠  
 Photograph: locations indicated by ③  
 numbers along streets

Scale: 0'-----200'