

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 91002001

Date Listed: 1/30/92

Ringgold Commercial H. D.
Property Name

Catoosa
County

GEORGIA
State

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Patrick W. Andrus
Signature of the Keeper

2/7/92
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Section No. 10

This nomination is amended to show the acreage as less than one acre.

This change was confirmed by phone with Richard Cloues of the Georgia SHPO (2/7/92).

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

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 Ringgold Commercial Historic District
other names/site number

2. Location

street & number Nashville Street, between Tennessee and Depot Streets
city, town Ringgold (n/a) vicinity of
county Catoosa code GA 047
state Georgia code GA zip code 30736
(n/a) not for publication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	7	3
sites	0	0
structures	0	0
objects	0	0
total	7	3

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

12/6/91
Date

Elizabeth A. Lyon
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

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other, explain:

see continuation sheet

Patrick W. Andrews 1/30/92

Signature, Keeper of the National Register

Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

COMMERCE:business
GOVERNMENT:post office

Current Functions:

COMMERCE:business/professional

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

MID-19TH CENTURY:GREEK REVIVAL
OTHER:Stripped Classical

Materials:

foundation brick, stone
walls brick
roof asphalt, metal
other

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

The Ringgold Commercial Historic District is located in the city of Ringgold, Catoosa County, in northwest Georgia. The district is located along Nashville Street, the city's main street, and consists of seven historic buildings within a commercial block of downtown Ringgold. The attached buildings date from c. 1860 to 1939. The buildings exhibit classical features such as pilasters, dentils, minimal ornamentation, and patterned brick. Some of the buildings are altered, i.e. original storefronts modified and windows blocked.

The earliest buildings date from the 1860s. The Whitman Block building (west-end of block) is a c. 1860, two-story, three-bay building located on the corner of Nashville and Tennessee Streets. The brick building exhibits Greek Revival influences with rectangular windows, stone lintels and sills, and pilasters. A section of the front facade is covered with a nonhistoric metal covering. Constructed by one of Ringgold's earliest residents, William Lane Whitman, the building was first used as a drygoods store. The first telephone system for Ringgold was also located in the second story of the building.

The 1860 McClain building (located mid-block) is a stuccoed, two-story building with a granite foundation, rectangular windows with masonry sills, pilasters, and a plain architrave. The building was used as a mercantile store, hardware, and feed store.

The 1860s, stuccoed, two-story Whitsett Building (located east-end of block) features a decorative recessed panel with arched second-story windows that are now blocked. The building is located two doors down

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from the McClain building and was used for a grocery, and drygoods store; later as the Dixie Cafe.

The remaining buildings date from the early 20th century. They are one-story, brick buildings with minimal detailing. Constructed in 1917, the former Bank of Ringgold (located east-end of block) is a one-story, brick building with recessed decorative brick panels, and brick dentils. The former Ford Motor dealership and McGill's grocery (located mid-block) are two identical brick buildings located in the middle of the block. Both constructed in 1920-21, the buildings are one-story structures with minimal detailing, some brick cornice work, and recessed storefront entrances. The 1926 White Oak building (located mid-block) operated as a grocery and hardware store until 1939, when it was leased as the U.S. Post Office. The building served as the post office until 1959.

The buildings are all located on the north side of Nashville Street in the block just west of the depot. The buildings are evenly set back from the street; new streetlamps are along the sidewalk.

Three noncontributing buildings are located within the district and are post-1941 commercial buildings. The district is surrounded by nonhistoric or altered commercial development.

8. Statement of Significance

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
Communications

Period of Significance:

c. 1860-1941

Significant Dates:

c. 1860

Significant Person(s):

n/a

Cultural Affiliation:

n/a

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

n/a

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

Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)

Ringgold Commercial Historic District is significant in architecture because the seven historic buildings that make up the district are local interpretations of an important historic building type--the commercial storefront building--and retain much of their original historic architectural character as mid-19th and early 20th-century commercial buildings. Important architectural features include load-bearing brick construction, pilasters, and patterned brick. The Whitman Block building, the McClain Store, and the Whitsett building all date from the 1860s. These buildings are two-story, stuccoed brick, symmetrically designed commercial buildings with minimal detailing. These mid-19th-century buildings represent relatively rare examples of extant mid-19th commercial brick structures in Georgia; many downtowns in small towns do not have buildings this old. The remaining historic buildings within the district were built in the early 20th-century and reflect the "stripped classical" influence on commercial architecture. Architectural features include minimal design details, brick corbeling, pilasters, and recessed paneled brick. The commercial structures are typical of late-19th and early 20th-century, one- and two-story buildings within a small Georgia town.

The district is significant in commerce and communications because the buildings served the needs of the residents of Ringgold by housing stores and offices which provided a variety of goods and services. The majority of buildings housed stores, offices, and other places of business that provided day-to-day commercial activities such as a bank, post office, mercantile company, the telephone company, hardware, cafe, and grocery for the residents of Ringgold and these businesses were important to the growth and development of the city. The buildings continue to serve as office and retail space.

National Register Criteria

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

The district meets National Register Criteria A as it is associated with the events making a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. This commercial district, as the core of a small southern town, illustrates a great deal of the panorama of American life. The historic buildings, arranged along the town's main street, once housed general stores, groceries, a bank, a drugstore, a post office, the telephone company, and a shirt factory, all used in

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day-to-day life. The district represents the variety of needs of a growing community in the mid-19th to early 20th century.

The district meets National Register Criteria C because of its architectural significance. The historic district contains seven intact commercial buildings arranged on the north side of one block along the town's main street. The one- and two-story commercial type buildings--with classical features and minimal details--are characteristic of mid-19th and early 20th-century commercial development in small Georgia communities.

Period of significance (justification, if applicable)

c. 1860 - beginning construction dates
1941 - 50 year cut-off

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if applicable)

Contributing Buildings - 7
Noncontributing Buildings - 3 (post-1941)

Developmental history/historic context (if applicable)

The town of Ringgold is located at a natural crossroads created by the broad valley of the Appalachian mountain system and the gap cut in White Oak Mountain by Chickamauga Creek. The natural crossroads were utilized first by Indians and later by pioneers and settlers. Ringgold's crossroad location contributed strongly to its initial settlement and its development.

In 1836, an act was passed by the Georgia legislature to construct a state-owned railroad from southern Tennessee to central Georgia. The Western and Atlantic Railroad ran from Chattanooga to Atlanta and took 14 years and \$4,000,000 to complete. The first train came through Ringgold on December 1, 1849. The depot was completed in early 1850.

The town was formerly known as Taylor's Gap and Dogwood Post Office. It was incorporated as Crossroads in December 18, 1847 while the area was still part of Walker County. The name was changed to Ringgold shortly after that in honor of Sam Ringgold, the first U. S. officer killed in the Mexican War. The town's first election was held in 1848.

Although the Western and Atlantic had been built primarily to bring prosperity to the larger towns of north central Georgia, Ringgold benefitted by becoming a railroad boomtown. When Catoosa County was created out of Walker County on December 5, 1853, Ringgold was at the

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peak of its prosperity and became the county seat. The town boasted a larger trading business than Chattanooga (Ringgold is located approximately 15 miles southeast of Chattanooga), and for awhile, the depot was the busiest of the 20 or so stops along the 137-mile route.

Ringgold's historic downtown commercial area developed in a linear grid for at least three blocks along Nashville Street, immediately west of the depot. Early buildings included a jail, stables, a three-story hip-roofed courthouse with a Masonic Lodge on the top floor, and a Presbyterian Church. The first bank was made of brick and located across from the jail. Michael Dickson, a businessman prominent in Ringgold's early development, had a hotel across from the depot and operated one of the town's taverns, one block from the depot on the south side of Tennessee Street. There were two other hotels - the Cherokee Hotel near Dickson's Hotel, and the brick Whitgett House. All of the above mentioned buildings have been destroyed.

One of the oldest remaining commercial buildings in Ringgold stands on the north side of Nashville Street, in the block immediately to the west of the depot. The c. 1860 Whitman Block building was constructed by William Lane Whitman. Whitman had arrived in Ringgold in 1847 and had established himself as a merchant.

The building known as the McClain store was built in 1860. The town's first drugstore was located in this building. From 1901 until 1924, J.A. McClain operated a store until his bankruptcy in 1924. In the same year, J.H. and E. Miller Clark purchased the building and operated a hardware and feed store (Rollins Feed) for several decades.

The two-story Whitgett Building was built around 1860 by James Whitgett. In 1919, a Mr. Trundle bought the building and operated a grocery store in it until 1923. The Dixie Cafe was in the building from 1935 until 1958.

By 1860, Catoosa County's population was 4,082. Approximately half of the population lived in Ringgold. Judging from the 1860 census, the economy was healthy and diverse. Most of the men described themselves as farmers, farm or day laborers. There were merchants who described their businesses as groceries, family groceries, dry goods stores, variety stores, or dry good and clothing stores. There were a hotel keeper, bookkeeper, depot clerk, depot agent, railroad workers, traders, and store clerks. There were a number of clergymen, attorneys, a few physicians, teachers, a publisher, a banker, and a constable. Craftsmen included several blacksmiths, a millwright, millers, a brick mason, a gunsmith, a saddler, a silversmith, a tailor, three cabinet makers, shoemakers, a wagon maker, a wagon master, tanners, carpenters, a carriage wright, and at least one apprentice.

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Because of its strategic rail position, Ringgold was the site of much activity during the Civil War. The first involvement began when Confederate General Bragg designated Ringgold as one of the hospital towns to care for the sick and wounded returning from his retreat through Kentucky and Tennessee. Hospital beds were placed in the local hotels, churches and the courthouse.

The Battle of Ringgold Gap was fought November 28, 1863. Confederate General Pat Cleburne had been ordered to protect the trains and rear of General Bragg's army as it retreated through the gap. By the end of the morning, the Union army with General Grant arrived in Ringgold. Orders were given to burn the town, including the depot, and to destroy the rail lines. During the first and second weeks of December 1863, buildings were burned, but the town was not completely destroyed. The depot and several other brick structures in the downtown block were gutted, but remained standing. The old courthouse, two churches, the Whitman home, and several other homes were left standing as seen in two pictures taken by war photographer Matthew Brady.

Union forces occupied Ringgold from November 27, 1863 until May 6, 1864. During the spring of 1864, Ringgold became the jumping off place for General Sherman's advance on Atlanta. One hundred thousand Union soldiers, 35,000 horses, 254 cannons, and hundreds of 6-mule wagons were assembled. Because of guerilla activity, the Union army ordered anyone living within three miles of the rail line to either sign a loyalty oath or to move. On May 6th, Sherman began his march to Atlanta.

By 1870, Catoosa County had a population of 4,409, compared to the 5,082 it had in the 1860 census. The county had lost 673 residents in the aftermath of the war and the majority of that loss was probably in and around Ringgold. Merchants, including Mr. Whitman, closed their businesses. Many of the people who left went west, usually to Texas. Those who remained were generally subsistence farmers. There was some interest in the mineral content of the local mountains, but little came of it. Several local newspapers were started, but all failed. It was not until around 1904, when the Catoosa County Record was published, that a newspaper was successfully reestablished.

By 1880, there were 4,739 people in Catoosa County and by 1890, there were 5,431 people. It had taken the county approximately 20 years to regain its prewar population.

Ringgold slowly built back. The rail line and depot were repaired and new stores opened. J. A. Smith bought the Whitman Block around the turn-of-the-century and had a shirt factory in the upper story. Evitt's Drugstore was also located in the building. During the 20th

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century, Ringgold's first telephone company operated out of the second-story; the phone lines are still visible on the interior.

In 1900, Ringgold had a population of 437. The Western and Atlantic depot carried on a "fine commercial business with farmers in the vicinity." Beef cattle were becoming important in the area. Large quantities of strawberries were raised and shipped to major cities such as Atlanta and Cincinnati.

The Bank of Ringgold was built in 1917. Chartered by J. A. McClain, and other businessmen, it operated out of the one-story building until 1973.

The building now known as the White Oak Building was constructed in 1926 by J. H. Clark. The first year he stored grain in the building for the cattle he bought and sold. The next and following years he operated a grocery and hardware store. From 1939 until 1959 the building was leased to the U.S. Post Office. During the first ten years, the lease was \$1,330 annually and for the next ten years the lease was \$720 annually.

During the early decades of the twentieth century, Ringgold's economic base changed from agriculture to industry. A chenille bedspread factory opened in the 1920s (and continued into the 1960s), introducing the textile industry to the area. The Dixie Highway, (U.S. Hwy. 41), was built through the gap in the 1930s, providing jobs and better access to the surrounding communities.

During the Depression, the Civilian Conservation Corps provided jobs locally through building four parks along U.S. Hwy 41, tracing Sherman's route through northwest Georgia. Small parks were built at Ringgold Gap, Dry Creek at Dalton, Resaca, and further south, in Cassville. In 1939, the Work Project Administration (WPA) replaced Ringgold's antebellum courthouse with the present courthouse.

The completion of Interstate 75 in the 1960s greatly increased Ringgold's access to outside markets and commuting range to jobs. Today, the city remains the active county-seat of Catoosa County.

9. Major Bibliographic References

Andrews, Ross. "Ringgold Historic District." Historic District Information Form, October 26, 1990. On file at the Office of Historic Preservation, Atlanta, Georgia.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): () 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:

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

Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

n/a

*The White Oak Building has been granted preliminary certification as contributing to a potential National Register district on 4/30/91 by NPS.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than two.

UTM References

A) Zone 16 Easting 672800 Northing 3865110

Verbal Boundary Description

The National Register district boundary is indicated by a heavy black line drawn to scale on the district sketch map.

Boundary Justification

The nominated district consists of those historic commercial buildings that make up the north side of the block along Nashville Street between Tennessee and Depot Streets. The area is surrounded by nonhistoric commercial development.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lisa Raflo, National Register Specialist
organization Office of Historic Preservation, 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** December 5, 1991

(HPS form version 9-13-91)

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Photographs

Name of Property: Ringgold Commercial Historic District
City or Vicinity: Ringgold
County: Catoosa
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: March 1991

Description of Photograph(s):

- 1 of 4. Streetscape view, corner of Tennessee and Nashville Streets, the Whitman Block building; photographer facing northeast.
- 2 of 4. View of buildings from right to left: the Whitsett building, former Bank of Ringgold, the McClain building, the White Oak building, the Ford Motor dealership, and McGill's grocery; photographer facing north.
- 3 of 4. Streetscape view of Nashville Street; photographer facing northeast.
- 4 of 4. Streetscape view of Nashville Street; photographer facing northwest.