

439

**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 STEWART, DR. JAMES A., HOUSE  
other names/site number N/A

**2. Location**

street & number Grady St.  
city, town Portal (N/A) vicinity of  
county BULLOCH code GA 031  
state Georgia code GA zip code 30450

(N/A) not for publication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	5	0
sites	1	0
structures	0	0
objects	0	0
total	6	0

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 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.

Elizabeth A. Lyon  
Signature of certifying official

4/15/93  
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**

- 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

Delores Byer 5/27/93

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

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## 6. Function or Use

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### Historic Functions:

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

### Current Functions:

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum

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## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification:

OTHER: FOLK VICTORIAN  
GEORGIAN COTTAGE

### Materials:

foundation	brick
walls	wood
roof	tin
other	n/a

### Description of present and historic physical appearance:

The Dr. James A. Stewart House is a historic frame, one-story house with outbuildings facing Grady St., one of the major streets of the small town of Portal. Built around 1908-1909, and the earliest surviving house in Portal, it is a Georgian Cottage type house with a 4-room, central-hall, square plan with a large hipped roof. It has a front porch running the length of the front facade with Folk Victorian woodwork. There is also a rear ell including the kitchen.

The house contains original mantels, doors, and other woodworking including simple detailed mantels and moldings and wood plank walls and ceilings. The flush vertical plank wainscoting in the hallway was originally painted with a decorative finish - a red base with yellow streaks. Constructed of heart pine by local carpenter-builders, the house features machine-cut materials with machine-cut trim on the porches front and rear. There is extra ornamentation in the gables.

The terrain is generally flat. The house property features mature trees and shrubs but no formal gardens or beds remain. This property also features a creek and wooded area which forms the rear of the house property. Development along Grady and Mullet is fairly dense, and there are no parks or squares in the area.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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There are four major outbuildings including a privy (1908), barn (1909), stables (1917), and garage (c. 1915), as well as a brick horse trough (1921) and a brick boiler (1921). The original smokehouse collapsed several years ago and once existed behind the house. A rose garden once stood to the left of the house, and the cornfield to the right of the house is still somewhat apparent, but all evidence of the separate horse and cow paddocks and the rear vegetable garden have been erased by time and vegetation. According to checks still in the family's possession, the kitchen was added and the rear porch altered in 1921. In 1933, the original wood shingle roof was replaced with a new tin roof which remains in place today. The original Delco electrical connections remain on the rear porch of the house.

The streets of Portal are laid out in a block pattern, and the lot on which the house sits is roughly rectangular in shape. U.S. 80 runs parallel to Mullet Road (Railroad St.) through Portal between the county seat towns of Statesboro and Swainsboro. Since the terrain is flat, it has little effect on land subdivision.

Changes to the house have been minimal.

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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  
HEALTH AND MEDICINE

**Period of Significance:**

1908-1943

**Significant Dates:**

1908-1909

**Significant Person(s):**

STEWART, DR. J.A. (1880-1952)

**Cultural Affiliation:**

n/a

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

unknown

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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)**

The Dr. James A. Stewart House, built in 1908, is significant in architecture because it is a good example of the Folk Victorian style/Georgian Cottage type house built in a small town setting and is the earliest surviving residential structure in Portal. It is typical of upper-class residential development. It retains all of its original features and floor plan, that of the 4-room, central hall. The house retains its original doors, mantels, wainscoting, and other features including decorative gables. The house is also typical of the era continuing the decades-old central hall theme and remains an intact example of a house of this period. All of the interiors appear intact and unchanged.

Its simply detailed mantels and moldings are an appropriate treatment for the wood plank walls and ceilings. The flush vertical plank wainscoting in the hallway was originally painted with a decorative finish - a red base with yellow streaks. The original Delco electrical connections remain on the rear porch of the house. The house retains most of its outbuildings, including a privy (1908), barn (1909), stables (1917), and garage (c. 1915), as well as a brick horse trough (1921) and a brick boiler (1921). This is an unusual number of surviving outbuildings, and as a group they illustrate the kinds of domestic outbuildings associated with a turn-of-the-century house in Georgia.

The property is also significant in health/medicine because the owner/builder Dr. J. A. Stewart (1880-1952) who moved to the newly reconstituted town of Portal after the turn of the century and became its most important citizen. A recent medical college graduate, he began his practice in this area. He built this house and his drugstore and office down the street. Dr. Stewart was significant as the town's doctor, city council member, and all around civic leader, as well as a major land owner. This house would have been the home of the town's most prominent doctor/citizen during the historic period.

**National Register Criteria**

The Dr. James A. Stewart House meets National Register Criterion A because it meets the broad patterns of American history as the home of a small town doctor and a citizen who was not only one of the best

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known and respected residents, but a very active one as well, serving on the city council, running the local drug store/pharmacy adjoining his own office, as well as being a member of other civic organizations. As the house of "Doc Stewart" it was no doubt the center of much activity during his heyday as a doctor.

The property meets Criterion B because the stores represent the major life work of the town of Portal's most important citizen, Dr. J. A. Stewart. From his arrival in the town at the onset of the 20th century, he was involved in every aspect of the town's growth and development from the city council to fraternal organizations. As the first doctor and one of the earliest settlers of Portal, Dr. Stewart played a significant role in the town's civic and economic development. Stewart was responsible for the relocation of his parents, brothers, and other family members from Crawfordville to Portal. His uncle, C. W. Caldwell built the two additional stores in this block in 1909. Stewart himself introduced a first to Portal in 1909-10 when he started his drug store operation. The marble soda fountain which he installed is still intact and featured eight pumps with carbonation produced by a bicycle pump. This fountain became a popular gathering spot in the community for both ice cream and gossip.

When Portal was incorporated in 1914, Dr. Stewart served on the first town council. He was an early member (1911) of the Portal Baptist Church, where he served as a deacon and church officer. He was a stockholder in the locally owned Portal Telephone Company, chartered in 1915. The doctor was a mason at the lodge in neighboring Aaron and also belonged to Portal's chapter of the Knights of Pythias. He was active in the trade and training of trotting horses between 1917 and 1925. When Portal's railroad was threatened by receivership proceedings in 1924, Stewart joined with other townspeople in a successful effort to raise funds necessary to continue railway service to the community.

The Stewart House meets National Register Criterion C because it is a good example of the Georgian Cottage type of house. Its four room, central hall plan with hipped roof is one very common in small towns in Georgia. The Stewart House is a very intact example of this type of house. It is the type of house that was very common in the first decade of the 20th century when it was built. The house retains good examples of local craftsman workmanship such as the mantels, wainscotting, doors, and front porch. The outbuildings reflect the necessity of the times to have many other services available on the property and most of these have survived to show the totality of the domestic house complex of the era.

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**Criteria Considerations (if applicable)**

N/A

**Period of significance (justification)**

The period of significance, 1908-1943, was chosen because Dr. Stewart lived in this house during the entire historic period. During this time he was active in business, social, and civic matters in the town.

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

The contributing resources are the house and its outbuildings which have survived. All were built between 1908-1943, the period of significance, and all retain their integrity.

**Developmental history/historic context (if applicable)**

The earliest settlement in Portal occurred about 1890 when G.W. and E. E. Foy of Effingham County purchased a 755-acre tract in northwest Bulloch County to harvest pine timber. They established the E. E. Foy Manufacturing Company and built a private railroad line from Rocky Ford to Portal with spur lines extending from the main line into the timber harvesting areas. The company store as well as housing for the company employees were located at Portal. Timber was shipped from Portal by rail to Rocky Ford and then on to Egypt (in Effingham County), Georgia, where the Foy sawmill was located. During this period, the Foy operation was one of the largest timber concerns in the state. In 1893, J. E. McCroan, who operated the store, applied to the United States Post Office Department for a post office. That application was the first written record which specifically mentioned Portal by name.

The closest school to Portal was located two miles away in Bradwell. There were no churches in Portal, but residents attended services at Pleasant Hill Methodist Church, Upper Lotts Creek Primitive Baptist and Poplar Springs Baptist Church, all of which were located within approximately five miles of town. By 1904, the Foy Company had harvested all of the timber in the area, and they parceled and sold off their holdings. Portal as such ceased to exist.

The specific origin of Portal's name is not clear; however, local residents offer a commonly accepted explanation. When the Foys



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established their rail line into northwest Bulloch County, they expected a large settlement to follow. For that reason, "Portal", would serve as a gateway between the more rural areas of the county and Statesboro. Several years after the early Portal settlement declined, the name would be resurrected for a new town.

That same year, rumors began circulating that a rail line was to be constructed between Statesboro and Swainsboro, county seat of the adjoining county. Two lines were chartered: the Savannah, Statesboro and Northern, and the Statesboro and Wrightsville. Neither company actually laid any track. In 1907, however, the Savannah, Augusta and Northern Railroad announced plans to complete a line from Statesboro to Wrightsville. In anticipation of this announcement, Alice Hendrix Daughtry and Elizabeth Hendrix entered into an agreement with the Georgia Realty Company of Statesboro to develop a station on the proposed rail line. This stop would be called "Portal" after the older dead town three miles to the north.

According to the agreement, the land for the new station and community consisted of 35 acres, with one portion to the south of the railroad and another portion to the north. Georgia Realty president J. A. Brannan and secretary Hinton Booth agreed to have the land surveyed into business and residence lots with intervening streets. Georgia Realty gained ownership of odd numbered lots 1 through 75 and all of the lots numbered 101 through 146. The Hendrix sisters retained ownership of even numbered lots 2 through 76. R. H. Cone drew up the original survey. Because of errors made in this survey, the parties had J. E. Rushing draw up a corrected plat in August 1910.

A newspaper account in the Bulloch Times for April 15, 1908 informed readers of an "auction sale of lots" to be conducted at the "new town" of Portal, with the S, A, & N Railroad (by then under construction from Statesboro to Wrightsville) carrying "free of charge those who wish to attend." The Times described Portal as "the second station out from Statesboro, twelve miles distant, ... located in good farming country. There is a strong probability that a thriving town will soon be established at that place." That same article also announced a similar sale of lots at Aaron, seventeen miles west of Statesboro for the week prior to the Portal sale.

Auctions such as those advertised at Portal and Aaron attracted citizens from many locations including rural Bulloch County. One such citizen was Dr. James A. Stewart. Born in Crawfordville, Georgia, in 1880, Stewart had attended the Medical College of Georgia. After graduating in 1906, Stewart moved to Bulloch County where he heard there was a need for rural doctors. He lived first with J. B. Jones, who had moved to Bulloch County from Crawfordville. There he practiced medicine from an office behind Jones' house. Later he moved into Old

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Portal. By late 1907, he began boarding with the Kitchings family, who lived not far from the Jones. He established his office across the road from the Kitchings' house. While living with the Kitchings, he met and became engaged to their daughter Sarah Kitchings.

The Portal auction, conducted April 18, 1908, "resulted in the sale of quite a good many lots ... all bringing good prices. The sale was conducted by the Georgia Realty Company, which furnished free transportation via the S. A. & N. railway for a hundred or more persons from this place." It seems evident that Dr. Stewart attended this auction because in May of that year, he filed a deed for "one-half acre of land lying in the town of Portal" conveyed from Alice H. Daughtry and Elizabeth Hendrix. This lot is the site on Grady Street where Dr. Stewart built his house by the end of that year. Four months later, he augmented his lot with an additional purchase of property located behind the original purchase. This entire lot was near the center of the developing business district, next to the site of W. E. Parsons' house and near Parsons' cotton gin.

Portal grew quickly that first year. A bank was constructed, with a school on the second floor. The Baptist Church organized at the house of W. E. Parsons, and both the Baptists and the Methodists met in Parsons' gin house for some time. As trade in the area increased, the gin house became increasingly difficult to utilize as a church. Parsons had been constructing a general merchandise store and had already roofed it. In an effort to accommodate the churches, however, he removed the roof and added a second story meeting room over the store. This served as the church until both denominations completed their own structures in 1911 and 1912 on land donated by the Georgia Realty Company.

The Bulloch Times for July 15, 1908 reported the successful growth of both Portal and its neighbor Aaron:

The new towns of Portal and Aaron, on the S. A. & N. railway, are said to be lively specimens of thrift and enterprise, with new buildings going up all about. At Aarons [sic] there are three store buildings, and at Portal two stores, a big ginnery and a number of residences. New depots are almost completed at both of these towns.

That same year, Dr. Stewart purchased another lot in the business district of Portal. He received from W.E. Parsons "one lot in the town of Portal...size 20 ft. front and 100 ft. in depth, bounded north by lands of W. E. Parsons, east by lands of W. E. Parsons, bounded south by railroad, bounded west by lands of Grady Street." It was on this lot that Dr. Stewart constructed his drug store and office.

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In February 1909, an anonymous poem, "A Trip To Portal," appeared in The Statesboro News. This verse specifically mentions six stores and three residences and includes a note on "clever Dr. Stewart who cures the peoples ills has all kinds of medicines, the very best of pills." An April newspaper issue commented on the continuing growth of the town:

Portal is one of those good little towns which is destined to grow into a good big town. ... A score or more new houses, built within the past few months, denote the progress of the place, and its surrounding farms insure its continued growth. Portal is going to be a town, and a good one, because a good class of people are building the place.

That same article specifically mentioned Dr. Stewart's residence as well as those of several other citizens. The November 30, 1909, issue of The Bulloch Times describes Portal itself as "one of the coming towns of Bulloch County. A few months ago it was a cotton patch, now a booming town with 10 stores and handsome residences."

Dr. Stewart convinced both his brother C. A. Stewart and his uncle C. W. Caldwell to move from Crawfordville to Portal. In 1909, Caldwell purchased the lot next to Stewart's drug store and built two stores on the property. In 1911, Dr. Stewart transferred a half interest in the drug store lot to his brother, but the interest was transferred back to Dr. Stewart the following year.

Portal was incorporated in 1914, and Dr. Stewart served on the first town council. The first ordinances adopted by the council addressed disorderly conduct such as "hooping," throwing trash or garbage in the streets, possession of whiskey, firearms or shooting in town, and selling on Sunday. Public dances, whether charged for or not, were forbidden. The Portal Telephone Company was chartered in 1915, with Dr. Stewart as a stockholder. Sometime after 1915, the town began electrical services to structures by means of a Delco generator, and city water was installed in 1921.

In 1915, the S. A. & N. railway was purchased by the Midland Railroad. By 1917, the Midland experienced financial difficulties and went into receivership. The railroad was sold at auction in Savannah that same year. Service continued on the line through Portal until November 20, 1922. In December 1923, one year after rail service to Portal had ceased, the citizens met to discuss ways to reestablish rail traffic between their town and Statesboro. Several residents, including Dr. Stewart, raised a total of \$10,000 and were given 90 days to raise \$22,000 more to purchase the irons and other property on the right-of-way of the railroad. This became unnecessary, however, because in February 1924, the line was purchased out of its second

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receivership by the Georgia and Florida Railroad, and service from Statesboro was restored.

In 1928-29, U.S. Highway 80 was constructed through Portal. This route connected Portal to towns not serviced by the railroad. This new transportation route could not revitalize the local economy, however, which had been severely damaged due to boll weevil infestations in the cotton crop. The poor business climate was dealt a death blow by the Depression. Many residents left the town in search of a better living. In 1950, rail service was discontinued and the rails taken up. Even under these conditions, local landowners repeatedly fought industrial interest in the area. Consequently, businesses operating in and around Portal today are almost all agriculturally related.

For reasons which remain unexplained, Dr. Stewart's uncle, C. W. Caldwell, lost his remaining parcel of land and it had to be sold at auction by the sheriff. It was purchased at auction in 1912. Soon after the purchase, the present stores were constructed under the ownership of Parrish and Hendrix. Parrish either leased or operated personally both stores as retail establishments until his death. His son, Charles E. Parrish inherited the property from his mother, Dotha Parrish, and sold the entire parcel to Dr. Stewart on July 2, 1943. Stewart purchased the property because it had been held by family members for most of Portal's history and because he wanted to insure the stability of the business corner where his drugstore stood. His son operated a grocery store in the center building, and Dr. Stewart leased the other store for various retail operations until his death.

Dr. James Stewart died in 1952, and his office was closed and the drugstore/office locked up by the family. The old Caldwell stores which he owned continued to operate for several years afterward. In recent years, however, all of the commercial stores have been vacant. Mrs. Stewart died, and eventually the house was left vacant when none of the heirs chose to live there.

About 1981, the Portal Heritage Society began seeking tourist interest in their area and established the annual Turpentine Festival to highlight the historic and continued activity in naval stores. Their efforts fostered an appreciation for Portal's past. The Stewart family felt very strongly that Dr. Stewart's legacy should be preserved, and in 1990, his heirs deeded the stores and the house to the Portal Heritage Society for use as museum facilities.

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## **9. Major Bibliographic References**

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Groce, Julie C. "National Register Nomination: Dr. J. A. Stewart Family District, Portal, Georgia" Historic Property Information Form, October, 1990. Copy on file at the Office of Historic Preservation, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, GA.

**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
- (X) Other, Specify Repository: Portal Heritage Society

**Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):**

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property** 1.26 acres.

**UTM References**

A) Zone 17 Easting 412560 Northing 3600440

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property is marked on the enclosed plat dated July 24, 1990, "Survey for the J. A. Stewart, Est.".

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated property is all that remains associated with the home of Dr. Stewart.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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**name/title** Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., Historian.  
**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** April 8, 1993

(HPS form version 10-29-91)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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**Photographs**

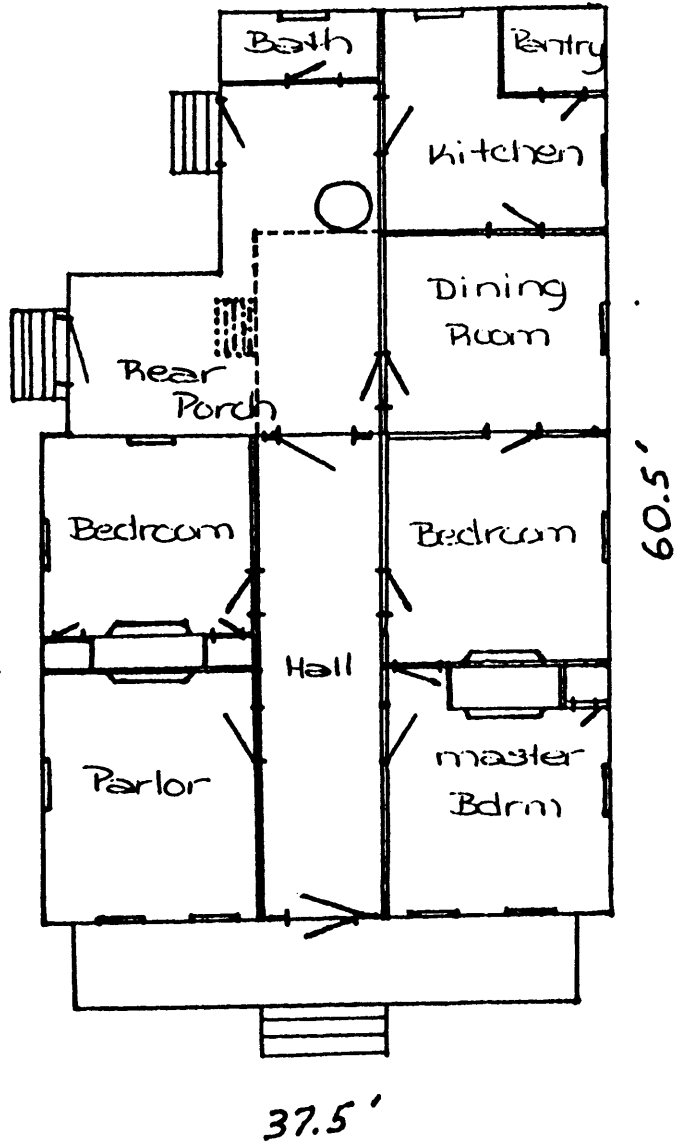
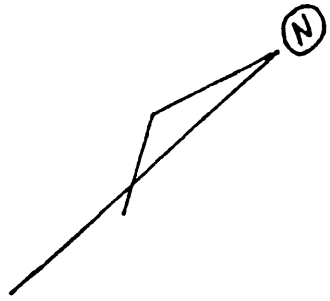
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**Name of Property:** Stewart, Dr. J. A., House  
**City or Vicinity:** Portal  
**County:** Bulloch  
**State:** Georgia  
**Photographer:** James R. Lockhart  
**Negative Filed:** Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**Date Photographed:** June, 1992

**Description of Photograph(s):**

- 1 of 8: Front facade, photographer facing northwest.
- 2 of 8: Front facade, photographer facing north.
- 3 of 8: Northeast facade, photographer facing southwest.
- 4 of 8: Rear facade, photographer facing northeast.
- 5 of 8: Outbuildings, garage on left, barn on right, photographer facing northwest.
- 6 of 8: Interior, parlor, photographer facing north.
- 7 of 8: Interior, master bedroom looking toward second bedroom beyond, photographer facing northwest.
- 8 of 8: Interior, bedroom adjacent to master bedroom, photographer facing east.

Floor Plan  
Stewart, Dr. James A., House  
Portal, Bulloch County, Georgia  
Scale: As marked on the plan  
Source: Drawn by Julie C. Groce  
Key: The rooms are marked directly  
on the plan.



1CM = 5'



Sketch Map (Site Plan)

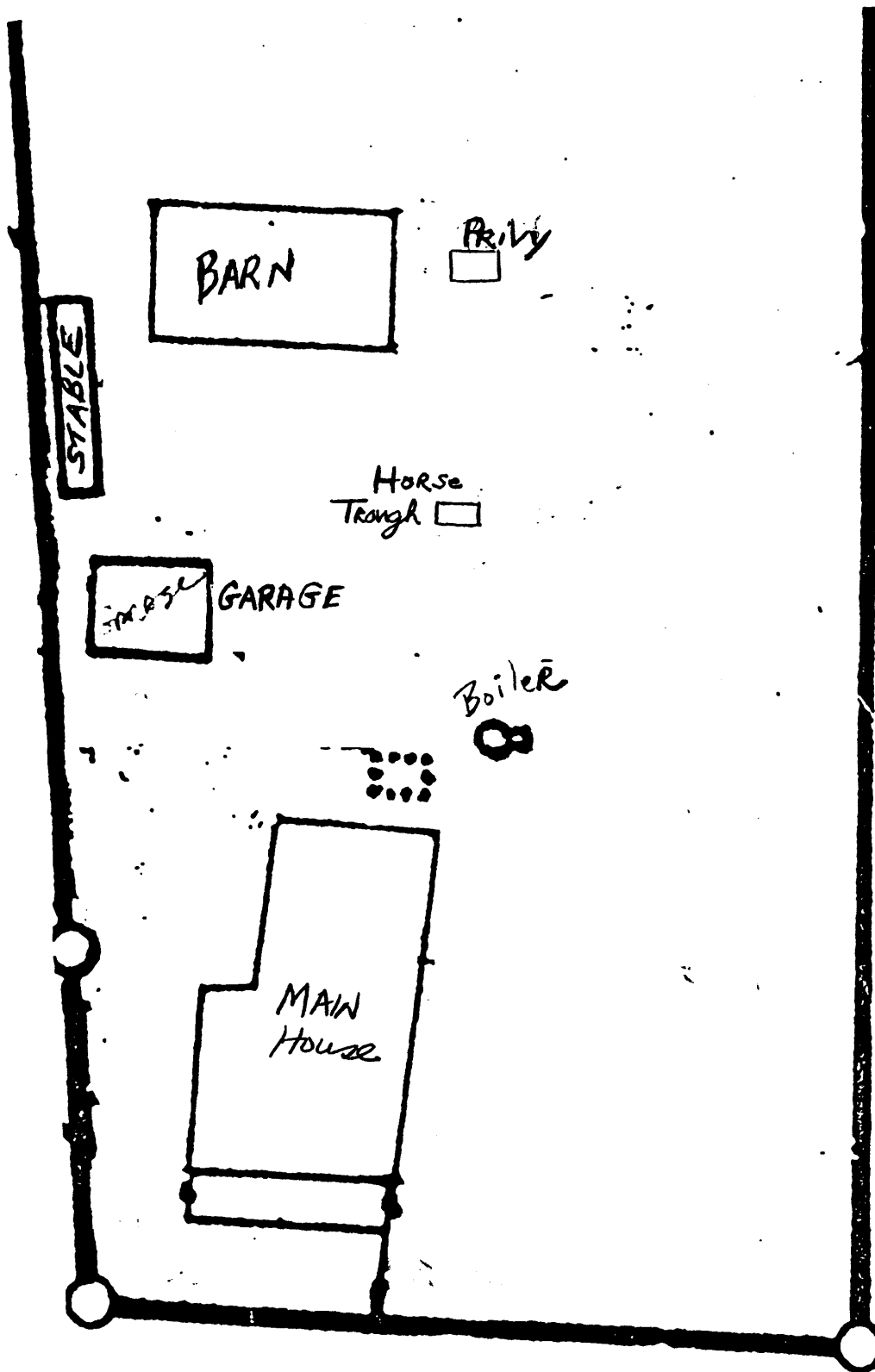
Stewart, Dr. James A., House  
Portal, Bulloch County, Georgia

Scale: Not to scale

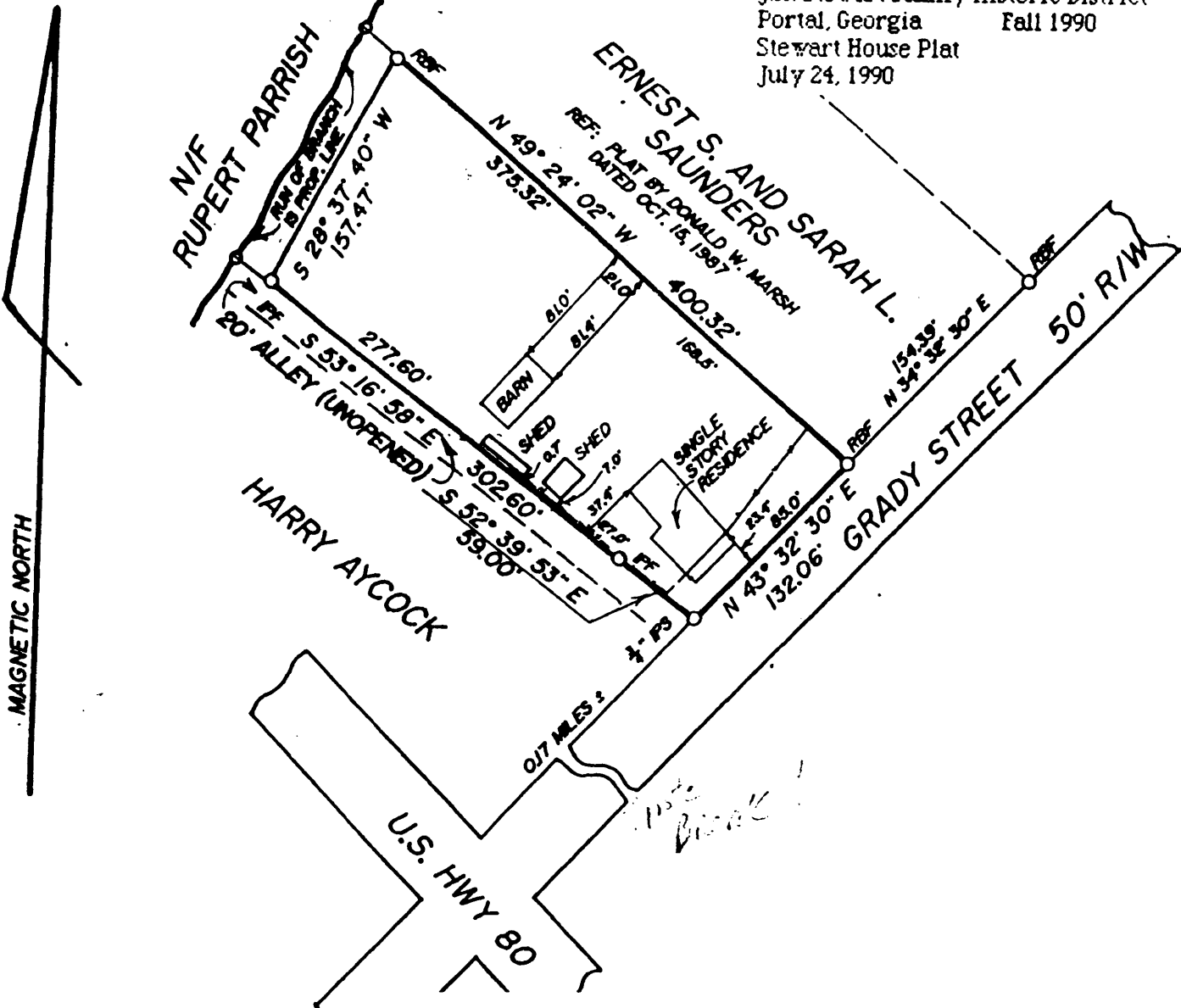
Source: Drawn by Portal Heritage Society

Date: 1990

Key: The outbuildings are marked directly  
on the map.



J.A. Stewart Family Historic District  
 Portal, Georgia Fall 1990  
 Stewart House Plat  
 July 24, 1990



Tax Map/Plat

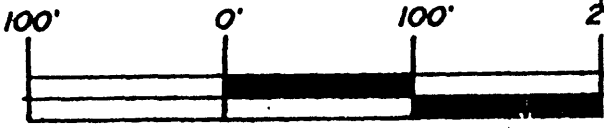
Stewart, Dr. James A., House  
 Portal, Bulloch County, Georgia  
 Scale: As shown on the plat  
 Source: Plat of Survey for J. A. Stewart Estate  
 Date: July 24, 1990  
 Key: The nominated property is all that is shown on the plat.

EOC FIELD = 119,498  
 EOC PLAT = 1/ 87,035  
 ANG. EOC = 25"/ANG. PT.  
 ADJ. METHOD - COMPASS RULE  
 EQUIP. USED: 6" TOTAL STATION  
 100' STEEL TAPE

DONALD W. MARSH AND ASSOCIATES  
 30 SEBALD STREET  
 STATESBORO, GEORGIA 30458  
 764-2397

JULY 24, 1990  
 SCALE: 1" = 100'

FILE NO: 9007013



IN MY OPINION THIS PLAT IS A CORRECT REPRESENTATION OF THE LAND PLATED AND HAS BEEN PREPARED IN CONFORMITY WITH THE MINIMUM STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS OF LAW

