

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED JUN 21 1979
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Roberts-McGregor House

AND/OR COMMON

Charles E. McGregor House

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Depot Street

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Warrenton

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Tenth - Rep. Barnard

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

Georgia

CODE

13

COUNTY

Warren

CODE

301

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- ___ DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- ___ STRUCTURE
- ___ SITE
- ___ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- ___ PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- ___ BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- ___ IN PROCESS
- ___ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- ___ OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- ___ WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- ___ YES: RESTRICTED
- ___ YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- ___ AGRICULTURE
- ___ MUSEUM
- ___ COMMERCIAL
- ___ PARK
- ___ EDUCATIONAL
- ___ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ___ ENTERTAINMENT
- ___ RELIGIOUS
- ___ GOVERNMENT
- ___ SCIENTIFIC
- ___ INDUSTRIAL
- ___ TRANSPORTATION
- ___ MILITARY
- OTHER: vacant

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. Ronald L. Mitchell

STREET & NUMBER

3300 Piedmont Road

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

Georgia 30305

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Superior Court

STREET & NUMBER

Warren County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Warrenton

STATE

Georgia 30828

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic Structures Field Survey: Warren County, Georgia

DATE

August, 1978

___ FEDERAL STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Historic Preservation Section, Ga. Dept. of Natural Resources

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Roberts-McGregor House is a large, two-story, four-over-four-with-central-hall house. It is constructed of brick and surfaced with stucco. The house was originally built in a transitional Federal/Greek Revival style between 1835 and 1843. It was remodeled in the 1920s with the addition of the Neo-classical portico. The Roberts-McGregor House still stands at the head of Bank Street, one block from the courthouse square. Approximately three areas of the original seven-acre landscaped town lot remain associated with the house.

The facade, as redone for C.E. McGregor in the 1920s, was stripped down into clean Classical lines. The cornice is simply a course of indenting capped by a course of cymareversa moulding. The same treatment wraps the chimney caps. Windows are tall, six-over-six lighted, with operable shutters. The entire building is sheathed in stucco, including the four huge, hollow terra cotta columns. The entry is the most ornamented feature of the facade and is original, like most of the interior details. Trabeated sidelights and transom are framed by severe Doric pilasters, panels, and entablature. The door here and all others in the house are eight-paneled with the keyholes set in a brass inset rectangle.

Most of the interior details remain in their original form. The highly plastic floriated plasterwork in the entry ceiling is set in panels which frame an acanthus-leaf medallion surrounding the light fixture. Door frames are very similar to those in Bonar Hall in Morgan County, Georgia, with deeply profiled mouldings punctuated by vegetal discs at the upper intersection of posts and lintels. Italian craftsmen reportedly did the elaborate mouldings and panels for this exceptional ceiling.

The double parlors to the right of the entry are separated by eight paneled sliding doors. Greek fret work caps the deeply recessed windows and the sliding doors. Ceilings are over twelve feet high with deeply profiled mouldings and baseboards as high as ten inches. Mantelpieces are pilaster-supported entablatures. The right-front fireplace is covered with an exquisite, baroque-inspired firescreen. The right-rear parlor has a simpler metal closure over the fireplace.

The original use of the two left rooms is unknown. Mantelpieces and mouldings are less ornamental than those across the hall, and the appearance of closets would indicate a bedroom or dining-room function. Windows are recessed and framed like those in the opposite parlors. The left-rear rooms on the first and second floors completely fell several years ago. The floors have since been jacked up and the walls remain to be rebricked.

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The stair leading to the upper bedrooms is located at the end of the central hall. It has simple, turned balusters and terminates in a turned newel cap. Risers are decorated with carved scrolls and the sides of the staircase are faced with panels shaped to the slope of the steps.

The four rooms above are similar to the first-floor rooms with the exception of closets and simpler decorative treatments.

In the basement the same four-room-with-central-hall plan is repeated with low ceilings, dirt or brick floors, and no decorative treatments. The kitchen and whitewashed food cellar, as well as the other two servants' rooms, are cluttered with old furniture, old law books and other remnants of the McGregors' occupancy. All other furniture has been removed from the house and most is in the possession of the McGregor descendants.

It is not known when the formal magnolia and boxwood garden was first laid out, but it was redesigned and replanted at least once in the early twentieth century by C.E. McGregor. When Major C.E. McGregor married Mary Lou Roberts and occupied the house about this time, he also built the low stone wall around the house which emphasizes the formal, frontal setting centered at the end of the walkway which delineates the garden and connects the entry gate to the front door. The iron rings and stoop for tying up and mounting horses remain at the entry gate. The gardens are overgrown at present.

Currently, only one outbuilding exists on the northern edge of the property, adjacent to the road. It is unclear to what use it was put. The original kitchen was moved into a brick-floored basement room. When plumbing was installed, the eighteen-inch-thick walls could not be bored through, so pipes were encased in wooden boxes on the outside of the house.

As the house became increasingly deteriorated, the McGregor daughters built a small, two-room house in the front yard of the property, between the front portico and the street. This has since been torn down and only the foundation remains.

Although at first glance the home appears to be in extremely deteriorated condition, on inspection it appears to be sturdy and very intact in all

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rooms and on all levels except the northwest corner which has deteriorated and has had to be shored up by the present owner. Once this is repaired and the grounds brought back from their present jungle state, the house could once again be an inhabitable local landmark.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property consists of City Lot No. 22, approximately three acres, bounded on all sides by streets, as shown in the accompanying map. It is an easily definable city block, all that remains intact of the original McGregor property.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Local History
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES ca. 1835-1842

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Roberts-McGregor House is significant in architecture, landscape architecture, and local history. Architecturally, the house, widely known for its monumental Neo-classical facade, actually dates from the antebellum period and has excellent Federal proportions and Greek Revival interior details dating from that time. It is also the largest and most imposing house in Warrenton. In local history, it is significant as the home of the Roberts and McGregor families of local and state prominence from the mid-nineteenth century to the early-twentieth century.

The Roberts-McGregor House is a local landmark and has significance to the history of architecture in Georgia. It is a fine example of monumental domestic architecture dating from the transitional period between the Federal and Greek Revival styles. The massing and proportions of the house, the arrangement of the five-bay front facade, and the tall stepped gables with double-end chimneys are clearly derived from the Federal style. The trabeated front doorway, the four-over-four-with-central-hall plan, and interior details, including plasterwork, woodwork and mantels, show a strong Greek Revival influence. All these features are carefully designed and skillfully executed. The size of the house is unusually large for country-town dwellings in Georgia of this era. The use of brick in its construction is extraordinary for the period, and the use of unkilned or clay brick is even more unusual. Subsequent changes to the house, including the portico, have been in keeping with the original character and appearance of the house, and reveal the extent to which the Classical styles influenced Southern domestic architecture throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

The Roberts-McGregor property also has significance to the history of landscape architecture in Georgia, although this significance is somewhat more speculative than that of its architecture. The house is surrounded by twenty-foot-tall boxwoods and towering magnolias. The overgrown survivors of once-formal gardens. These formal gardens featured brick walks and other plantings as well, although these have largely been obliterated. The gardens may date to the nineteenth century, although it is known that Charles E. McGregor redesigned and replanted at least some of the gardens, and he built the low perimeter wall, in the early-twentieth century. Because the gardens have been recently neglected, they possess a degree of integrity, albeit overgrown, that is unusual and presents an opportunity for further interpretation.

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Dr. Henry Lockhart, a farmer, state senator from 1823-25, and medical doctor, built the house between 1835 and 1842. A more precise date for the house cannot be determined from the county records, since the deed books for the years 1817-1844 were destroyed by a fire. The 1835 date is from the county history of Warren County, and the 1842 date from local tradition.

According to the 1830 and 1840 censuses, Lockhart appears financially prosperous in Warrenton. In 1830, the Lockhart household consisted of six family members and thirty-three slaves. Ten years later, the family had doubled, seventeen slaves were added, and that same number were engaged solely in farming. Dr. Lockhart did not begin his medical practice until after 1840. In 1847, he was bankrupt, and being unable to complete his house, was forced to sell it for \$2,500 to Jesse M. Roberts. During Lockhart's and Roberts' ownerships, the house was a brick block with one-story shed porch across the front, bespeaking Federal and Greek Revival details.

By 1849, Roberts had completed the house, for its taxable value jumped to \$2,800. In the 1840s, the house would have appeared to be a duplicate of Bonar Hall, built ca. 1832, fifty miles northwest in Madison, Georgia. Both are unusual for their eighteen-inch-thick clay-brick walls, stepped gables and double-end chimneys. Brick was seldom used in building during the first part of the nineteenth century in Georgia, and these two residences would be very pretentious for their use of it.

Jesse Roberts had about twice the operating capital as Lockhart. He planted several thousand acres, owned eighty slaves, held \$15,000 in investments, and had several carriages. He was judge of the Inferior Court of Warren County from 1849-1851.

At his death in 1874, Roberts divided his plantations among his sons and left this house to his daughter, Mary Lou, in trust from his wife, Louisa, who died in 1885. On April 16, 1872, Mary Lou had married Civil War Major Charles E. McGregor (1841-1924), a native of Warren County. After receiving ownership, McGregor added the monumental Neo-classical portico to the house.

Charles E. McGregor was quite a colorful and influential figure. Besides his Civil War service, he was elected to the State House of Representatives for 1882-83, and the State Senate for 1894-95 and 1913-14. He was editor of the Warrenton Clipper, the county's only newspaper, wielding much

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influence from this position. After he turned eighty, in 1922, he was elected state pension commissioner for a two-year term, serving from 1923 until his death on October 15, 1924. He was defeated for re-election shortly before his death at age eighty-four. An editorial written at his death cited his close, personal friendship with Georgia's nationally known Populist-turned-racist, Thomas E. Watson. Watson lived only a few miles away in neighboring McDuffie County at "Hickory Hill," a mansion similarly facaded with a Neo-classical addition, perhaps hinting at similar effects by good friends. Watson's biographer, C. Vann Woodward, cites many personal intercessions by McGregor on behalf of Watson, including informing potential gubernatorial candidates that Watson would support them if they would run, which was for many years tantamount to victory when Watson was at his height.

McGregor's son, Louis Darby (b. 1878) studied law under Watson and his law books can still be found in the basement of the house. McGregor's daughter, Jessie Lou ("Tote"), was a member of the first graduating class of the Georgia State College for Women in 1892 at the age of sixteen. "Tote," born in 1875, and her sister Helen (later Mrs. Stowe), born in 1881, lived in the house until 1966, when, due to crumbling bricks, the house became unstable. They then built a small cottage in the front yard and lived there for a few years. Both sisters died not long after the move and the house was sold in 1975 to Ronald L. Mitchell, an Atlanta antiques dealer.

Although this house has been unoccupied for many years and has had minimal restoration, the owner has indicated his intent to restore it with the help, if possible, of a matching grant. No other sites are on the National Register either in the town or the county (which has been settled since 1783), and the recognition and restoration of this home could certainly be a catalyst to other efforts in the community. Although no county historical society exists, there are active groups in nearby counties who support this nomination and would be willing to assist this county in beginning preservation activities. Restored, this home could certainly serve the community and any society, whether presently existing or one formed in the future, as a meeting place, as well as being a showplace as it once was.

Considering the monumentality of this structure, it would be imposing in any community, and its details and massing would be worthy of note in any Georgia town or city, but in Warrenton, it certainly is the most imposing structure existing, not only for its location, size and design, but also for the community leaders who lived there.