



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 Rochelle Historic District
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number The city of Rochelle, centered on First Avenue (U.S. Highway 280) and Ashley Street (State Routes 233/112).
city, town Rochelle () vicinity of
county Wilcox code 315
state Georgia code GA zip code 31079

() not for publication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	180	89
sites	2	0
structures	2	1
objects	0	0
total	184	90

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A.
Name of previous listing: N/A.
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

Richard Coover
Signature of certifying official

11-13-07
Date

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

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency or bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register _____
- determined eligible for the National Register _____
- determined not eligible for the National Register _____
- removed from the National Register _____
- other, explain: _____
- see continuation sheet _____

Patrick Andrews
Keeper of the National Register

1/15/2008
Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

Domestic: single dwelling

Commerce/Trade: business, professional, organizational, financial institution, specialty store, department store, restaurant, warehouse

Funerary: cemetery

Government: city hall, fire station, government office, post office

Religion: religious facility, church school

Industry/Processing/Extraction: manufacturing, industrial storage

Transportation: rail-related, road-related

Current Functions:

Domestic: single dwelling

Commerce/Trade: business, professional, organizational, specialty store, restaurant, warehouse

Funerary: cemetery

Government: city hall, government office, post office

Religion: religious facility, church school

Industry/Processing/Extraction: manufacturing, industrial storage

Transportation: rail-related, road-related

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Late Victorian: Gothic, Italianate, Empire, Queen Anne, Romanesque

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Beaux Arts, Colonial, Italian Renaissance, Tudor Revival

Late 19th and 20th Century American Movements: Commercial Style, Bungalow/Craftsman

Modern Movement: International Style

Other: center-hall house, Georgian-plan house, saddlebag house, Queen Anne house, American Small House, ranch house

Materials:

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other Wood

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

Summary Description:

The Rochelle Historic District includes the historic commercial, residential, and industrial areas of Rochelle, a small town in south Georgia located roughly 20 miles east of Cordele. The town is laid out in a gridiron plan with the one-block-long commercial district in the center. The commercial district, which is composed of one- and two-story attached brick buildings on both sides of First

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Avenue, was mostly established in the early 20th century. The district also includes the Reid House hotel (1896) and the railroad depot (1916). Located along the Seaboard Coast Line is the industrial district, which includes a variety of industrial complexes, gins, and cotton and peanut warehouses. The African-American community is located adjacent to the industrial area and is represented by its historic houses, school, churches, and cemetery. The largest part of the district is the historically white residential neighborhood that sprawls south from First Avenue to the city limits. It features houses designed in the Neoclassical, Classical Revival, Queen Anne, Craftsman, English Vernacular Revival, and Colonial Revival styles. House types popular throughout the state were built in Rochelle, including the saddlebag, center-hall, Queen Anne, Georgian, gabled-ell, bungalow, the American Small House, and ranch house. Community landmark buildings throughout the district include the First Baptist Church (1918), the Rochelle United Methodist Church (c.1918), Masonic Lodge (c.1890), Hosley Temple CME (1913), and Pharmers Chapel Church (c.1900). The historic district features several examples of post-World War II modern architecture, including the Wilcox County Health Building (1956), Cook Family Dentistry Building (1958), and the United States Post Office (1962).

Description:

The Rochelle Historic District encompasses the historic commercial, industrial, residential, and community landmark buildings associated with the development of the south Georgia city of Rochelle. Located in the coastal plain of Georgia, Rochelle is sited on a small rise in the center of the county along the route of the Seaboard Coast Line. Rochelle is the largest city in Wilcox County, but Abbeville, located along the Ocmulgee River, is the seat of county government. Rochelle serves as a transportation hub with the east-west rail line that runs through the city and the north-south U.S. Highway 280 and State Routes 112 and 233 that trend north to south. Dogwood trees and crepe myrtles line the main approaches to town. The edges of the historic district are marked by a distinct transition from a regular grid of streets to agricultural fields and recent commercial development, especially along Highway 280.

Rochelle was established after the Americus, Preston, and Lumpkin Railroad (now the Seaboard Coast Line) was laid through Wilcox County in 1887. The town is laid out in a gridiron plan with the rail line running east to west through the center of the commercial district. The industrial district is located along the railroad line one block north of the commercial district. The African-American neighborhood lies north of the industrial district and the railroad line. The largest part of the historic district is the white residential neighborhood that lies south of the railroad line. It stretches from the commercial district south to the city limits.

Rochelle's commercial buildings, which line both sides of First Avenue, were mostly built in the first decades of the 20th century (photos 1-9). The buildings share party walls and common setbacks along the sidewalk. In most cases, the buildings occupy the entire lot. Most are one-story buildings, though a few are larger, two-story buildings, such as the Reid House hotel (photo 6). Many were built in the Italianate style with storefronts that include a center entrance flanked by large, plate-glass windows. The facades usually include arched windows at the second-floor level and a corbelled brick

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cornice. The buildings in the district feature a variety of styles and materials, all dating from the early to mid-1900s. Brick is the most common structural material, sometimes embellished with stone or terra-cotta trim. Some storefronts are supported with cast-iron columns.

Significant commercial buildings in the historic district include the Mashburn & Fitzgerald Building, a two-story brick building located on First Avenue (photo 7). Built c.1911, the company has been in continuous operation since it began as a general mercantile store in 1890. The adjoining Brazier Mercantile Company is a one-story brick store that remains mostly unchanged since its construction in 1911 (photo 7). The Brown Building on the southeast corner of Gordon Street and First Avenue was built for the Brown Banking Company in 1910 (photo 2). The painted sign panel reads, "*Bank – 1910 – W G Brown & Co.*" The First Avenue façade has six ground-floor display windows interspersed with doors that lead to the second floor. Decorative brickwork is located around the doors and windows and along the corbelled cornice.

The historic district includes a number of resources associated with transportation. These include the railroad line, which was laid in 1887 (photos 11 and 16). The depot, which replaced an earlier building, was built on Ashley Street between the rail line and First Avenue in 1916 (photos 10-11). The brick depot is distinguished by its wide, flaring hip roof supported by heavy, wood brackets. It is covered with pressed-metal shingles. The Reid House hotel was built at the corner of First Avenue and Gordon Street in 1896 to provide lodging for railroad passengers (photo 6). The large, brick hotel includes a two-story wood porch along the Gordon Street façade.

Resources in the historic district associated with automobile travel include the plan of streets, which was laid out when the town was established in 1887. The streets, which form a cross-rail plan to accommodate the railroad, are laid in a gridiron pattern with the main commercial corridor, First Avenue, built parallel to the railroad. Smaller streets serve the African-American residential neighborhood to the north and the large white neighborhood to the south. A gas station from c.1920 is located on First Avenue (photo 4). It includes canopies on two sides that sheltered the pumps, which no longer exist. A small country store, located at the fork of State Routes 233 and 112 at the southernmost end of the historic district, relied on customers arriving both by wagon and by automobile (photo 43).

The Rochelle Historic District includes a significant number industrial buildings and structures located along the railroad corridor. These include large sprawling brick warehouses that were used to store cotton in the first decades of the 20th century. Several brick and frame warehouses are located on First Avenue at the east end of downtown (photos 3-4). Larger steel warehouses for curing and storing peanuts were constructed on both sides of the railroad line between Pine and Ashley streets (photos 9-10 and 12-14).

The African-American residential neighborhood in Rochelle is located north of the railroad line. It includes small houses clustered close together on small lots. Historic house types, such as hall-parlor houses (photo 28), which are defined as houses with two, unequal sized rooms, saddlebag houses (photo 26), a house with a central chimney and two equal-sized rooms, and bungalows, which were larger houses built in the first decades of the 20th century (photo 14, right). These

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houses, which are usually two-rooms wide with bedrooms, kitchen, and bath to the rear, include large front porches. Interspersed among the historic houses in the African-American neighborhood are modern manufactured houses (photos 21 and 27).

Historic churches north of the railroad include the red-brick Evergreen Baptist Church (photo 23), which was built during the mid-20th century, Pharners Chapel, a wood-frame church with central tower built c.1900 (photo 27), and Hosley Temple CME Church, a wood-frame church with a corner tower built in 1913 (photo 19).

Additional community landmark buildings in the African-American neighborhood include the gable-front Rochelle Colored School on King Street (photos 21-22), the two-story boarding house on Pine Street (photo 25), the concrete-block Masonic lodge on Gordon Street (photo 17), and the concrete-block social club on Bessie Avenue, which is decorated with painted murals (photos 17-18). The Evergreen Baptist Church cemetery, located in the northwest corner of the historic district, is an open field covered with small markers, many cast in cement (photo 24).

The historic white residential neighborhood located south of downtown Rochelle includes some of the earliest and largest houses in the historic district. As in the African-American neighborhood, nearly all of the houses south of the railroad are wood-frame construction. These include large Queen Anne house types with irregular massing and complex, steeply pitched roofs. Many were built with eclectic Queen Anne-style ornamentation. Examples are located on First Avenue (photo 29), Ashley Street (photo 42), and a cluster at Gordon Street and Third Avenue (photos 52-53).

Most houses in Rochelle are vernacular dwellings based on regional building traditions that were influenced by popular styles in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Typical house types include the Georgian-plan house, which is defined by four equal-sized rooms divided by a central hall (photos 38 and 51). The central-hall house is one-room deep with two-rooms divided by a central hall (photos 47 and 50). The hall-parlor house is usually small with two unequal-sized rooms (photos 35, 39, and 67).

The Craftsman-style bungalow was built throughout the historic district from the 1910s through the 1920s (photos 30, 60-62 and 65-66). These houses are one-story frame houses that often feature porches across the front and are usually covered with a gable-front or hip roof. Craftsman-style elements include shallow-pitched gable roofs supported by brackets, exposed rafter ends, and battered porch posts. Sash windows are often configured with a multi-light upper sash and a single light in the lower sash.

Houses built after World War II include the American Small House, a distinctive house type that emerged during a period of desperate economic conditions during the Great Depression and the postwar era. This was a national effort to provide well-designed, well-built affordable small houses that are in no sense traditional. American Small Houses are compact, one-story, gable-roofed houses with usually four main rooms. The exteriors are plain with no architectural style and little ornament. Some appear vaguely as Cape Cod houses in form. In Rochelle, several examples are located along Ashley Street (photo 41).

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Ranch houses in the historic district were built from the 1940s into the 1960s (photo 63). The term "ranch house" is an all-encompassing term for mid-20th-century single-family houses with a distinctive one-story height and long, narrow form, and long, low proportions. Plans include L- and U-shapes as well as plain rectangular forms. These were often built together in large suburban subdivisions. Ranch houses often include carports and garages. Ranch houses have zoned interior plans with private spaces for bedrooms and bathrooms at one end and public spaces for living and family rooms at the other end. Floor plans are open with public rooms flowing into one another. This house type could be designed in any number of styles, including Colonial Revival, Modern, Contemporary and California, also called Western style, or in no style. In Georgia, most ranch houses were built in the hip-roofed Colonial Revival style. Shed and gabled-roofed Modern, Contemporary, and California styles are less common in Georgia. Ranch houses in Rochelle are long and low and usually clad in brick and covered with a shallow-pitched hip roof or side-gable roof. Most include elements of the Colonial Revival style.

Community landmark buildings south of the rail line includes two churches and the Masonic lodge. The First Methodist Church of Rochelle on Gordon Street at Sixth Avenue was built in the Classical Revival style in 1918 (photos 44 and 45). It is a brick building distinguished by a large dome and corner entrance, which is lined with colossal columns and entablature in the Corinthian order. Arched windows along the sides are flanked by pilasters. The W. T. Standard Memorial Annex was dedicated on October 28, 1955. The sanctuary was renovated in the late 1960s.

The First Baptist Church of Rochelle on Gordon Street at Third Avenue was built in the Classical Revival style in 1918 (photos 54 and 55). Designed by the South Carolina architect James J. Baldwin, the church is a two-story brick building with a recessed porch flanked by colossal columns. The sanctuary is covered with a dome.

The Masonic Hall on Gordon Street, located adjacent to the First Baptist Church, was built c.1888 (photo 54). It is a plain, two-story gable-front building clad in weatherboard. The Masonic emblem is located on the front of the building near the peak of the roof.

The Ashley-Jackson Cemetery is located between Hill and Stephens streets and First and Second avenues. The small family cemetery features a few dozen stone markers shaded by tall pine trees.

Several buildings were constructed in the historic district after World War II that are excellent examples of modern architecture. The Rochelle Telephone Company on Third Avenue was built in the mid-to-late 1950s (photo 57). It is a one-story building constructed of beige brick with curved wall filled with glass block. Its plain, rectilinear form makes no references to past architectural styles. The Cook Family Dentistry Building on Second Avenue features a modern flat roof and brick walls laid in stacked bond (photo 32). The Wilcox County Health Center on Third Street is also covered with a flat roof and features a porch supported by metal piping (photo 34). Built c.1955, the health center features plain windows without ornament of any kind, which typical of modern architecture. The United States Post Office in Rochelle on Second Avenue was built in 1962 (photo 31). Like all of the nearly 300 post offices built in Georgia between World War II and 1970, the post office in Rochelle is

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modern in style with an emphasis on basic geometric forms, modern materials, and virtually no ornament. The four columns across the front allude to a classical colonnade. Located on a site southwest of the commercial district, the Rochelle post office has enough parking to accommodate customers who arrive by car and the larger trucks that deliver mail for local distribution. The post office was built by a private developer and leased to the United States Postal Service, an arrangement that was common for post offices built in Georgia after World War II. The post office in Rochelle was never owned by the United States Postal Service.

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
Industry
Community Planning and Development
Social History
Ethnic Heritage: Black
Transportation

Period of Significance:

1887-1962

Significant Dates:

1887 – Rochelle was established after the railroad was laid through Wilcox County.

1888 – General Assembly granted the city charter.

1898 – Fire destroyed most of the downtown Rochelle.

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

Baldwin, James J. (architect of First Baptist Church of Rochelle, 1918)

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Section 8--Statement of Significance

Statement of significance (areas of significance)

The city of Rochelle is a small town in Wilcox County in South Georgia. Established along the railroad line in 1887, Rochelle is composed of a series of districts based on function (commercial and industrial) and patterns of settlement (white and African-American residential neighborhoods). The commercial district is located on both sides of First Avenue between Ashley and Gordon streets. The industrial district is located intermittently along the railroad line. The historic white residential district is located south of the railroad line and the smaller historic African-American district is located north of the railroad line. Community landmark buildings are located throughout the historic district.

The Rochelle Historic District is significant in the area of architecture because the commercial, residential, and community landmark buildings are representative of architectural styles and types built in Georgia cities from the end of the 19th century through the middle of the 20th century. The wide variety of house styles and types in Rochelle is documented in the statewide historic context, *Georgia's Living Places: Historic Houses in their Landscaped Settings*. These houses include high-style Queen Anne-style houses, built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The historic district also includes Georgian-plan, central-hall, hall-parlor, and saddlebag houses, all house types popular statewide through the first decades of the 20th century. Craftsman-style bungalows were also built in Rochelle. After World War II, the American Small House and later the ranch house were built nationwide; the Rochelle Historic District includes excellent examples of American Small Houses and ranch houses, mostly south of the railroad line.

Commercial buildings in the historic district are characteristic of commercial buildings constructed throughout small towns in south Georgia in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The commercial district includes a variety of early to mid-20th-century architectural styles and building types. Many of the commercial buildings are attached one-story buildings with a single storefront. Others are two-story commercial blocks with a storefront on the first floor and rental or storage space above. Many of these buildings have elements of the Italianate style, such as the stepped parapets and corbelled brickwork.

The Rochelle Historic District includes a significant number of community landmark resources. Community landmark resources are buildings or structures that are typically public buildings or other types of resources that because of their location, size, or status have become social or physical landmarks in the community. Historic community landmarks in Rochelle include the numerous churches associated with the African-American and white residential neighborhoods and the two Masonic lodges. The railroad depot, built in 1916, is also an important community landmark building.

The historic district also includes significant examples of modern architecture built after World War II. The United States Post Office and the Wilcox County Health Center are both excellent examples of modern architecture with their flat roofs, basic geometric form, lack of ornamentation, and lack of references to past architectural styles. Buildings, such as these, that were part of broad federal programs were often the first modern buildings to appear in small towns in Georgia.

The historic district is significant in the areas of commerce and industry because it represents the

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city's importance as a regional center of commerce and industry from the late 19th to the middle of the 20th century. Before the railroad was laid through Rochelle in 1887, Ashley Street served as the main route of commerce from Irwinville to Hawkinsville. Logging routes that joined Abbeville and the Ocmulgee River also passed through town. The arrival of the railroad made Rochelle an important commercial shipping and receiving point. The city became the warehousing and distribution center for Wilcox County because of its central location and because agricultural and forest products could be shipped by rail.

The location along the railroad of the warehouses, the Reid House hotel, and the freight depot fueled commercial activity on First Avenue. Most of the commercial buildings in downtown Rochelle are one- and two-story attached buildings that were constructed at the turn of the 20th century. They were designed in a variety of popular revival styles and in many cases cast-iron columns support large, plate-glass storefronts. Some businesses have operated continuously since their founding. These include Mashburn & Fitzgerald (1890), Braziel Mercantile Company (1911), Doster's Warehouse (1945), Rochelle State Bank (1947), and Wilcox County State Bank (1952).

The district is significant in the area of community planning and development because the town plan is representative of cross-rail communities established alongside the railroad in Georgia at the end of the 19th century. Cross-rail towns were planned around the railroad with the intersection of roads and the railroad line at the heart of these communities. This plan is an important type of community plan documented in the statewide historic context, "Georgia Community Development and Morphology of Community Types."

In 1887, the Americus, Preston, and Lumpkin Railroad established an east-to-west railroad line through the town of Rochelle. The commercial district was built one block south of the tracks on First Avenue. Industrial operations were located along the tracks. The streets were laid out in a gridiron pattern in response to the rail line. The short-lived north-south line of the Ocilla Southern had less of an impact on the physical development of the community. Ashley Street, the principal north-south avenue, was important because it crossed the railroad line and because it followed the route of the Irwinville-to-Hawkinsville trail.

Rochelle is significant in the areas of community planning and development and social history as an intact example of a racially segregated community dating from the "Jim Crow" era of the late 19th-century. Division along racial lines was a characteristic of nearly every Georgia town founded after 1870 with many, like Rochelle, physically divided by railroad tracks. The African-American neighborhood in Rochelle includes houses, schools, churches, and a cemetery north of the railroad tracks. The white neighborhood, with its houses, schools, and churches, is located on the south side of the city. The practice of segregation was part of a broad pattern race-based discrimination that resulted in a distinctive pattern of development in Rochelle and in cities throughout the South.

Rochelle is significant in the area of black ethnic heritage because it includes residential and community landmark buildings associated with the city's African-American community. Although few houses survive intact, the African-American neighborhood, located north of the railroad line, includes a significant number of historic churches. These include the Evergreen Baptist Church, Hosley

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Temple CME and Pharners Chapel Church. Other important community buildings include the Rochelle Colored School and the Masonic lodge.

The historic district is significant in the area of transportation because its streets and rail-related resources represent the city's importance as a hub of transportation. Rochelle benefited from its location in the center of Wilcox County. Foot trails to Fitzgerald, Ashburn, Owensboro, Pineview, and Cedar Creek evolved into wagon roads and then developed into roadways for automobiles. Among the important early roadways was the road between Irwinville and Hawkinsville. Area farmers used this route to take crops and produce to market and brought home supplies from Rochelle. In 1887, the Americus, Preston, and Lumpkin Railroad was laid through Rochelle. The city's gridiron pattern of streets developed around the east-to-west railroad line. Major roadways developed to connect Rochelle to other towns, including a road to Abbeville, the seat of county government, and a road to the larger town of Cordele. The railroad-related buildings in Rochelle include the railroad depot and the Reid House hotel, which served railroad passengers.

National Register Criteria

A – The Rochelle Historic District is significant in the areas of commerce and industry because it served as a regional center for commerce and industry from the late-19th to the middle of the 20th century; community planning and development because of its cross-rail plan of streets are laid was common to county seats in Georgia; black ethnic heritage because it includes residential and community landmark buildings associated with the city's African-American community; and transportation because its streets and rail-related resources represent the city's importance as a hub of transportation.

C – The Rochelle Historic District is significant in the area of architecture because the commercial, residential, and community landmark buildings are representative of architectural styles and types built in Georgia cities from the end of the 19th century through the middle of the 20th century.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

N/A

Period of significance (justification)

The period of significance begins in 1887 when Rochelle was established and ends in 1962 to include the several modern community landmark buildings and the small number of mid-20th-century ranch houses. These represent the last major buildings constructed during the period of significance.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

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Contributing resources in the historic district are those constructed between 1887 and 1962 that are significant for the themes of architecture, commerce, community planning and development, and politics and government and which retain historic integrity. The nomination includes two contributing structures: the plan of streets laid out in 1887, the year the city was established, and the rail line. The historic district includes two contributing sites: the Evergreen Baptist Church Cemetery on Dykes Avenue and the Ashley-Jackson Cemetery on Second Avenue. The historic district does not include any contributing objects.

The noncontributing buildings were built after 1962 or have lost sufficient historic integrity so that they no longer convey their historic significance. Noncontributing buildings include the frame building at the northeast corner of First Avenue and Gordon Street (photo 3) and the manufactured houses on King Avenue (photo 21). Several commercial buildings on First Avenue are noncontributing because their facades have been either altered or covered with false fronts (photo 8). The water tower located behind city hall, which is not fifty years of age, is a noncontributing structure (photo 68).

Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

Rochelle was established after the Americus, Preston, and Lumpkin Railroad was laid through Wilcox County in 1887. In 1888, the Georgia General Assembly granted the city charter. Ten years later, a fire destroyed most of the burgeoning downtown. The rebuilt city continued to thrive and by 1900, the population reached 793. In 1913, bonds were issued to establish a municipal water supply and electrical system. Cotton remained the staple crop in Wilcox County through World War I when the price plummeted. The Great Depression and World War II continued to dampen growth. The population, which reached 1,235 in 1960, increased by less than 200 in the year 2000.

Wilcox County was established on December 22, 1857. The county was formed from parts of Pulaski, Irwin, and Dooly counties. The area was settled in the late 1700s and early 1800s primarily by people of Scots-Irish descent, who migrated southward from North and South Carolina. By 1860, the population of Wilcox County was 2,115. The seat of government in Wilcox County is Abbeville, located at the east end of the county. Although there was some discussion of relocating the county seat near Rochelle in the center of the county, the seat of county government remained in Abbeville.

John A. Owens and John R. Ashley owned the land that was developed as the city of Rochelle. The Hawkinsville-Irwinville Road, now called Ashley Street, was the principal trade route through the area during the 19th and early 20th centuries. This road formed the boundary between Owen's and Ashley's farms. Ashley, who served in the state legislature in the 1880s, lived in a log house at Third Avenue and Stephens Street. Ashley is buried in the small Ashley-Jackson family cemetery. He built a new home on Ashley Street between Third and Fourth avenues. Ashley's log house was demolished in 1926.

Most of the early settlers to Rochelle traveled west across the Ocmulgee River, or south from Georgia northern counties. These settlers engaged in retail merchandising, banking, medical

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services, and the production of lumber and naval stores. They raised livestock including cattle, sheep, hog, and domestic fowl, and planted row crops, such as cotton, sugarcane, wheat, rye, sweet potatoes, and field peas. Most of the woodland was an open range for cattle and sheep, which were taken to market once a year. Residents of Rochelle traded items, such as wool and animal hides, for food they could not produce locally, including coffee, sugar, spices, flour, and salt. Among the early families in Rochelle were the Stanfords, Quattlebaums, Smiths, and Blackshears.

In 1887, the Americus, Preston, and Lumpkin Railroad was extended east across south Georgia from Americus to Abbeville in Wilcox County. The railroad, which was financed by Colonel Samuel Hugh Hawkins and a group of investors from Americus, was the state's only railroad constructed entirely with local capital. The line was inaugurated on October 17, 1887. The daughters of Colonel Hawkins, who had recently toured Europe, named the towns along the line after European cities, including Seville (Spain), La Rochelle (France), Milan (Italy), and Rhine (Germany). By 1889, the railroad began operating steamboats on the Ocmulgee and Altamaha rivers, eventually reaching Savannah and Brunswick.

The streets and avenues in the city were laid out in response to the railroad line. The major thoroughfares are First Avenue and Ashley and Gordon streets. Commercial development is concentrated on First Avenue between Mills and Jackson streets. The residential area for the city's white residents was located south of First Avenue. A section of Sixth Avenue came to be known as "Silk Stocking Avenue" because it includes large houses of the city's affluent residents. The railroad line forms an industrial corridor through Rochelle that includes warehouses and ginning operations. The African-American community in Rochelle is located north of the railroad tracks.

In 1888, a year after the railroad was established, the city of Rochelle was granted a charter of incorporation by the Georgia General Assembly. The charter defined the city limits and established the city's governmental structure. Peter Coffee was appointed the first mayor. Businesses in Rochelle included Pollock and Brown general merchandise, Warren & Fitzgerald general merchandise, and Lassiter & Ham's wholesale business. The first cotton warehouse was built in 1889 by the Reverend James W. Mashburn and Frank Willcox. The warehouse occupied the site of the present Mashburn & Fitzgerald store on First Avenue.

The Rochelle State Bank was established by John N. King on the southwest corner of First Avenue and Gordon Street. In 1908, the Brown Banking Company built its bank next door. It operated there until 1910 when it moved to a new building on the southeast corner of First Avenue and Gordon Street. By 1910, Rochelle banks included the Bank of Rochelle, Citizens Bank, Brown & McNamara, and King & Brown. Insurance companies, which worked closely with the banks, included King and Mashburn and J. H. Rogers Company.

In 1898, a fire in Rochelle destroyed almost the entire business district, including drug stores, three millinery shops, a barber shop, meat markets, general merchandise stores, saloons, the telephone exchange, and a music store. Several smaller fires destroyed downtown buildings before the city's fire department was formed in 1913. By 1900, the population of Rochelle increased to 793.

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Section 8--Statement of Significance

As more people moved into Rochelle, hotels became necessary for both residents and for travelers. Rochelle's first hotel, the Ashley House, was built in 1887 on the northeast corner of First Avenue and Gordon Street. Built by Captain William C. Ashley and Dan McLeod, the two-story Ashley House included the post office and a store. In 1889, John L. Boynton built the Boynton House hotel. Located near the Ashley House, it was destroyed by fire in 1895. The Reid House hotel was built on the site of the Boynton House on the northwest corner of First Avenue and Gordon Street in 1896. The Reid House hotel, which served as a hotel until the 1950s, now stands vacant. Other early hotels in Rochelle include the Veranda House, which was built in 1889 and operated by Mrs. W. B. Fitzgerald. Jim Gibbs operated the Frog Pond Hotel beginning in c.1890. It was located on the west side of Ashley Street between Second and Third avenues. In 1900, Hotel Algernon was completed. It was operated by H. L. Land. Fires destroyed the Hobby Hotel on July 19, 1905 and the Hotel Lasseter on December 26, 1907.

On April 9, 1913, residents of Rochelle approved a bond issue for \$20,000 for a water system and electrical plant that would provide electricity for lights. The electric plant was used from 1913 until 1928, when Georgia Power Company purchased the franchise to supply electric power to the city. Rochelle's fire department was formed in 1913.

By 1918, Rochelle had more than 50 businesses, four churches, two schools, medical doctors, a veterinarian, a dentist, three attorneys, two druggists, three insurance agents, and several building contractors. By 1930, there were four automobile agencies selling Chandler, Paige, Oldsmobile, and Ford cars.

The increased use of automobiles resulted in improvements to the city's roadways in the 1930s. State Route 30 and U.S. Highway 280 were routed through Rochelle on May 1, 1936. These roads were paved in the 1940s with First Avenue serving as a link in the federal highway system between Savannah and Columbus. During World War II, the highway was used to transport military personnel and equipment from Columbus to Savannah on their way to Europe. Additional roadways through Rochelle include State Route 112 to Ashburn and Hawkinsville, State Route 233 to Owensboro and Hawkinsville, and State Route 215 to Fitzgerald and Vienna.

In 1914, the Ocilla Southern Railroad line from Fitzgerald to the south was laid through Rochelle. The railroad hauled slag, lumber, and highway paving materials. As forests in the area were depleted of timber, the line became less active. By June 1918, the north-south Ocilla Southern was in receivership and it had begun to abandon sections of the line. The Ocilla Southern ceased operations in February 1924.

Civic organizations in Rochelle include the General David Blackshear Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, which was organized in 1938, the Rochelle chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, which was organized in 1972, the Rochelle chapter of the Lions Club, which was established in 1957, the Masonic Lodge, the Dogwood Garden Club, the Alberta Crummey Garden Club. Rochelle's population has remained stable since 1960 when the census recorded 1,235 residents living in Rochelle. In 2004, the city's population was recorded as 1,419.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

In 1974, Rochelle was among 25 Georgia communities designated as National Bicentennial Communities. The Stay and See America competition was part of the American Bicentennial Program and was sponsored by the Georgia Chamber of Commerce. Rochelle received several awards including the top Newcomer Category Award, which was presented by the president of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and former Governor Carl Sanders, the second-place Business-Advertising award, and the third-place Button Gwinnett Award for solving community problems. The Bicentennial-Heritage Cookbook, which was published in 1974, remains a popular item in stores in Rochelle.

The railroad line is currently operated by the Heart of Georgia Railroad Company, which transports crushed stone, fiberboard, chemicals, lumber, pinewood, scrap metals, plastics, and gasoline. In addition to freight, the rail line is used by the SAM Short Line Excursion Train, which mostly runs between the southwest Georgia cities of Cordele and Plains. The Short Line passes through Rochelle on trips to Savannah.

Agriculture remains the most important industry in Wilcox County, which is among the state's largest producers of watermelons and cantaloupes. Local farmers also produce peanuts, corn, soybeans, cotton, tobacco and pecans. Peanuts are brought to warehouses in Rochelle to be cured.

Rochelle, like many other small towns in Georgia, has been affected by the development of the Interstate Highway System, which reduced the level of traffic and also diminished the commercial activity in the city. Nationwide retailers, such as Wal-Mart, Dollar General, and Family Dollar, represent a large portion of the city's retail business. The Rochelle business district is centered on First Avenue, which remains intact, although the condition of many of the buildings has deteriorated in the last several decades. U.S. Highway 280 through downtown has enabled the city to remain vital and a center of industry and commerce in Wilcox County.

9. Major Bibliographic References

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McDonald, Mary Lou and Samuel J. Lawson III. Passing of the Pines: A History of Wilcox County, Georgia. 3 vols., 1984-1992.

Mashburn, Nell Denton. Wilcox County Georgia Records-Geneological. 4 vols., 1946.

Prince, Richard. Seaboard Air Line Railway: Steamboats, Locomotives and History. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2000.

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

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been issued
date issued:
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

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

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

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 260 acres.

UTM References

- | | | | |
|----|---------|----------------|-------------------|
| A) | Zone 17 | Easting 267390 | Northing 3538000 |
| B) | Zone 17 | Easting 268900 | Northing 35370270 |
| C) | Zone 17 | Easting 268900 | Northing 3535560 |
| D) | Zone 17 | Easting 267990 | Northing 3536140 |

Verbal Boundary Description

The historic district boundary is indicated by a heavy black line on the attached nine tax maps, which are drawn to scale.

Boundary Justification

The historic district boundary includes the intact historic commercial, residential, and community landmark buildings in Rochelle.

To the north, the boundary excludes portions of the African-American neighborhood that lost historic integrity due to demolition, new construction, or extensive alterations. Also excluded is the city's main historic cemetery due to its isolation by nonhistoric residential development.

To the west, the boundary excludes recent industrial, commercial, commercial, institutional development as well as agricultural fields.

To the south, the boundary excludes the modern school complex, sewage treatment plant, and fields and woods.

To the east, the boundary excludes the nonhistoric (post 1962) residential development and a wooded area along a creek.

11. Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Office

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telephone N/A
e-mail N/A

- () **property owner**
() **consultant**
() **regional development center preservation planner**
(x) **other: DDA**

Property Owner or Contact Information

name (property owner or contact person) James Fitzgerald
organization (if applicable) Rochelle Downtown Development Authority
mailing address P.O. Box 474
city or town Rochelle **state** Georgia **zip code** 31079
e-mail (optional) N/A

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Name of Property: Rochelle Historic District
City or Vicinity: Rochelle
County: Wilcox
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: August 2007

Description of Photograph(s):

Number of photographs: 68

1. First Avenue, photographer facing west. Map 1.
2. First Avenue, photographer facing southwest. Map 1.
3. First Avenue and Gordon Street, photographer facing northeast. Map 1.
4. First Avenue, photographer facing southeast. Map 2.
5. First Avenue, photographer facing west. Map 2.
6. First Avenue, photographer facing northwest. Map 1.
7. First Avenue, photographer facing northwest. Map 1.
8. First Avenue, photographer facing east. Map 1.
9. First Avenue, photographer facing north. Map 1.
10. Railroad Depot, Ashley Street, photographer facing northeast. Map 1.
11. Railroad Depot, photographer facing southwest. Map 1.
12. Industrial buildings, Ashley Street, photographer facing northeast. Map 1.
13. Industrial buildings, Gordon Street, photographer facing northwest. Map 1.
14. Industrial buildings, Bessie Avenue, photographer facing west. Map 1.
15. Piney Grove Baptist Church, Railroad Street, photographer facing northwest. Map 2.
16. Railroad Avenue, photographer facing east. Map 2.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

17. Gordon Street with Masonic Lodge (right), photographer facing north. Map 2.
18. Bessie Avenue, photographer facing north. Map 2.
19. Hosley Temple CME Church, Ashley Street, photographer facing northeast. Map 1.
20. Mill Street, photographer facing northwest. Map 1.
21. Rochelle Colored School, King Avenue, photographer facing northwest. Map 1.
22. Rochelle Colored School, King Avenue, photographer facing northwest. Map 1.
23. Evergreen Baptist Church, Pine Street, photographer facing northwest. Map 1.
24. Evergreen Baptist Church Cemetery, Dykes Avenue, photographer facing northwest. Map 1.
25. Boarding house, Pine Street, photographer facing northeast. Map 1.
26. Pine Street, photographer facing northwest. Map 1.
27. Pharmer's Chapel AME Church, Bessie Avenue, photographer facing northwest. Map 1.
28. Pine Street, photographer facing west. Map 1.
29. First Avenue, photographer facing southeast. Map 1.
30. Second Avenue, photographer facing southwest. Map 3.
31. United States Post Office—Rochelle, Second Street, photographer facing south. Map 1.
32. Cook Family Dentistry Building, Second Avenue, photographer facing southeast. Map 1.
33. Ashley Street, photographer facing north. Map 1.
34. Wilcox County Health Center, Third Avenue, photographer facing north. Map 3.
35. Third Avenue, photographer facing northeast. Map 3.
36. Fourth Avenue, photographer facing northwest. Map 3.
37. Fourth Avenue, photographer facing northeast. Map 3.
38. Ashley Street, photographer facing northeast. Map 3.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

39. Ashley Street, photographer facing southwest. Map 3.
40. Ashley Street, photographer facing southwest. Map 4.
41. Ashley Street, photographer facing southeast. Map 4.
42. Ashley Street, photographer facing northeast. Map 4.
43. Store, Ashley Street, photographer facing northwest. Map 4.
44. Rochelle UME Church, Gordon Street, photographer facing northeast. Map 6.
45. Rochelle UME Church, Gordon Street, photographer facing north. Map 6.
46. Fifth Avenue, photographer facing southeast. Map 6.
47. Fifth Avenue, photographer facing northeast. Map 6.
48. Gordon Street, photographer facing north. Map 6.
49. Gordon Street, photographer facing north. Map 6.
50. Gordon Street, photographer facing northeast. Map 6.
51. Gordon Street, photographer facing northeast. Map 6.
52. Gordon Street, photographer facing southeast. Map 6.
53. Third Avenue, photographer facing east. Map 6.
54. First Baptist Church (left) and Masonic Lodge, Gordon Street, photographer facing northwest. Map 6.
55. First Baptist Church, Gordon Street, photographer facing north. Map 6.
56. Gordon Street, photographer facing north. Map 6.
57. Third Avenue, photographer facing north. Map 6.
58. Rochelle Telephone Company, Third Avenue, photographer facing southeast. Map 6.
59. Second Avenue, photographer facing southwest. Map 6.
60. Second Avenue, photographer facing southwest. Map 6.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

61. Third Avenue, photographer facing northeast. Map 6.
62. Fourth Avenue, photographer facing northwest. Map 6.
63. Fourth Avenue, photographer facing northeast. Map 6.
64. Sixth Avenue, photographer facing east. Map 6.
65. Sixth Avenue, photographer facing southeast. Map 6.
66. Fifth Avenue, photographer facing north. Map 6.
67. Hill Street, photographer facing northwest. Map 2.
68. Hill Street from First Avenue, photographer facing south. Map 2.

(HPD WORD form version 11-03-01)