

Regis 02-539

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 Southern Railway North Avenue Yards Historic District
other names/site number North Yards

2. Location

street & number 539 John Street, N.W.
city, town Atlanta () **vicinity of**
county Fulton **code** 121
state Georgia **code** GA **zip code** 30313

() **not for publication**

3. Classification

Ownership of Property:

- (x) private
- () public-local
- () public-state
- () public-federal

Category of Property:

- () building(s)
- (x) district
- () site
- () structure
- () object

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing

Noncontributing

buildings	6	0
sites	0	0
structures	1	0
objects	0	0
total	7	0

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.

Raymond Luce
Signature of certifying official

6-28-02
Date

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

Patrick Andrews 7/16/2002

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other, explain:

see continuation sheet

Keeper of the National Register Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

Transportation: rail related
Commerce: warehouse

Current Functions:

Commerce: business

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

No style

Materials:

foundation	Concrete
walls	Concrete
roof	Asphalt
other	Brick

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

Summary Description:

The Southern Railway North Avenue Yards Historic District (North Yards) is located northwest of downtown Atlanta in the industrial corridor that formed along Marietta Street and the Western and Atlantic Railroad. The North Yards complex includes the concrete roundhouse, built in 1925, and five concrete warehouses that were built in the 1950s and early 1960s. Designed by Southern Railway's in-house architect, the **roundhouse** is a concrete-framed building that was used to assemble and service passenger trains. Its 18 bays represent one-third of a complete circle. The rear is brick-clad with 40-light steel-framed windows designed to bring light into the interior work areas. In addition, a roof monitor with clerestory windows runs the length of the curved roof. The interior is utilitarian with only the concrete posts and beams that define the work bays and no ornament. The floor-level was raised with additional concrete when the building was converted to freight storage. The turntable and much of the track have been removed. The **little house**, which was built in 1952, was the first in a series of massive, concrete freight warehouses built by Southern Railway. The little house is a rectangular shaped warehouse constructed of poured-in-place concrete with truck bays on one side and a rail spur on the other. The **end house** was built in 1953 onto the south end of the roundhouse. Like the little house, the end house was also constructed of poured-in-place concrete and had rail and truck access. The **big house**, located in the center of the complex, was built from 1955 to 1956. It is a massive warehouse built of tilt-slab concrete construction with a single interior space supported with nearly 100 concrete columns. The long house, which is located on the east end of the complex, comprises three attached buildings. The **south long house** was built in 1958; the adjoining **middle long house** was constructed in 1962. The north long house was built in 1965 and is not included in the historic district because the property owner objects to having it listed in the National

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7—Description

Register. The long house buildings were built with tilt-slab concrete construction with open interior spaces supported by concrete columns.

Description:

The Southern Railway North Avenue Yards Historic District (North Yards) is a complex of railroad-related resources is located northwest of downtown Atlanta in the industrial corridor that formed along Marietta Street and the Western and Atlantic Railroad (photos 1-2). The two-mile industrial corridor stretches from the Atlanta reservoir to downtown Atlanta. The Georgia World Congress Center and the Georgia Dome are located south of North Yards. The Georgia Institute of Technology and the headquarters for the Coca-Cola Corporation are located to the north and east. Neighborhoods that provided workers for North Yards had been located west of the complex but have since been replaced by public housing. In recent years, many of these two-story government-funded rowhouses have been demolished, leaving North Yards bounded by vacant land to the west.

North Yards is bounded by the CSX rail line to the east, North Avenue to the north, Gray Street to the west, and John Street to the south. This complex once served as Southern Railway's North Yards where passenger trains were assembled and light maintenance was performed. Before World War II, the site had been covered with spur lines though currently the complex is defined by a series of massive one-story concrete warehouses. The curved shapes of the buildings, especially the south walls of the end house and big house and the east wall of the long house, reflect Southern Railway's desire to build the largest possible warehouses within the confines of existing spur and main lines (attachment 1). The end house and big house were built to the edges of a teardrop-shaped spur that once extended south from North Avenue. The curved east wall of the long house follows the path of the CSX main line. Three abandoned spur lines that served the warehouses enter the complex from the north. The remainder of the North Yards complex is mostly paved with asphalt that provided the trucks with access to the warehouses (photos 3-4).

The complex of warehouses totals over a quarter of a million square feet of interior storage space. Most of the buildings are connected. The roundhouse, little house, end house, and big house are joined to form an "N" shaped plan. The end house abuts the roundhouse on its south end wall. The little house is joined to the northernmost bay of the roundhouse by a covered breezeway. The big house was built adjacent to the little house on the east side of a spur line that served both buildings. The big and little houses are connected by an enclosed ramp that terminated the south end of the spur line. The long house, which is located along the east boundary of the historic district, is not joined to the other warehouses. Both buildings that form the long house are connected by covered loading dock.

In 2001, the North Yards warehouses were rehabilitated as an office park as part of a preservation tax incentives project. Because of their concrete construction and open plans, most buildings were not dramatically altered. The buildings had been allowed to deteriorate and work was done to repair damage from neglect. Much of the rehabilitation involved modern HVAC systems and other utilities in order to convert the warehouses into office space. Features such as the loading bays were retained and new glass doors were set inside the historic openings so that it appears that the loading bays are

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7--Description

“open for business.” The big house, as described below, is the only building in which historic fabric was removed.

In addition to work on the buildings, the rehabilitation included changes to the landscape, such as the addition of parking areas and lights, though most of the site was historically paved. A grass and gravel plaza was installed in front of the roundhouse in place of the turntable and tracks, which had long since been removed. Trees have been planted in the parking areas and around the buildings. Lastly, a new entrance to the warehouse complex on North Avenue was established. Descriptions of the individual buildings follow:

Roundhouse

The roundhouse is the oldest building in the complex and was built in 1925 (photos 4-11). According to the building permit it was designed by the in-house Southern Railway architect. It is a concrete-framed building that was originally used to assemble and service passenger trains (attachment 2). Its 18 bays represent one-third of a complete circle (photo 9). The rear is brick-clad with 40-light steel-framed windows designed to bring light into the interior work areas (photos 4-5). In addition, a roof monitor with clerestory windows runs the length of the curved roof. The two-story office is located at the rear on the north end of the building (photo 5). The interior is utilitarian with only the concrete posts and beams that define the work bays and no ornament (photos 10-11). The turntable and tracks have been removed (photo 9).

The roundhouse was altered in the 1950s when it was converted to a warehouse. The turntable and tracks were removed and the service bays for the rail cars were filled to provide a continuous floor level for warehouse storage. In addition, the rail bays were converted to truck bays with overhead wood doors. The roundhouse measures approximately 37,100 square feet.

End house

The end house, which was built in 1953, abuts the south wall of the roundhouse (photos 12-15). Its plan is asymmetrical because the curved south wall was built to the edge of the teardrop shaped spur rail that looped around the end house and the big house (photo 13). The end house is constructed of poured-in-place concrete. The horizontal seams on the exterior and interior walls indicate the height of each pour (photo 13). The west façade has three loading bays to receive freight by rail. A spur line was once located along the west side of the end house but no longer survives. The east facade has eight loading doors for trucks to ship freight from the building. There are no windows on the south facade. The interior is divided into eight bays by seven rows of concrete columns (photo 15). The columns support a flat, concrete-slab roof. There is no ornament or finish in the building and the floor, walls, and ceiling are concrete. All wiring is exposed. The end wall of the roundhouse remains intact where it is joined to the north end of the end house (photo 15). The end house measures approximately 34,300 square feet.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7--Description

Little house

The little house was built in 1952 and is the smallest warehouse in the complex (photos 16-20). It is located in the center of the roundhouse-end house-little house-big house complex and is connected to the roundhouse at its north end by an open breezeway (photo 17). It is connected to the big house by an enclosed ramp located at its south end. The little house, like the end house, is constructed of poured-in-place concrete, scored in a horizontal pattern (photo 16). The west façade has nine rail bays and the east side has nine corresponding truck bays. A rail spur is located between the little house and the big house (photo 20).

The interior is divided into four bays by three rows of concrete columns (photo 19). The columns support a flat, concrete-slab roof. The interior is entirely concrete: floor, walls, and ceiling. A small section of the northeast wall was replaced with glass during the rehabilitation. Like the end house, the little house has no windows. The little house measures approximately 17,600 square feet.

Big house

The big house was built in 1956 and is located in the center of the historic district (photos 20-31). The concrete walls were poured on site and tilted into place. A band of clerestory windows above provide the interior with natural light. Both sides of the building are lined with loading bays. The east side features truck bays and the west side is lined with rail bays. The curved south wall was built to the edge a rail spur that no longer survives (photo 29). The big house is joined to the south end of the little house by an enclosed concrete ramp. The interior is a single open space divided into six bays by five rows of concrete columns (photos 30-31). The coffered concrete-slab roof is supported by over one-hundred concrete columns. The big house measures approximately 82,400 square feet.

The big house was altered during the 2001 rehabilitation more than any other warehouse in the historic district. In order to provide utilities and vehicular access to all areas of the site the northernmost portion of the big house was demolished. The area demolished was a small portion of the building and did not contain any character-defining features that are not found in the rehabilitated portion of the building. As part of the rehabilitation a glass wall was installed in place of the tilt-slab walls that were lost (photos 24-25). The expansive glass wall extends from the roof slab to the floor and shows where the roof slab and walls were cut. The glass wall is clearly differentiated as new construction.

Long house

The long house, an irregular-shaped complex built along the east edge of the district, comprises three attached buildings (photos 32-45). The south long house was built 1958 (photos 32-38); the middle long house was built in 1962 (photos 34, 39-40, and 42-43) and the north long house was built for cold storage in 1965 (41, 44-45). The north boundary of the historic district runs between the middle long house (1962), which is included as a contributing building, and the north long house (1965), which is not in the historic district. The north long house (1965) is owned by the Coca-Cola Corporation, which is opposed to listing it in the National Register.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7--Description

The south long house (1958), like all three sections of the long house, was built with tilt-slab construction. The floors are poured concrete, the walls are concrete, and the coffered roof slab is concrete. Each longhouse building features an open plan divided only the poured concrete columns required to support the roof slab. The North Yards office was located in a series of small, second-floor rooms at the south end of the south long house (1958), photos 32 and 36. The office is accessed by a tight open-well stair in the southwest corner of the warehouse (photo 35). The stair is lit by diamond-paned windows, the only ornament in the entire warehouse complex (photos 32-33). Most of the south long house (1958) is dedicated to interior warehouse space. Both sections of the longhouse are partially lit from small fixed-pane windows at the clerestory level (photos 37-38, and 43).

All three long house buildings include truck bays along the west side and rail bays long the east side. An open platform that joins the south long house (1958) with the middle long house (1962) was built when the middle long house (1962) was constructed (photos 34 and 39). A smaller open platform was built as part of the north long house (1965) and is located just north of the historic district boundary (photo 45). The overall curved shape of the building reflects a bend in the main rail line that defines the east edge of the historic district. The south long house (1958) measures approximately 30,800 square feet. The north long house (1962), which is not included in this National Registration nomination, measures approximately 58,600 square feet.

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
Transportation

Period of Significance:

1925-1962

Significant Dates:

1925—roundhouse built.
1952—little house built.
1953—end house built.
1955-1956—big house built.
1958—south long house built.
1962—middle long house built.

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

Edwards, William (structural engineer)
Fuller, Pope (architect)
Smith & Freeman (architecture firm)
Southern Railways (architect)
Wells & Taylor (architecture firm)
Armstrong, William H. (structural engineer)

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Statement of significance (areas of significance)

The Southern Railway North Avenue Yards Historic District is the largest surviving freight warehouse complex in Atlanta and Georgia. It is a singular historic warehouse complex in the Atlanta metropolitan area which since the mid-19th century has been the state's major railroad hub. The complex derives its significance from its size, construction methods and materials, and its associations with the Southern Railway Company's post-World War II innovation in freight handling. The district represents an important transitional period in railroad freight handling of less-than-carload quantities of freight following World War II. The warehouse complex also represents significant uses of reinforced concrete construction techniques including traditional concrete framing, large-scale poured-in-place concrete construction, and innovative tilt-slab construction.

The Southern Railway North Avenue Yards Historic District is significant in the area of transportation because it represents both the period before World War II when Southern Railway (and most U.S. railroads) relied on both freight and passenger service to the period following the war when the railroads' costs soared at the same time they lost passengers to automobiles and airlines and encountered fierce competition from trucks operating on government-built highways. During this time, the railroads lost business to trucks as a provider of transportation for small shippers. In addition, many post-war industries in Georgia located operations in areas where there was no or only marginal rail access. In addition, railroads were burdened by outmoded government regulations and rate structures, labor union rules, and outdated freight-handling facilities.

The increased use of trucks to transport goods put pressure on the railroads to come up with new ways to improve their efficiency and, where possible, to integrate truck freight into their larger rail freight operations. As a result, the railroads sought partnerships in the warehousing and carload-consolidating business. For Southern Railway in Atlanta, this meant no longer switching individual freight cars from customer's sidings located throughout a rail yard or along sidings or spur lines. Instead, switching crews moved blocks of freight cars to and from a single large warehouse located near the traditional hub of rail lines near downtown Atlanta. This "wholesale" method of shipping preserved for customers the economies of shipping freight by rail and reduced costs to the railroad. This also meant more flexible freight service; industries located some distance from rail lines could ship short distances by way of trucks while benefiting from the economies of rail transportation.

Southern Railway hired the Southern Bonded Warehouse Company to build and operate warehouses at its North Yards for shippers to temporarily store less-than-carload freight. These so-called "public" warehouses are distinguished from private warehouses that were owned and operated by individual businesses or shippers of freight. The Southern Bonded warehouses provided space with access to rail and road transportation where shippers could safely store goods in amounts too small to justify their own warehouses. Trucks delivered relatively small quantities of freight between these central warehouses and collection/distribution points (businesses, industries, or truck freight terminals) primarily throughout the metropolitan Atlanta area but also to and from more distant points with no or marginal railroad connections. The railroad shipped consolidated freight longer distances to and from Atlanta. The Southern Railway's warehouses at North Yards represent the first instance in which this innovation in freight handling was used by the railroad at its major regional rail center in Atlanta. It

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

also marked the beginning of a mutually beneficial relationship between the railroads and the trucking industry which led next to "piggy-back" operations and then to the containerized system which is in widespread use today.

As the public warehouse business grew so did the North Avenue Yards. During the 1950s and early 1960s, Southern Bonded built five warehouses and converted the roundhouse for use as a warehouse. The first warehouses were built in 1952, 1953, and 1956. These included connections to the roundhouse. The long house comprises three buildings that were constructed in 1958, 1962, and 1965. The last two buildings were designed for the storage of commodities with part of the north long house (1965) dedicated to cold storage.

The rail-to-truck operation at North Yards continued until 1971 and was the predecessor to the piggy-back system and then the uniform container method of shipping that is the current industry standard and that prevails throughout Atlanta's railroad freight operations. Indeed, former freight-car classification yards such as the Hulsey Yard just east of downtown Atlanta have been converted to containerized freight in recent years, and new freight yards in the Atlanta metropolitan area such as the Austell intermodal facility are entirely containerized. These newer freight yards are located suburban areas near interstate highways to accommodate truck traffic.

The Southern Railway North Avenue Yards is a unique example of a large-scale, less-than-carload, consolidated freight warehouse in Atlanta and the state of Georgia. It is the only known example of its kind in existing in the state today, and is believed to be the only such example of a facility ever to have been built in the state (based on existing field surveys of historic buildings and structures in Georgia, Georgia's preliminary statewide railroad historic context, railroad-related National Register nominations from other railroad cities in Georgia, and first-person experience of the Historic Preservation Division staff). Its location in downtown Atlanta reflects the city's role as the largest railroad center by far in Georgia from the mid 19th century to the present. Lesser railroad centers in Georgia, including Macon and Augusta, and the smaller cities of Albany and Waycross, had (and still have) impressive collections of warehouses (see, for example, the Macon Railroad Industrial District National Register nomination, Bibb County, or the Central of Georgia Railroad National Historic Landmark form, Chatham County), but none had such a massive, innovative, consolidated rail-truck warehouse complex as the Southern Railway North Avenue Yards in Atlanta. The Southern Railway North Avenue Yards also is believed to be among the largest and best surviving examples of the less-than-carload-freight warehouse complexes in the southeast United States (see attached letter reports by Jackson McQuigg and Bill Schafer, authorities on the history of railroads in the southeast), although this cannot be confirmed at the time because regional field surveys of post-World War II railroad-related buildings and structures do not exist.

The roundhouse at North Yards is also an exceptionally rare individual historic resource and one of only two of its kind known to exist in Georgia. It was built in 1925 to service passenger trains for the Southern Railway at its Atlanta hub. Roundhouses, like this one, were built in most large Georgia cities by the first decades of the 20th century. Five roundhouses were built in Atlanta, but only the roundhouse at North Yards survives. The only other extant roundhouse in Georgia is included in the National Historic Landmark Central of Georgia Railroad Yard in Savannah. It is also a reinforced-

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

concrete roundhouse that was built in the 1920s.

The North Yards complex is significant in the area of architecture because the North Yards buildings represent advancements in concrete construction from the 1920s to the 1960s. The roundhouse was built in 1925 and is the oldest building in the North Yards complex. It was built with a post-and-beam method of concrete framing. The concrete frame was filled with brick and glass forming curtain walls across the rear of the building. The roundhouse is unusual in the way concrete construction was used to form the curved shape required by the building's use as a railroad roundhouse. Southern Railway adapted the post-and-beam configuration to the shape of the building like the spokes of a wheel. The method of concrete employed in the roundhouse was typical of large industrial buildings constructed in Atlanta from the early 1900s through the 1940s. Examples include the Atlantic Cotton Compress Warehouse on Auburn Avenue, built in 1905, and Warehouse No. 8 at Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills, built in 1940.

After World War II, innovations in concrete technology enabled builders to enclose greater interior volumes with greater spans between columns. These buildings were not only more economical in their use of the building materials but they could be constructed faster and were cheaper to build. Although all the warehouses are built of concrete, the earliest warehouses (little house and end house) were built of poured-in-place concrete. The later warehouses (big house and long house) were built using a technique called tilt-up construction in which the walls are poured on site and then tilted into place.

The first two warehouses, the little house (1952) and the end house (1953), were constructed using poured-in-place concrete walls and a flat concrete slab roof. This is a variation of the column and slab framing developed and patented by C. A. P. Turner of Minneapolis in the first decade of the 20th century. In this system, columns (sometimes flared mushroom columns) and a thickened roof slab distribute the force that would cause the roof to deflect. The Western Electric Building (1939) on Ralph McGill Boulevard in Atlanta is an excellent example of this technique. In the little house and the end house, columns without flared tops support the massive roof slab.

The big house, designed by the architectural firm of Wells & Taylor, with William H. Armstrong as structural engineer, was built a few years later in 1956 and makes use of evolving concrete technology. The walls were first poured on the ground inside the perimeter of the building and then tilted up into place. Tilt-up concrete construction, which was first developed in Southern California in the early 1950s, allows for fast, economical concrete construction without the formwork necessary for poured-in-place concrete. The coffered concrete ceiling has been pre-formed in large slabs, which are joined at the location of the widely spaced columns. The roof slab is coffered to reduce its weight and make more economical use of concrete. Additionally, the big house is innovative because of its bands of clerestory windows that encircle the building. These windows were built just above the height needed to stack three storage pallets (the maximum that could be hoisted by fork lift at the time) and provide natural light to the interior of the building.

The long house, like the earlier big house, was built with tilt-slab construction. The long house comprises three buildings. The small upstairs office is located in the south long house (1958). The

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

entrance to the office is signified by diamond-shaped windows that light an interior stairwell. The windows in each long house building differ, but are mostly small and located high near the roof. Wells & Taylor, Architects, designed the south long house (1958). Smith & Freeman Architects of Atlanta, with William Edwards as structural engineer designed the middle long house (1962). Pope Fuller designed the north long house (1965).

National Register Criteria

A—After World War II, automobile and air travel dramatically reduced the number of long-distance rail travelers. In addition, trucks had begun to serve many of the customers that had traditionally relied on rail transportation to move freight. To compensate, Southern Railway in Atlanta hired the Southern Bonded Warehouse Company to build warehouses at its North Yards for shippers to temporarily store less-than-carload freight until it was ready to be transhipped by truck. This innovation allowed the Southern Railway Company to remain competitive in the freight-shipping business during the middle of the 20th century, and this allowed Atlanta to retain its position as the largest railroad center in Georgia in the face of increasing truck and air transport. This period of rail freight was eclipsed in the early 1970s by the use of containerized shipping which today is the industry standard.

C—Buildings at North Yards represent significant advances in concrete construction from the 1920s to the 1960s. The roundhouse, built with a reinforced concrete frame, was typical of large industrial buildings in the 1920s and 1930s. After World War II, innovations in concrete technology enabled walls to be poured in place (little house and end house) and later poured on site and tilted into place (big house and long house). The use of these new methods was part of a virtual revolution in the design and construction of economical, efficient, large-scale utilitarian buildings across the country. The North Yards warehouses are the earliest and largest documented examples of this kind of building in Atlanta and Georgia.

Historic Integrity—Individual buildings at the North Yards as well as the complex as a whole retain a high degree of historic integrity in terms of site planning, design, materials, and interior space.

The roundhouse, one of only two in the state to have survived, retains its distinctive overall form, its subdivision into regular service bays, its orientation toward the turntable site, and its historic building materials including concrete, brick, and metal-sash windows. The only major alterations to this building occurred during the historic period when it was converted to a warehouse. These changes included the filling of the railroad spurs and service pits to create a level floor and the removal of the turntable. Changes to the building during its recent rehabilitation were minor and include replacing the service bay doors and repairing damaged and missing window glazing.

The concrete warehouses are virtually unaltered from their original construction and retain their original materials, structural systems, and open interior spaces. Doors and in some instances windows have been replaced. The big house was altered during the recent rehabilitation of the complex to accommodate city-mandated utility improvements on the property (including water mains, trunk sewers, and drainage) as well as new tenant services and utilities, and to provide new access to

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

the complex following the virtual closure of the historic truck access route by the adjacent Georgia World Congress Center (an expanding convention center). A small portion of the big house was removed and sealed with a contemporary glass curtain wall.

The overall setting is highly intact with the original rail corridors (some retaining their railroad tracks) still clearly evident as are the vast paved truck parking and maneuvering areas. The only changes to the setting are an expansion of the historic paved areas for additional tenant parking and the introduction of contemporary landscaping in traffic islands and along the foundations of some of the warehouses.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

The North Yards complex meets Criterion Consideration G as a less-than-fifty-year-old resource because Southern Railway's warehouse complex is a rare and exceptionally significant transportation-related resource in Atlanta and Georgia. The first warehouse, the little house, was built in 1952 with five more built over the next ten years. The North Yards complex represents a distinct transitional period in rail transportation of freight, which began shortly after World War II and continued through the 1960s. Railroad warehousing of less-than-carload freight, like that at North Yards, replaced previous methods of freight warehousing and delivery and preceded containerized freight handling used increasingly after the 1960s through today. North Yards is a unique example of its type in Atlanta and Georgia because of its size, concrete construction techniques, and its high level of historic integrity.

Period of significance (justification)

The period of significance begins in 1925 when Southern Railway built the roundhouse to assemble and service passenger trains and ends in 1962, when the Southern Bonded Warehouse Company built for Southern Railway the middle long house (1962).

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

The six contributing buildings in the historic district are the roundhouse, little house, end house, big house, south long house, and middle long house. (The north long house is not nominated due to separate owner objection.) The contributing structure is the series of spur rail lines that run through the North Yards complex that served the warehouses. There are no noncontributing resources associated with the Southern Railway North Avenue Yards Historic District.

Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

As the Civil War unfolded in the 1860s, Atlanta developed as a manufacturing and distribution center. The city became the crossroads of the Confederacy as new industries for the war effort were established. Most importantly, the city was served by four railroad lines. Troops and products were moved through Atlanta on a daily basis. Union forces arrived in September 1864 and departed in November after the complete destruction of Atlanta's railroad facilities. After the war, all four rail lines

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

were rebuilt.

In 1873, the Atlanta & Charlotte Air Line was completed and gave Atlanta its first direct route to New York. It was the first of the lines to enter Atlanta that became part of the Southern Railway System. Another important link in the present Southern Railway System was known as the East Tennessee Virginia and Georgia Railroad. Completed in 1882, this line competed with the Western & Atlantic to Chattanooga and with the Central to Macon. In 1883, the Georgia Western (later Georgia Pacific), was completed and gave Atlanta a direct connection to Birmingham and the Alabama coal and iron fields.

In June 1894, the Richmond & Danville, Georgia Pacific, East Tennessee Virginia & Georgia, and Atlanta & Florida (built in 1887) merged to form the Southern Railway Company. Currently known as Norfolk Southern, it became the largest line serving Atlanta and the sixth largest in the United States. Its right-of-way traversed every southeastern state. Samuel Spencer, a native of Columbus, Georgia, served as Southern Railway's first president. By 1900, forty-four railway systems had offices in Atlanta, and one-third of all freight entering the state of Georgia moved through the city. Atlanta at the beginning of the 20th century emerged as a railroad capital for the south and the nation.

Southern Railway Company

In the first decades of the 20th century, railroads developed as one of Atlanta's major industries and Southern Railway developed as one of its largest employers. As early as 1911, Southern Railway had built a roundhouse at its North Avenue rail yard. During the 1920s, Southern Railway made substantial improvements to the facilities in its Atlanta division. Heavier and more powerful locomotives were added that required strengthening more than 1,000 miles of track. Bridges and trestles were rebuilt or replaced and automatic signals and telephone dispatching equipment was installed. Passing tracks were built to handle the longer freight trains. In Atlanta, a new roundhouse was built in place of the smaller, c.1911 roundhouse and shops were added to handle the growing passenger traffic carried by the railroad. The stated goal of the company was to improve its facilities and add equipment to increase its capacity and efficiency in handling the growing business in the south. The company was headquartered in Washington, D.C., but Atlanta remained the site of its largest shop operation.

In addition to the North Avenue yards, Southern Railway's Atlanta operations included the Inman yard south of Inman Park where freight trains were assembled (the Inman yard roundhouse was demolished in the 1980s), and the Pegram Shops on Windsor Street where heavy repair work was done on engines. The Pegram Shops, which began servicing diesel engines in the early 1950s, remain in operation.

During the 1920s, additional passenger train service was added to Southern Railway's schedule. The *Piedmont Limited*, *Ponce de Leon*, and the *Southern Crescent*, all serving Atlanta, were added in a two-year period. In 1925, the roundhouse at North Yards was built to service passenger trains for the company. All of the Southern passenger trains were serviced at the North Avenue roundhouse and

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

shops, including the assembly of excursion trains. A turntable in front of the roundhouse allowed for an engine to be placed in any of the eighteen bays. The steam engines were watered and loaded with coal. Five tracks ran from the front of the building to the rear coach yard where the trains were turned around. Several small buildings adjacent to the roundhouse provided shop for activities such as repainting and upholstery work.

In the years following World War II, Southern Railways developed its rail network that served the rapidly growing south. A 1946 map of Southern Railway's system shows the high concentration of southern cities served by the railroad. Southern Railways was the first major railroad to convert entirely to diesel engines. It was also first to customize its freight cars to handle specialized freight. Passengers, freight, mail, and express shipments all traveled on Southern Railway's 10,000 miles of lines during the post-World War II era.

As the 20th century progressed, the increased use of personal automobiles resulted in the decline of rail travel. The decline in passenger service and other changes led Southern Railways to merge on June 1, 1982 with the Norfolk and Western Railroad that was headquartered in Roanoke, Virginia. Today, the railroad operates as the Norfolk Southern, with headquarters in Norfolk, Virginia.

Southern Bonded Warehouse Company

Southern Bonded Warehouse Company developed from a cartage business begun in the 1920s on Spring Street in Atlanta by John and Mamie Rooker. John Rooker began his career with Morrow Transfer Company in 1902. In c.1953, their son, William A. Rooker, began the public warehouse business. As the warehouse business grew, Southern Bonded built a series of large concrete warehouse for Southern Railway at its North Avenue yard.

As late as 1947, the only buildings at North Yards were the roundhouse, a long narrow shed used as an automobile terminal, and several smaller structures that housed boilers and repair machinery. In the 1950s and 1960s, Southern Bonded built a complex of warehouses around the North Avenue roundhouse. The roundhouse, no longer used to assemble passenger trains, was altered for use as a warehouse. Train access doors were converted to loading docks where trucks received goods that had arrived by rail. The turntable was removed. Southern Railway leased the roundhouse to Southern Bonded Warehouse Company in the early 1950s. Between 1952 and 1965, Southern Bonded built several free-standing interconnected concrete warehouses with rail access for receiving goods and loading docks for freight to be transshipped by truck. Southern Bonded Warehouse had many clients in the food business, including Nabisco, Frito-Lay, Nestle, and Lipton among others. In addition, Southern Railway's warehouses increased the volume of rail traffic for the rail line. Southern Bonded Warehouse Company remained at North Yards until 1971, when the company relocated to Morrow, Georgia, a suburban location several miles south of Atlanta on an interstate highway.

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National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 9—Major Bibliographic References

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National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 9—Major Bibliographic References

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 20 acres

UTM References

A)	Zone 16	Easting 740640	Northing 3739500
B)	Zone 16	Easting 740900	Northing 3739600
C)	Zone 16	Easting 740960	Northing 3739300
D)	Zone 16	Easting 740640	Northing 3739290

Verbal Boundary Description

The National Register boundary is indicated on the attached USGS topographic maps, drawn to scale with a heavy black line.

Boundary Justification

The historic district represents most of the land historically associated with Southern Railway North Avenue Yards. The historic district includes the six major buildings built by Southern Railway between 1925 and 1962. These buildings include the roundhouse that was used to service passenger cars and five concrete warehouses that were after World War II. The north long house (1965) was added for cold storage and is under separate ownership. It is located outside the bounds of the historic district.

11. Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Office

name/title Steven H. Moffson, Architectural Historian
organization Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
mailing address 156 Trinity Avenue, S.W., Suite 101
city or town Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303
telephone (404) 656-2840 **date** June 28, 2002
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Consulting Services/Technical Assistance (if applicable) () not applicable

name/title Lynn Speno
organization Ray and Associates
mailing address 328 7th Street, N.W.
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telephone N/A
e-mail N/A

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

Property Owner or Contact Information

name (property owner or contact person) David Purdue and Rhodes Purdue
organization (if applicable) Northyards Partners
mailing address 434 Marietta Street, N.W.
city or town Atlanta **state** GA **zip code** 30313
e-mail (optional) N/A

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Name of Property: Southern Railway North Avenue Yards Historic District
City or Vicinity: Atlanta
County: Fulton
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: January 2002

Description of Photograph(s):

Number of photographs: 45

1. View from Gasket City Lofts (W. L. Fain Grain Co./King Hardware) at 490 Marietta Street, photographer facing northwest.
2. View from Gasket City Lofts (W. L. Fain Grain Co./King Hardware) at 490 Marietta Street, photographer facing northwest.
3. Middle long house (left), big house (middle), and roundhouse (right), photographer facing southeast.
4. Roundhouse, photographer facing northeast.
5. Roundhouse, photographer facing southeast.
6. Rail spur with roundhouse (left) and big house (right), photographer facing northwest.
7. Roundhouse, photographer facing northwest.
8. Roundhouse, photographer facing west.
9. Roundhouse, photographer facing northwest.
10. Roundhouse, interior, photographer facing northeast.
11. Roundhouse, interior, photographer facing northeast.
12. End house (left) and big house (center and right), photographer facing west.
13. End house, photographer facing northwest.
14. End house (right) and roundhouse (center), photographer facing northeast.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

15. End house, interior, with end wall of roundhouse, photographer facing north.
16. Little house (left) and big house (right), photographer facing northwest.
17. Little house connection to roundhouse with big house (right), photographer facing northwest.
18. Little house with roundhouse in background, photographer facing southwest.
19. Little house, interior, photographer facing northwest.
20. Big house (left), rail spur (center), and little house (right), photographer facing southeast.
21. Big house, photographer facing north.
22. Big house, photographer facing southeast.
23. Big house, photographer facing northeast.
24. Big house, photographer facing southwest.
25. Big house, photographer facing southwest.
26. Big house, detail of entrances, photographer facing southwest.
27. Big house, detail of clerestory windows, photographer facing west.
28. Big house, photographer facing northwest.
29. Big house, photographer facing north.
30. Big house, interior, photographer facing south.
31. Big house, interior, photographer facing northwest.
32. South long house, photographer facing northeast.
33. South long house 1958 (right) and big house (left), photographer facing northeast.
34. South long house 1958 (right) and middle long house 1962 (left), photographer facing northeast.
35. South long house 1958, interior, stair, photographer facing southwest.
36. South long house 1958, interior, second-floor office, photographer facing northwest.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

37. South long house 1958, interior, warehouse, photographer facing south.
38. South long house 1958, interior, warehouse, photographer facing north.
39. Middle long house 1962, loading dock, photographer facing northwest.
40. Middle long house 1962, photographer facing north.
41. North long house 1965, photographer facing northwest.
42. Middle long house 1962, photographer facing south.
43. Middle long house 1962, photographer facing north.
44. North long house 1965 (left), middle long house 1962 (center), and big house (extreme right), photographer facing northeast.
45. North long house 1965 (left) and middle long house (right), photographer facing north.

(HPD WORD form version 11-03-01)

Fulton County tax map from the Realty Atlas. On file at the Fulton County courthouse.

31

14-81

Southern Railway North Avenue
Yards Historic District
Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia

Sketch Map

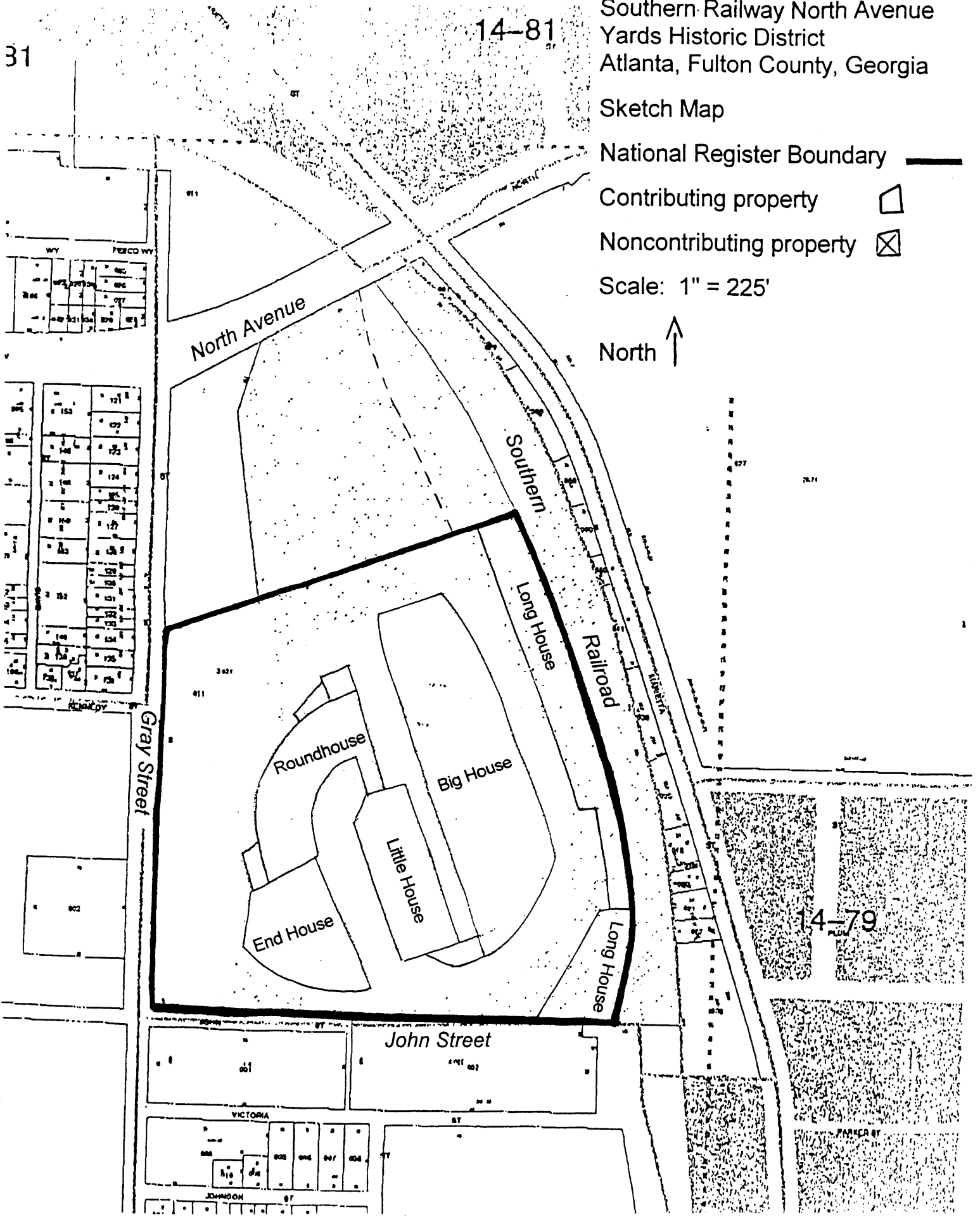
National Register Boundary 

Contributing property 

Noncontributing property 

Scale: 1" = 225'

North 



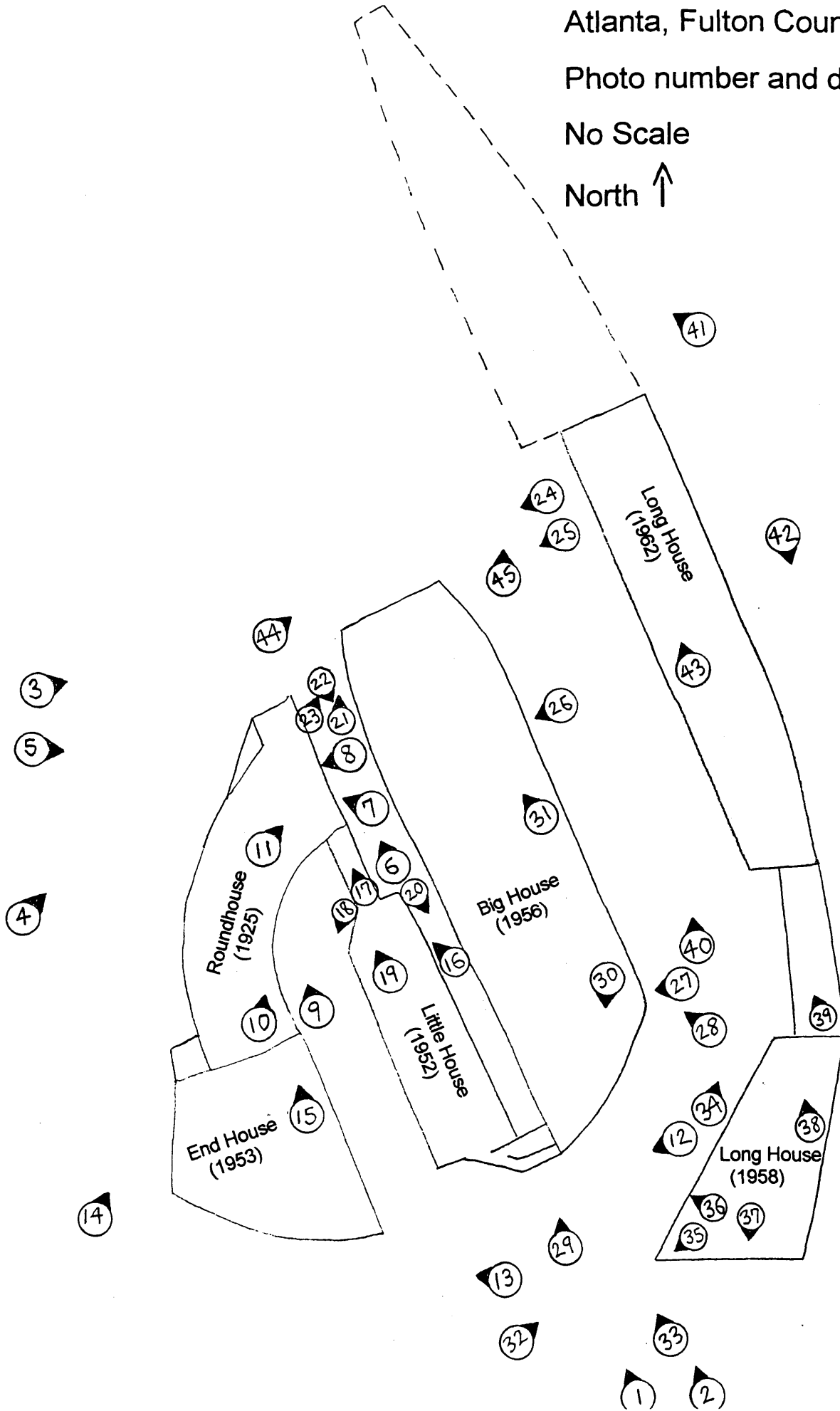
14-79

Southern Railway North Avenue
Yards Historic District
Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia

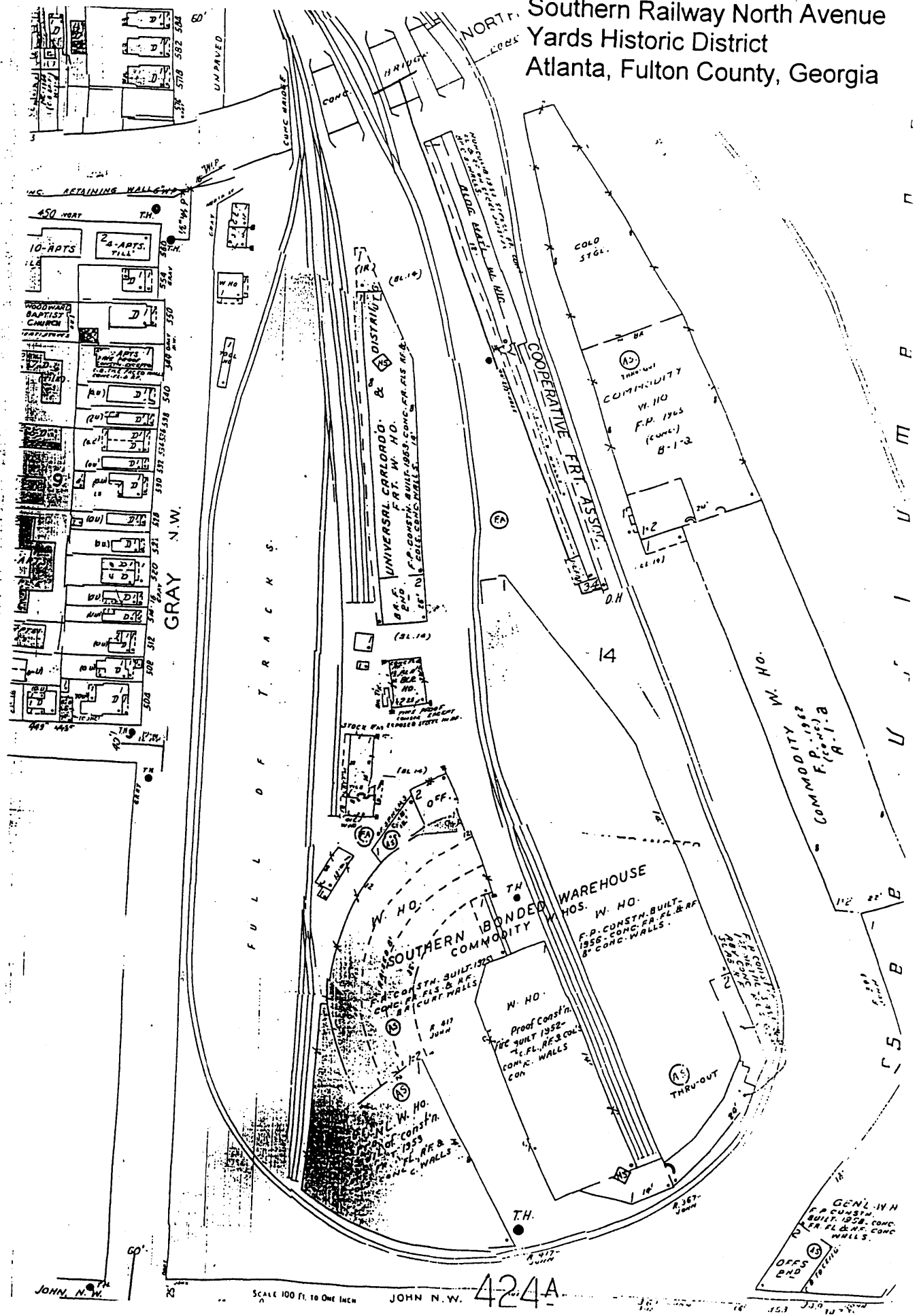
Photo number and direction of view 

No Scale

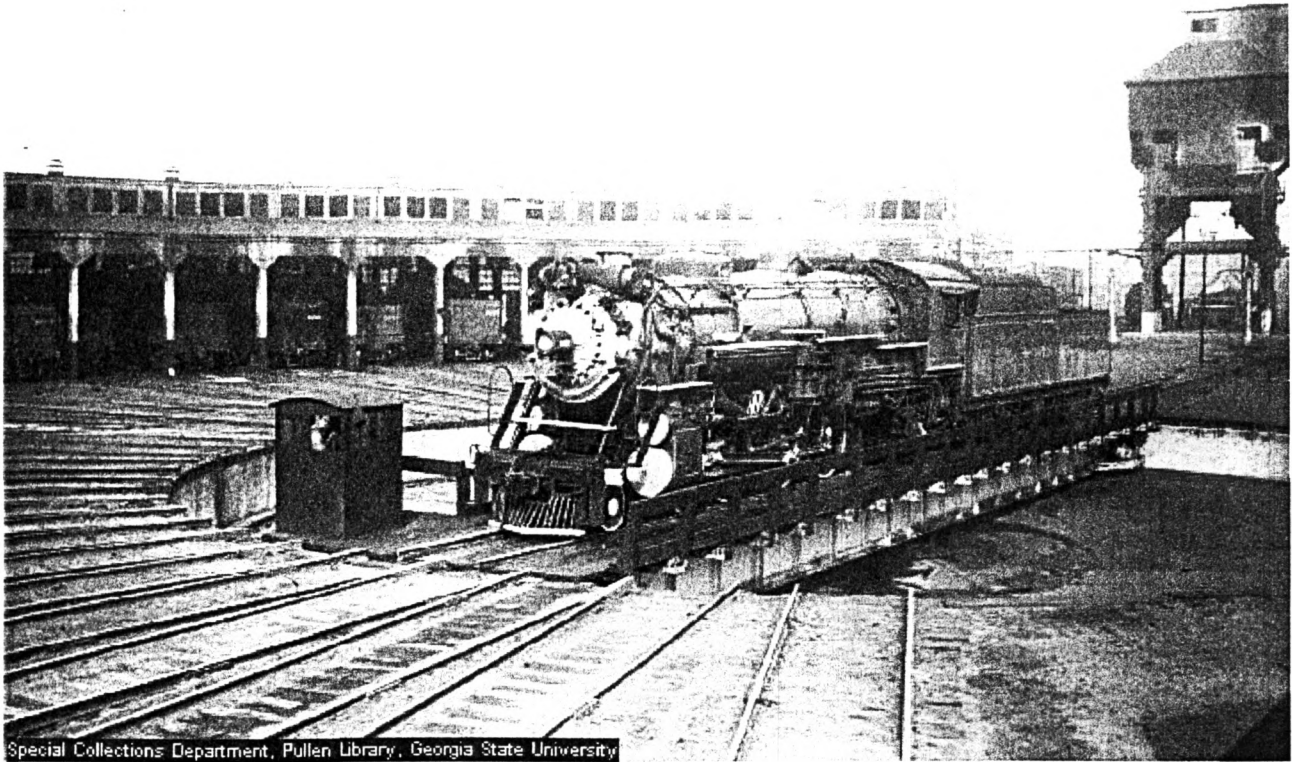
North 



Southern Railway North Avenue
Yards Historic District
Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia



Attachment 2. Roundhouse. Southern Railway North Avenue Yards
Historic District, Fulton County, Georgia.



Source: Special Collections Department, Pullen Library, Georgia State
University, Atlanta, Georgia.