

HISTORIC RESOURCES OF GREENSBORO, GREENE COUNTY, GEORGIA

HISTORIC DISTRICT #2

I. IDENTIFICATION

NAME OF DISTRICT: South Street-Broad Street-Main Street-Laurel Street Historic District

LOCATION: South, Broad, Main, and Laurel Streets

CITY: Greensboro

COUNTY: Greene (code 133)

STATE: Georgia (code 013)

ZIP CODE: 30642

CLASSIFICATION: District

CURRENT USE(S): Residential, Religious

ACREAGE: 115

U.S.G.S. QUADRANGLE: Greensboro, Ga.

U.T.M. REFERENCES: (A) Z17 E297560 N3717140

(B) Z17 E297480 N3716380

(C) Z17 E296140 N3716710

(D) Z17 E296800 N3717330

II. DESCRIPTION

DESCRIPTION

General character, appearance, and historical development: The district is a large residential area characterized by early nineteenth-century to early twentieth-century residences and three churches built around the turn of the century. The residential structures vary from one to two story dwellings. Designs range from the plain styles of the early nineteenth century to the ornateness of the Victorian age. There are a few examples of Bungalow and Craftsman architecture.

Natural terrain, natural landmarks, geographic features: The terrain in this district, like that in most of the community, is rolling. Higher elevations within the district are located at the north and northwest edges of the district. This rolling topography allows a historic railroad line to pass through the district as a minimum intrusion to the district. There are no other distinct natural or geographic features within the district.

Various parts of the district: The district is fairly uniform and does not divide into distinct areas. It should be noted that there is a node of non-historic/intrusive commercial development south of Broad Street and west of the railroad which has been excised from the district.

Pattern of land subdivision: The district is primarily laid out on a gridiron plan with a few minor modifications. Green Street curves due to the railroad alignment and Elm Street forks in two directions to follow the courses of historic transportation

routes on Oconee and Apalachee Streets. The railroad which bisects the district is at grade level only at South Street; at other locations in the district the railroad is placed in a cut at a lower elevation, with a bridge built over the railroad on Broad Street.

The pattern of land division within the district is irregular. Most lots are rectangular but there are variations in size. Lots in the southeast sections of the district are the most uniform with typical dimensions of 100' x 200'. Also in this section of the district, blocks have been divided into six to eight lots. Lots in the northwest section of the district are considerably larger. Examples include individual lots which extend through an entire block on the north side of Broad Street and large individual tracts which have been delineated from an approximate 40-acre tract at the northwest edge of the district. There has been some land division of several blocks in this area. In the southwest of the district, there is uniformity along Laurel Street. Lots are 100' x 400', bounded on one side by the railroad. One unique feature of land division in this area is the approximate seven-acre tract associated with the John Cunningham House, historically called "The Cedars." The shape of this triangular piece of property is created by the adjoining roads, Oconee and Apalachee Streets.

Arrangement or placement of buildings: Buildings are primarily sited in the front-center of their individual tracts at similar setbacks to the streets and roads. All the structures in the district are detached and are surrounded by front, side, and rear yards.

Architectural characteristics: This district is filled primarily with houses ranging from the early 19th century through the early 20th century and varying in size from small, one-story cottages or bungalows to large, two-story residences. Most of the houses have one or more historic outbuildings associated with them. Many houses of the antebellum vintage have been remodeled numerous times to reflect subsequent architectural styles and fashions. One of the purest to its original antebellum design and one of the oldest is the Jonas Fauche House on Broad Street, ca.1800. This two-story frame structure of Federal design features a front entrance porch, 9/9 windows, and an intact interior. Other architectural styles within the district include Plantation Plain, Greek Revival, Italianate, Gothic, Queen Anne, Victorian Eclectic, Neoclassical, Bungalow, and Craftsman. Common elements found in the district include one- and two-story frame structures with weatherboard siding, flushboard-sided front and rear porches, dormers, and bays. A few structures are constructed of brick. There are three historic churches within the district with steeples rising above the residential development and one historic lodge building associated with Greensboro's black community.

Plantation Plain-style houses in the district are two-story, frame buildings with narrow proportions, end chimneys, and shed front porches. Greek Revival dwellings such as the Davis-Evans House (Methodist Parsonage) and the Pierce House feature monumental porticoes with fluted Doric columns and trabeated entrance doors with side lights and transoms. The portico on the Davis-Evans House has a cornice detailed with brackets and other classical decoration. The portico on the Pierce House has literally been attached to an earlier plantation plain dwelling. The Davis-Smith House on Laurel Street is an example of Italianate styling. This two-story brick structure features terra-cotta cornices and bracketed eaves. The house also features an array of outbuildings in its rear yard. The John Cunningham House, a ca. 1800 house, features a belvedere, reminiscent of Italianate design. Victorian-era architecture dominates the district. Details from Gothic-style structures include wall dormers, bay windows, and gingerbread vergeboard. Houses in the Queen Anne style, such as the structure at the corner of Main Street and Bush Street or the Nicholson House on Greene Street, have asymmetrical massing, towers with conical roofs, roof cresting, and encircling porches. Common details of Victorian Eclectic residences include hipped and gabled roofs, chimneys with brick detailing, bay windows, front porches with decorative detailing in porch balustrades, and typical 1/1 windows. Neoclassical houses feature relatively massive and symmetrical proportions, prominent columned porticoes, a variety of classical detailing, and ample size. Bungalow-style houses within the district are usually one-story brick structures with gabled roofs facing the street, with the lower gable covering a porch, and bracketed eaves. The Craftsman-style dwellings, such as the E.H. Armour House on Main Street, are usually of frame with gabled roofs, bracketed eaves, 2/2 windows, central-hall plans, extensive woodwork on the interior, and beveled glass. The three churches add to the Victorian dominance of the district. The First United Methodist Church of Greensboro is of Gothic design, while the First Presbyterian Church and the First Baptist Church with their extensive use of round arches are of Romanesque design.

Landscape characteristics: The rolling topography within the district is characterized by large trees, manicured lawns, and foundation shrubs. Pecan trees are used extensively in informal single plantings as well as in grove placements on vacant lots at the corner of Laurel and Greene Streets and behind the Dr. W. E. Adams House on South Street. Oaks are also used in large quantities, primarily as street trees. In a few cases elm trees are used as street trees. Typical roadside design includes a granite curb with a grassed space approximately four feet in width between the curb and sidewalk. Most of the street trees have been placed in this grassed space. Street tree plantings can be divided into two categories: the historic plantings of large trees and more recent dogwood tree plantings. The dogwood tree plantings are especially dominant on South Laurel Street. Magnolia trees are individually planted as focal points in many

front yards. The large open space in front of the Cunningham House contains one magnolia which is reputed to have been one of many which formed a tree-lined drive to the residence in historic times. Typical shrubbery in the district, used as foundation plantings around residences, is boxwood. Of special note are the exceptionally large boxwoods in the front yard of the Pierce House on Chestnut Street. There are a few walls of brick, concrete, and rock, and several earthen terraces in the undulating topography. Free-standing fences, primarily of wooden slats and low pickets, are also used to delineate boundaries between side, front, and rear yards. The block bordered by West, Greene, and Broad Streets which contains only two residences is literally encircled by a rock and brick wall topped with wooden pickets. There is a small park space created in a traffic island at the intersection of Broad and Laurel Streets. This space has been planted with a bed of shrubs and trees.

Archaeological potential: Unknown

Anomalous features: There is one Victorian-era structure within the district constructed of brick which contrasts to the typical frame dwellings. This structure is located at the corner of South and West Streets. It appears to be of Victorian Eclectic design and, like other many other structures in the district, its design has evolved. It is interesting to note that not only is it an anomaly due to its unusual use of brick but also due to historical associations. It is one of the few structures in this area associated with black history. Its original purpose was a lodge for the black community. Although an anomalous feature, it is an extraordinarily significant historic resource in the district.

CONDITION: Good--general district condition

CONTRIBUTING/NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCES:

Noncontributing properties (including both intrusions and non-historic properties) have been noted on the attached map of the district. The criteria for their notation is as follows: Intrusions are generally of one type. They are modern buildings that have been constructed since World War II. Due to their design, proportions, massing, siting, materials, and other features, they distract from the district and are in visual contrast to their surroundings. Non-historic structures have been built after the district's period of significance had passed. While these structures tend to blend into the district in terms of their design, proportions, massing, siting, materials, and other features, they do not contribute to the historic significance of the district.

BOUNDARIES:

The district boundaries encompasses an area which contains a concentration of historic residential development. This district

is joined by the mill village district (number 5 in this nomination) on the north and the commercial district (number 1 in this nomination) on the east. Non-historic development is located to the northeast, south, southeast, and southwest. The land is undeveloped to the west. A node of non-historic commercial development at the intersection of West Broad and Chestnut Streets west of the railroad has been excised from the district, making for an irregular boundary in this area.

PHOTOGRAPHS: 10-45

III. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

DATES OF DEVELOPMENT: 1786 (plan); 1800-1930 (architecture)

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE:

In 1786 Greene County was organized and Greensboro was established as the county seat. A plat of the town was made in that same year which established a gridiron street system. The northeastern section of the South-Broad-Main-Laurel district is located within this original part of the town. The town was incorporated in 1803 and Jonas Fauche, a Revolutionary War soldier who was named as one of the first commissioners, built one of the earliest houses in this district. His two-story frame dwelling was constructed adjacent to the town center on Broad Street. In 1812, the original plan was expanded and only the southwestern edge of the proposed district remained outside the town plat. In this area John Cunningham had built his home in the early 1800s known as "The Cedars," named for the plantings on the property. Cunningham, a merchant originally from Augusta, was a farmer and entrepreneur with various other business interests, such as the local flouring mill. His brother, Thomas Cunningham, also moved to Greensboro and built a home at the end of Main Street. This house which was situated at the edge of the 1812 town plan was in a terminus location. An avenue of trees led to the home which was built facing town at the dead-end of Main Street. The 1827 gazetteer notes that the city had 68 dwelling houses. It is certain that a large number of these homes were located within this district. In the 1830s the Georgia Railroad was constructed through Greensboro and the path of the line cut through this area. The railroad was placed in a natural or excavated gully below the elevations of Broad and Greene Street and at grade on South Street. There was a bridge on Greene Street, referred to in the county history as the "high bridge." Residential development in the district at this time appears to have been concentrated to the east of the new railroad line adjacent to the town center. A distance from the town center, residences such as the Cunningham House and the Pierce House, which encompassed an entire block on Chestnut, were situated on more spacious tracts. In the late 1850s W. D. Weaver built his home facing South Street. His property encompassed the entire block between Laurel Street and the railroad.

The district became the home of two institutions in the 1850s. The Greensboro Female College was built on Broad Street on the site of the Seals-Parker House, also known as Magnolia Manor in 1854 (burned in 1872). During the Civil War the Female College was used as a hospital and following the war the John Cunningham House served as Union headquarters for the Provost Marshall. The Presbyterians, who had been jointly worshipping with the Baptists in a structure at the corner of North and East Streets, purchased a lot on Main Street adjacent to the town center in 1859. A new building was completed in 1860, but it later burned. Construction began on a replacement in 1873, but it took 20 years to complete with the steeple and bell added in 1893. The Baptists also relocated to this area in 1904 with the completion of their new brick structure on Main Street. The Methodist Church, which had been located in a modest log structure in the vicinity of present-day Laurel Street, built their fourth house of worship in 1911 at the corner of Broad and West Streets. There was also a black lodge within the district at the corner of West and South Streets. It is not known exactly when this structure was built. Local informants remember "King Lewis," a major black figure in the community in the late 1800s and early 1900s and the head of the lodge, who annually led what was known as the "emancipation parade." He is remembered as "dressing in a frock tail coat and steeple hat every July Fourth and leading a group of black citizens down Broad Street and Main Street to the meeting house for the celebration."

By the turn of the century the district began to be infilled with Victorian-era houses. Many were placed on urban sized tracts, but several Broad Street residences were situated on tracts that extended through the entire block. The Mary Leila Cotton Mill and Village was under development in the early 1900s directly north of this district. Two structures (Nichelson House and the Radford-Merritt House) on Greene Street located west of the railroad were purchased by the mill in the 1920s and served for approximately 15 years as homes for mill managers. The rears of several lots on Broad Street were subdivided and non-historic dwellings built. Laurel Street and portions of South Street were infilled with later Bungalow and Craftsman-style residences. In the 1960s a motel, restaurant, and gas station were built at the corner of Laurel and Broad Streets, in all likelihood replacing former historic residences. In the late 1960s and early 1970s two new bank buildings of Williamsburg design were constructed on Main Street at the intersection of South Street. Contemporary residential development has included the infill of approximately four brick ranches within the district.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA: A, C

AREA(S) OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Community Planning, Landscape Architecture, Black History

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1786 (plan), 1800-1930 (architecture)

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: local

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Architecture. The district is important in architecture since the structures within the district represent over a century of domestic architectural styles, types, materials, and methods of construction, all of which characterize the historic residential architecture of smaller towns in Georgia, especially on the Piedmont. Buildings within the district include styles ranging from simple Plantation Plain designs to the more ornate Victorian-era modes of Queen Anne, Gothic, and Italianate as well as the early twentieth-century Neoclassical, Bungalow and Craftsman dwellings. Many of these buildings have evolved from earlier structures through various adaptations, a characteristic that is typical of much small-town architecture in the Piedmont region. Buildings in the district embody traditional Georgia buildings materials--some brick buildings but mostly wood-framed structures--and they document the mid- to late 19th-century transition from handicraft to industrial production of building materials. They also document the mid-19th century shift from heavy timber framing to the "balloon" frame. Also in the district are several fine historic religious structures dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that represent both traditional Gothic and Romanesque designs. Most of the buildings in the district were constructed by local craftsman who used interpretations of national designs. A few architectural designs within the district can be attributed to professional architects. The Davis-Smith House of Italianate styling was designed by Fay and Bruin, Architects, and constructed by Cook, Grumy, and Company, both firms of Atlanta. A Craftsman dwelling on East Street has been attributed to Leila Ross Wilburn, a highly successful female architect from Newnan and Atlanta, Georgia, who designed Craftsman dwellings throughout the state in the early 1900s. The Presbyterian Church has been attributed to the design of Tunis Tunison. Many buildings, especially those dating from the early 19th century, were built using locally made or available building materials including brick and wood.

Landscape Architecture. In landscape architecture, the district is significant for individually modest but cumulatively important historic landscape features which contribute significantly to the historic character and appearance of the district and help define its historic neighborhood character. Chief among these historic landscape feature are curbing and street trees, informally landscaped front yards which blend together to create the desired impression of a large public park, and the stands of historic pecan trees which give the district a peculiar character. The "streetscape" of street trees, curbs, and sidewalks is not only a historic feature of the neighborhood, one which is typical of such neighborhoods in small Georgia towns, but also a direct

result of community landscape improvement activities begun in 1898 under the auspices of the local "village improvement society." Such societies were active in promoting landscape improvements throughout the country during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and although many Georgia towns feature historic community or neighborhood landscaping, few have documented its origins. The informally landscaped front yards represent another late 19th-early 20th century landscape improvement that characterizes many small towns in Georgia and the nation; although informal looking, this historic landscape was the result of deliberate landscaping activities which included the removal of front fences and in some cases the destruction of older, more formal landscaping to create the newer, more picturesque character and appearance.

Community Planning. In terms of community planning, this district is important for two reasons. First, the district began its historic development in 1786 with the planning and laying out of Greensboro. The original town plan consisted of a gridiron street layout and rectangular building lots. Portions of the district closest to the downtown area--portions along the eastern stretches of South and Broad Streets, along West Street, and along the northern stretches of Main Street and Bush Street--were developed initially according to the dictates of this original community plan. Later, as development extended beyond the original city plan to the west and southwest, previously outlying rural areas with their larger lots, occasional older houses, and irregular street pattern were incorporated into the neighborhood. This incremental or evolved development pattern contrasts with the earlier planned arrangement, and both methods can be "read" in the layout of the neighborhood today. Both methods of developing historic residential neighborhoods--the planned and the incremental--are characteristic of small Georgia towns, and both feature the environmental characteristics found in this district. It is somewhat unusual to find both methods of neighborhood development in the same neighborhood, however, making this district somewhat unusual. Also unusual is the way in which the railroad cuts the district into two portions which correspond roughly to the "planned" section (to the east) and the "evolved" section (to the west). This situation resulted from the fact that the railroad was laid out at a relatively early point in Greensboro's history, at a time when this neighborhood still was largely encompassed by the original gridiron plan of the town. In actuality, however, because of the topography and the way in which the railroad runs through cuts, the railroad is unobtrusive in the district and manifests its presence only where it crosses Broad and South Streets.

Black History. In terms of black history, this district is significant for containing a historic lodge building associated with Greensboro's black community. A recent study of historic black resources in Georgia identified lodges in general as very important historic buildings in black communities. Lodges were centers of social, cultural, and political activity in the black

community. Many of these functions had been the exclusive prerogative of black churches, but with freedom for blacks to assemble and organize after the Civil War, lodges assumed an increasingly important community function. Moreover, in Greensboro, few historic resources associated with the black community have survived today with sufficient integrity to be eligible for the National Register. Thus this resource symbolizes the larger presence of the historic black community in Greensboro.

This district also may be significant in terms of social history. The district appears to be important as the residential neighborhood containing the homes of many of Greensboro's community leaders. A list of residents from this district includes some of the most influential people in the development of this city. The district has been the home of doctors, lawyers, bankers, merchants, industrialists, and ministers. However, additional documentation and evaluation is needed to support National Register eligibility under this area of significance.

CONTRIBUTING/NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCES:

78 contributing buildings
15 noncontributing buildings
93 total resources

VII. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS: Historic Structures Field Survey: Green County, Georgia (state-level survey)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: SEE Bibliography, Section 9, National Register Nomination Form

FORM PREPARED BY: SEE Form Prepared By, Section 11, National Register Nomination Form