

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 SPARTA CEME other names/site number N/A	TERY MAY 7 2001
2. Location	
street & number North of intersection of city, town Sparta county Hancock code GA zip code	
() not for publication	
3. Classification	
Ownership of Property:	Category of Property:
() private(X) public-local() public-state() public-federal	 () building(s) () district (X) site () structure () object
Number of Resources within Property:	Contributing Noncontributing
buildings sites structures objects total	0 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 1 0

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: Part of the cemetery was included within the Sparta Historic District in 1974.

Name of previous listing: Sparta Historic District Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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.				
Rillear & Cloves	5-3-01			
Signature of certifying official	Date			
W. Ray Luce, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer and Division Director, Historic Preservation Division				
In my opinion, the property () meets () does not meet the National Reg	gister 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	ude Anduls 6/22/2001			
() 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			

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

6. Function or Use		
Historic Functions:		
FUNERARY/cemetery		
Current Functions:		
FUNERARY/cemetery		

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

N/A

Materials:

foundation N/A walls N/A roof N/A other N/A

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

Sparta Cemetery is a 9.76 acre cemetery property located directly north of the intersection of Hamilton and Boland Streets in Sparta, Georgia, the county seat of rural Hancock County. It is directly north of the downtown commercial area. The irregularly-shaped cemetery is situated on primarily level ground and is bounded on the south by Hamilton Street and private property, on the west by private property and a small portion of Spring Street; on the north by private property and the C.S.X. Railroad; and on the east by private property. The entrance to Sparta Cemetery is at its southern end (southwest corner) and a "U"-shaped graveled main drive provides access to the property, extending to the northern boundary before looping around to the east and then running along the eastern boundary of the cemetery to Hamilton Street. There are also several other narrower paths through the property. The landscape treatment is informal, with numerous mature hardwoods and cedars located in a seemingly random planting pattern. (Photos 1, 4, 6,12,15,18, and 24.)

The cemetery is divided into approximately 750 lots for burial, and most of these lots are occupied by more than one funerary monument; many have four or more. The majority of the cemetery's burials are below ground and there is quite a range in the size of burial markers. A somewhat irregular grid plan is utilized to organize lots within the cemetery. The original site of Sparta Methodist Church, at the front-center of the lower (south) portion of the cemetery, now also contains burial lots. (Photograph 6.) Markers date from the first decade of the 19th century to the present day, as the cemetery is still in use for burials. Most of the more recent markers utilize spaces along the eastern side and in the northwestern portion of the cemetery. (Photos 16, 17, and 21.)

A wide variety of funerary art is found in Sparta Cemetery. There are numerous examples of flat stone slab markers, typically with the name and dates of the deceased incised on the top, but upright monuments are more common. (Photo 1.) The standing monuments range from very simple, small

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

markers to very large and distinctive monuments. (Photos 2, 5, and 8.) Some burial plots feature a single, large ornamental shaft at the center of a series of flat slab markers. Particularly prominent are truncated columns and obelisks, which are symbolic of life being cut short and were often used in the 19th century to mark graves of men of distinction. (Photos 2, 4, 5, and 18.) At least one example of this type was created by the stonecutter Theodore Markwalter, a German immigrant to Augusta who learned his trade while working on construction of the Cologne Cathedral. This marker is one of the few to be signed by either a craftsman or a company. Sparta Cemetery also contains a fine example of a column topped by a draped urn, a traditional symbol of sorrow, marking the grave of Epps Brown. (Photo 4.) There is one large mausoleum surrounded by ornamental fencing. It is a relatively simple structure with the only elaboration being pilasters at each corner. (Photo 7.)

Nonhistoric markers in Sparta Cemetery, particular those of recent decades, reveal new preferences for materials and decorative motifs. (Photos 14, 16, 19 and 20.) Granite stones have gradually replaced marble as the material of choice. Furthermore, new types of artistic treatment have become common, and examples are found in Sparta Cemetery. Sentimental and personal adornments have become popular since the 1970s, such as baby shoes or toys to indicate the grave of a young child.

At least ten of the cemetery lots are surrounded by ornamental iron fences, most of which are quite elaborate and distinctive. These fences are characteristic of the 19th century practice of enclosing burial plots.(Photos 2,3,4,5,7, 8, and 10.)

Sparta Cemetery retains a significant degree of historic integrity. Though the property has been expanded beyond its original boundaries, it nonetheless still retains enough characteristic features to represent the function, associations and appearance it had during its historic period. Modern (post-1951) graves are not so numerous as to overwhelm the overall historic appearance or give the appearance of a modern cemetery. Changes and alterations to historic grave markers have been fairly minimal, though the condition of some markers is rather poor. The cemetery is still in use.

Certifying o	official ha	as conside	red the	e significance of this property in relation to other	
properties:	inorar in	as conside	iou tiic	o significance of this property in relation to other	
() nationall	y (() statewid	е	(X) locally	
Applicable	Applicable National Register Criteria:				
(X) A	() B	(X) C		() D	
Criteria Cor	nsiderati	ions (Exce	otions)): () N/A	
()A ()B	() C ((X) D () E	() F	() G	
Areas of Sig	gnifican	ce (enter ca	ategori	ies from instructions):	
ART COMMUNIT LANDSCAP	—		DEVEL	OPMENT	
Period of S	ignifican	ice:			
1805-1951					
Significant	Dates:				
1805					
Significant	Person(s):			
N/A					
Cultural Aff	iliation:				
N/A					
Architect(s)	/Builder	(s):			
N/A					

8. Statement of Significance

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)

The Sparta Cemetery is the largest and most elaborate cemetery in Sparta. It is the principal historic cemetery for Sparta's white residents. Dating from the time of the city's incorporation, it is a local historic community landmark.

Sparta Cemetery is significant in terms of <u>art</u> for the fact that it contains numerous examples of 19th-and 20th-century funerary monuments as well as ornamental fencing. There is a variety and range of markers of various sizes, shapes, styles and composition, representative of similar cemeteries in other Georgia towns and small cities. The cemetery marks the only place besides the courthouse grounds where there was sculpture in the county. The cemetery also contains ornamental fencing. Because the town had many prosperous citizens, many monuments reflect the wealth of these people. Other memorials reflect less prominent citizens and are of simpler and smaller size, reflecting the economic diversity of the population.

Sparta Cemetery is significant in <u>community planning and development</u> for its association with the historic development of the city. While it was not designated in the original Sparta town plan, the cemetery was established on lots 121-124 of that plan. The fact that Sparta Cemetery was established the same year (1805) as Sparta's incorporation indicates that the presence of a community cemetery was a concern of Sparta's founders and early residents. The cemetery was designated for white residents only. Sparta Cemetery has additional significance for containing the graves of several persons of outstanding significance in the history of Sparta, Hancock County, and the state of Georgia, among these being David Dickson, Epps Brown, William Terrell, and Bishop George Foster Pierce.

Sparta Cemetery is significant in <u>landscape architecture</u> for the fact that the property is a good representative example of an early 19th-century small-town Georgia cemetery. Sparta Cemetery retains a significant degree of historic integrity. Though the property has been expanded beyond its original boundaries, it nonetheless still retains enough characteristic features to represent the function, associations and appearance it had during its historic period; these include the overall grid layout, range of monuments, informal landscaping including cedar trees, and cast-iron fences. Modern (post-1951) graves are not so numerous as to overwhelm the overall historic appearance or give the appearance of a modern cemetery.

National Register Criteria

The Sparta Cemetery meets National Register Criterion A because as a cemetery it is one of the necessities of life and was part of the city planning of Sparta, to provide a burial place for its citizens.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

The cemetery meets National Register Criterion C because as a cemetery it contains distinct pieces of funerary art which are of high artistic value, some are by well-known stone carvers. The cemetery also include a good collection of ornamental fencing showing the fine work done by artisans in that field.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

The Sparta Cemetery meets Criteria Consideration D because as a cemetery it is important as one that is nearly 200 years old, was founded as a city cemetery for the white residents of Sparta thus being a part of this county-seat's city planning, and contains fine examples of funerary art in both the grave markers and the ornamental fencing.

Period of significance (justification)

The period of significance runs from the founding of the cemetery in 1805 until 1951 the end of the historic period because it remains a functioning city-owned cemetery throughout this time.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

The cemetery itself is considered a contributing site and is the only resource to be enumerated.

Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

Located one block north of Sparta's commercial district and approximately 300 yards northeast of the Hancock County Courthouse, Sparta Cemetery was originally owned by the Methodist Church.

Burials were never limited to Methodists, however, and the property eventually became the town cemetery and is to this day owned by the City of Sparta. There are no African-American burials in the cemetery. African-Americans were buried in cemeteries associated with their churches.

Incorporated in 1805, Sparta had been settled in the late 18th century (1790s) as the county-seat for Hancock County, created in 1793. The community prospered as an important 19th-century town surrounded by major plantations and with many prominent plantation owners living within it. It was laid out in 1795 by Major Charles Abercrombie, a Revolutionary War veteran from North Carolina who had received bounty lands in the center of newly established Hancock County. Abercrombie divided his new town, which initially consisted of eighty-three acres, into half-acre lots. When he learned that the commissioners of Hancock County had been charged with locating a suitable courthouse site near the center of the county, Abercrombie deeded them four lots; these lots subsequently became the public square, upon which the first Hancock County courthouse was constructed.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

The Sparta plan is especially significant in the history of town planning in Georgia, as it served as a prototype for numerous other county seats in the state. As laid out in Sparta, the so-called Sparta Plan, as designated by Joan Niles Sears in her work on town planning in Georgia, features a central courthouse square situated on a high point with four streets running up to the center of the square. The primary entrance to the square is from the north, where the road (Georgia Highway 15/Jones Street) from the earlier town of Greensboro climbs toward the square and presents fine views of the courthouse. Broad Street (Georgia Highway 22), which was designated as Mitchell Street in the original Sparta town plan, is the major east/west street in Sparta and the site of the town's commercial district, located directly east of the square. Though Sparta Cemetery was not specifically designated in the original Sparta town plan, it was established on lots 121-124 at what was then the extreme northeast corner of the town in the same year (1805) that the town was incorporated or shortly thereafter.

The Methodist Church of Sparta, the town's first church, was established about the time that Methodist Bishop Francis Asbury first preached a sermon in Sparta on December 1, 1801. During the preceding decade, Asbury had traveled through Georgia and the southeast, spreading Methodism among new settlers. Though he was in the vicinity of Hancock County as early as 1791, Asbury did not actually enter the county until December of 1800 when he preached a sermon at Smyrna. In 1802, David Clement donated some land and \$250 for the construction of a Methodist meeting house in Sparta, though the building was apparently not completed until 1805. A simple frame structure, the church was intended for use by whites as well as their slaves and was located in a portion of Sparta Cemetery almost directly across Hamilton Street from the present Pierce Memorial United Methodist Church, which sits on the southeast side of the intersection outside the boundaries of the cemetery.

In 1874 the original church building was enlarged and a vestibule was added across the front with a bell tower at the center. The first church survived until it was burned in 1910. The original site was subsequently utilized for burials. Across the street, at the southeast corner of Hamilton and Boland Streets, an elaborate yellow-brick church was built. This building lasted only until 1927 when it too was destroyed by fire. It was replaced by the current Pierce Memorial United Methodist Church.

In addition to the graves of several Revolutionary War veterans as well as approximately 30 Confederate soldiers, Sparta Cemetery contains the graves of several persons of particular significance in the town's history as well as the history of Hancock County and the state of Georgia. Four of the most outstandingly significant individuals are Epps Brown, David Dickson, Bishop George F. Pierce, and William Terrell.

Epps Brown, born in Virginia in 1766, served in the Hancock County Militia from 1803 to 1810 and was Brigadier General in the Georgia Militia from 1810 to 1815. He also served as a member of the Georgia House of Representatives from Hancock County from 1808 to 1816 and as a State Senator from 1817 to 1826. Alfred Epps William Brown (b. 1803, d. 1875), son of Epps and Elizabeth Shackelford Brown, graduated from Yale University Law School at the age of seventeen and briefly

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

practiced law before becoming a successful Hancock County planter. The Brown family has been one of the most significant in the history of Hancock County.

David Dickson (1809-1885) was first a prominent Sparta merchant before acquiring 266 acres of land and beginning farming in 1845. He is credited with devising many new agricultural methods by which he was able to produce spectacular yields of corn and cotton. Dickson also contributed articles and letters to the *Southern Cultivator*, an antebellum agricultural journal. Along with his brother, Thomas, David Dickson was long considered one of Hancock County's most innovative and successful planters. In 1860 he owned 13,000 acres of land and 144 slaves; his real estate holdings were worth \$200,000 that year as opposed to only \$15,000 in 1850.

William Terrell (c.1786-1855) was a physician and planter and, like Dickson, played an important role in the advance of Hancock County and Georgia agriculture. Terrell was a founder and first president of the Hancock Planters' Club and in 1854 donated \$20,000 to the University of Georgia to endow the nation's second professorship of agriculture. He was also involved in politics, serving on the Inferior Court of Hancock County from 1808 to 1810, in the Georgia House of Representatives from 1810 to 1813, and in the United States Congress from 1817 to 1821. In 1847, at the age of 61, Terrell was again elected to public office as a member of the Georgia State Senate. William Terrell also contributed financial support and was a member of the Board of Advisement for the Sparta Female Model School. Established in 1831, this school adopted teaching methods developed at the Rensselaer School (now the Rensselaer Polytechnic) in Troy, New York, through which actual experiments and lectures were conducted by students. The Sparta Female Model School was initially quite successful and drew students from all over Georgia and even a few from Alabama and Florida, but financial and other difficulties forced the school to be re-located to Fort Gaines in 1838. Terrell died in 1855, and during the Civil War a four-gun battery from Hancock County fought in his honor as the Terrell Light Artillery. He is also the namesake of Terrell County, Georgia, created in 1856.

Sparta Cemetery also contains the grave of Bishop George Foster Pierce (1811-1884), a renowned figure in the history of the Methodist Church in Hancock County and Georgia. Bishop Pierce was born in Greene County in 1811 and educated at the University of Georgia. After becoming a Methodist preacher in 1831 he spent the next seven years as a circuit rider, but in 1838 he was chosen as the first president of the Georgia Female College in Macon, now known as Wesleyan. He was also president of Emory University from 1849 to 1854 before being chosen Bishop at the Methodist General Conference in Columbus, and he held that office for thirty years. His home was known as Sunshine, a few miles outside of Sparta. In 1868, Bishop Pierce granted a license to preach to Lucius Holsey, a former slave who six years earlier had been married by Bishop Pierce at Sunshine. Holsey became a leader in the Colored (now Christian) Methodist Episcopal Church and had a long and distinguished career. When the original Sparta Methodist Church was destroyed by fire in 1910, the replacement church was named Pierce Memorial Methodist Church in honor of Bishop George F. Pierce. It was built across the street from the cemetery.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

The original boundary of Sparta Cemetery has been expanded twice since the early 1930s, with new spaces added to the east of the original boundary as well as to the north and northwest. In 1931 the sizeable "Cary Annex" was made on the east side of the cemetery, with the land conveyed by C. W. Cary. As for the addition to the north and northwest, there are a few graves on the western side of the gravel drive that date from the 1920s, but nearly all are post-1951 and the majority of the graves in this particular section are from the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. At the present time an organization known as the Sparta Cemetery Association, a group of current and former Sparta residents, is working to catalog graves in Sparta Cemetery and encourage restoration and proper maintenance of this important property. A recent addition of land to the west of the entrance road is not included within this nomination.

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

Adamson, Carrie. Augusta Genealogical Society. Interviews, April 1996 and March 1997.

Dickens, Lee. Former resident of Sparta. Interview, March 1996.

Dyer, David. Resident of Hancock County. Interview, April 1996.

Gaissert, John A. Down the Road. Privately published by Marguerite Goolsby Gaissert, 1993.

Hancock County Deed Records.

Hancock County Tax Records.

Lawrence, Rev. Harold. First Methodist Church, Milledgeville and Historian of North Georgia Methodist Conference. Interview, March 1996.

Rozier, John. The Houses of Hancock, 1785-1865. Decatur, Georgia: Auldfarren Books, 1996.

Sears, Joan Niles. *The First Hundred Years of Town Planning in Georgia*. Atlanta: Cherokee Publishing Company, 1979.

Shivers, Forrest. *The Land Between: A History of Hancock County, Georgia, to 1940.* Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company Publishers, 1990.

Smith, Elizabeth Wiley. *The History of Hancock County, Georgia* (2 vols.). Washington, Georgia: Wilkes Publishing Company, 1974. (Note: Mrs. Smith died in 1933, book printed 1974.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): () 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:

(X-partial) 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 #

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9--Major Bibliographic References

Primary location of additional data:
X) State historic preservation office
) Other State Agency
) Federal agency
) Local government
) University
) Other, Specify Repository:
Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property

9.76 acres

UTM References

A) Zone 17 Easting 316160 Northing 3683730

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is marked on the enclosed plat map.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property is all that has been historically used as a cemetery and that is owned by the city and dedicated for that purpose. It does not include the year 2000 addition to the cemetery which is not shown on the map.

11. Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Office

name/title Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., Historian organization Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources street & number 156 Trinity Ave. SW, Suite 101 city or town Atlanta state Georgia zip code 30303 telephone (404) 656-2840 date March 23, 2001

Consulting Services/Technical Assistance (if applicable)

() not applicable

name/title John Kissane organization Historic Preservation Consultant street and number 310 Three Oaks Dr. city or town Athens state GA zip code 30607 telephone 706-613-7307

- (X) consultant
- () regional development center preservation planner
- () other:

(HPD form version 02-24-97)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs

Name of Property:

Sparta Cemetery

City or Vicinity:

Sparta

County:

Hancock

State:

Georgia

Photographer:

James R. Lockhart

Negative Filed:

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Date Photographed:

December, 1998

Description of Photograph(s):

1 of 24: South front of cemetery, off Hamilton Street, note boxed graves in center; photographer facing northwest.

2 of 24: Just northeast of photograph no. 1, lot with elaborate iron fencing; photographer facing northwest.

3 of 24: Detail of iron fence for the cemetery lot in photograph no. 2; photographer facing northwest.

4 of 24: Obelisk in center of south part of cemetery; photographer facing northeast.

5 of 24: Variety of grave markers, including fenced lot with small obelisk, south part of cemetery; photographer facing north.

6 of 24: Just to the left (west) of previous photograph and close to south end; photographer facing north.

7 of 24: Above ground burial chamber surrounded by elaborately fenced lot in center of southern part of cemetery; photographer facing southwest.

8 of 24: Shivers lot with iron fencing and markers from various eras on west side of cemetery's southern portion; photographer facing northwest.

9 of 24: Civil War Veteran's marker out of metal at western edge/road of the cemetery; photographer facing southwest.

10 of 24: Variety of iron fencing and a look back toward above ground burial seen in photograph no. 7; photographer facing northeast.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs

- 11 of 24: Table-type gravemarker (remains were actually in the ground); photographer facing northwest.
- 12 of 24: View from south portion toward east portion showing tree and variety of gravemarkers, with a very early 19th century stone at left; photographer facing northeast.
- 13 of 24: Same view/direction as no. 12, just further east showing buildings at edge and outside of cemetery; photographer facing northeast.
- 14 of 24: 1930s section of cemetery on northeast side; photographer facing north.
- 15 of 24: 1830s and 1870s sections with different types of less elaborate fencing: photographer facing northwest.
- 16 of 24: Northeast section of cemetery, the 1930s section; photographer facing northeast.
- 17 of 24: Road dividing the 1930s section on the east (right) and the 1870s section on the west (right); photographer facing north/northwest.
- 18 of 24: 1870s section with large monuments, one draped in traditional mourning cloth; photographer facing northwest.
- 19 of 24: Northwest section with burials from mixed years, looking more modern overall, railroad track at rear of photo; photographer facing north.
- 20 of 24: Just south of previous photograph, more 20th century burials; photographer facing northwest.
- 21 of 24: Northwest section, west of photograph no. 20, at edge of cemetery; photographer facing northwest.
- 22 of 24: Intersection of cemetery roadways at corner of cemetery; photographer facing northeast.
- 23 of 24: Just south of the previous photograph; photographer facing northeast.
- 24 of 24: Looking from western edge of cemetery (behind the photographer) toward the southern end /Hamilton St. entrance of the cemetery past the large trees; photographer facing southeast.



