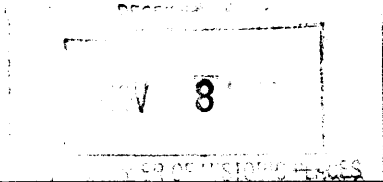


1476



## 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** Stone Mountain Historic District

**historic name** N/A

**other names/site number** N/A

### 2. Location

**street & number** Roughly bounded by Stone Mountain Cemetery, Stone Mountain Memorial Park, Lucile Street, CSX Railroad, VFW Drive, and the Stone Mountain city limits.

**city, town** Stone Mountain ( ) vicinity of

**county** DeKalb **code** 089

**state** Georgia **code** GA **zip code** 30083

( ) not for publication

### 3. Classification

**Ownership of Property:**

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-federal

**Category of Property:**

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

**Number of Resources within Property:**

Contributing

Noncontributing

|                   |     |     |
|-------------------|-----|-----|
| <b>buildings</b>  | 273 | 162 |
| <b>sites</b>      | 1   | 0   |
| <b>structures</b> | 2   | 0   |
| <b>objects</b>    | 0   | 0   |
| <b>total</b>      | 275 | 162 |

**Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:** N/A

**Name of previous listing:** N/A

**Name of related multiple property listing:** N/A

**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

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

Richard Clowes 10-31-00  
Signature of certifying official Date

W. Ray Luce  
Director, Historic Preservation Division,  
Georgia Department of Natural Resources

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

Edson A. Beall 12/7/00

( ) 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

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## 6. Function or Use

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### Historic Functions:

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/multiple dwelling/hotel  
COMMERCE/TRADE/business/specialty store/professional/financial institution/restaurant  
SOCIAL/clubhouse  
EDUCATION/school  
RELIGION/religious facility  
FUNERARY/cemetery  
RECREATION/CULTURE/museum/sports facility  
TRANSPORTATION/rail-related

### Current Functions:

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/multiple dwelling/hotel  
COMMERCE/TRADE/business/professional/financial institution/restaurant  
SOCIAL/clubhouse  
GOVERNMENT/city hall  
RELIGION/religious facility  
FUNERARY/cemetery  
RECREATION/CULTURE/sports facility  
TRANSPORTATION/rail-related

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## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification:

MID-19th CENTURY/Greek Revival  
LATE 19th CENTURY AND EARLY 20th CENTURY REVIVALS/Colonial Revival/Tudor Revival  
LATE 19th CENTURY AND EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Bungalow/Craftsman  
OTHER: Folk Victorian

### Materials:

|            |                    |
|------------|--------------------|
| foundation | Concrete           |
| walls      | Wood: weatherboard |
| roof       | Asphalt            |
| other      | Stone, Brick       |

### Description of present and historic physical appearance:

#### Summary Description

The Stone Mountain Historic District is a railroad town in central DeKalb County that comprises residential, commercial, and community landmark buildings constructed in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Stone Mountain Historic District is located at the base of Stone Mountain, a granite outcropping that rises 700 feet above the surrounding terrain. Many buildings in Stone Mountain are

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### Section 7--Description

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distinguished by their granite construction; granite also is found in retaining walls and fence posts. Stone Mountain is a railroad-strip-type town with the Georgia Railroad line trending north to south through the center of the historic district. Main Street, the principal commercial corridor, and other main thoroughfares run parallel to the rail line or cross perpendicular to the line. The commercial area at the center of the district consists mostly of a continuous row of one- and two-story commercial buildings on the east side of Main Street, opposite the rail line. Some are stone; others are built of brick with decorative brickwork and arcaded fronts. At the center of town is a large open lot that was the site of former school and later sanitarium which burned in the 1970s. The granite depot, built c.1857 with an addition built in 1914, is rectangular-shaped and is sheltered by a broad hip roof. The brick trolley barn, located a block east of the railroad depot, was built c.1920. The historically white residential neighborhoods are centered on East and West Mountain streets. The earliest houses are central-hall, Greek Revival-style houses built from the 1850s to the 1870s. Later houses represent the gabled-ell house, saddlebag, and central-hall house types, some with Queen Anne-style ornament. The most prevalent historic houses are bungalows with Craftsman-style ornament and English Vernacular Revival-style houses built mostly in the first decades of the 20th century. Community landmark resources include the Romanesque-style Stone Mountain United Methodist Church (1909), the Colonial Revival-style First Baptist Church (1938), the Rock Gym (WPA, c.1930), the depot and trolley, and the Stone Mountain Cemetery (c.1850). Located at the north end of town, the cemetery includes over one thousand burials and a variety of markers and landscape features. Shermantown, located south of downtown, is the city's historic African-American neighborhood. Shermantown features small, mostly frame houses on small lots, narrow streets, and community landmark resources such as churches and stores.

#### Description of Historic Resources

The City of Stone Mountain is located on the west side of Stone Mountain in east central DeKalb County, Georgia. Stone Mountain, which is visible from points throughout the city (photos 1 and 47-48), is a key component of the setting of the historic district but is not included within the district boundary. Stone Mountain, for which the city is named, is now part of Stone Mountain Memorial Park, a 3,200-acre recreational state park. This mountain is approximately 700-feet tall and 1,683 feet above sea level. Classified as a monadnock, Stone Mountain is the largest single outcropping of granite in the world and it has been called "the Eighth Wonder of the World."

Stone Mountain is a railroad strip-type town with the rail line passing through downtown in a north/south direction. The commercial downtown is organized on a grid-iron plan on the east side of the rail line. It comprises three blocks of continuous one- and two-story commercial buildings on Main Street and smaller secondary streets. The historically white neighborhoods north and east of downtown and the African-American neighborhood named Shermantown, which anchors the south end of the historic district, continue the grid-iron plan. The historically white neighborhood west of

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the rail line is laid out on an irregular grid of curvilinear streets with larger blocks than those across the tracks. Granite curbs, retaining walls, and steps located downtown and throughout the residential neighborhoods are among the most prevalent landscape features in Stone Mountain. Modern subdivisions with curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs surround the historic district on all sides except the east side, which is bounded by Stone Mountain Memorial Park. North of the historic district is the Memorial Drive extension, a four-lane divided highway.

The Stone Mountain Historic District includes a variety of architectural styles and building types built from the 1830s through 1950. In 1994, New South Associates completed a historic sites survey of Stone Mountain that identified 255 resources within the city limits of Stone Mountain, the majority of which are within the proposed historic district boundary. Commercial buildings, residential buildings, and community landmark resources are described below:

#### Commercial Buildings

The historic commercial buildings in Stone Mountain are mostly recognizable commercial building types such as commercial blocks, filling stations, and arcaded blocks built in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. New South Associates surveyed 30 historic commercial buildings that date from 1836 to the 1930s. Most commercial buildings are constructed of brick or Stone Mountain granite. They include not only traditional commercial blocks but also house types, such as the I-house, that were built for commercial uses. Twelve buildings, constructed as residences, are now serving commercial functions. Most commercial buildings are located in the commercial downtown, which extends along Main Street from Mountain Street south to Poole Street.

Most commercial buildings are either one- or two-story commercial blocks that contain one or two separate commercial enterprises. These buildings typically have flat roofs with parapets ornamented with decorative brickwork on the entablature. These buildings line Main Street between Memorial Drive and Poole Street. 975 Main Street (photo 9) is a one-story brick building with a paneled brick parapet wall. A larger example lies across the street at 963-965 Main Street (photo 8, right). It is a c.1900 two-story brick building with a stepped brick parapet. The lower façade has modern display windows and a full façade, shed roofed porch. The second-floor windows are original 9/9 double-hung sash with narrow arched lintels. Photo 7 includes one- and two-story granite commercial buildings as well as a two-story brick bank building. Typically, brick buildings feature more decorative detail than stone buildings because granite is much more difficult to work. The Stone Mountain Inn at 933-935 Main Street (photo 6) is another example of an intact brick commercial building. Constructed in c.1905, the two-story brick building features segmentally arched windows, stepped parapet, and decorative brickwork above the windows and at the cornice.

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Three commercial block buildings in Stone Mountain are arcaded (photos 8 and 15). These one-story brick buildings are located on the corner of East Mountain and Main streets. Built at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these three attached buildings feature a variety decorative motifs, including corbeled and paneled parapets, quoins, and keystones to accentuate the arches. They have housed a variety of businesses and underwent extensive renovations in the 1970s that left the facades intact.

The historic district also contains a number of one-story, free-standing commercial buildings. These buildings usually feature one principal room with a front gable sometimes concealed behind a parapet. Located at the corner of Forest and Central avenues is a frame, front-gable commercial building with corrugated metal walls and a front-gable roof. The gable forms an entrance porch and is supported by wood brackets. The building has one front door with two flanking windows, doors in the rear and side, and an interior brick chimney. Now vacant, this building originally served as a grocery store. Other free-standing store buildings were built of Stone Mountain granite. Examples of these include the large one-story commercial building at 6565 Memorial Drive, which features a front-gable roof and stepped parapet, and a building located at the corner of East Mountain Street and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue (photo 17).

The gasoline filling station arrived with the advent of the automobile. An example of an early filling station is the Maddox Grocery Store and Filling Station at 5483 East Mountain Street (photo 25). This c.1920 building is a small, one-story, three-bay building constructed of random-laid granite blocks. No longer a filling station, it serves as a meeting place for members of the Stone Mountain walking club. Another historic filling station is located at 691 Main Street (photo 29). Its porte cochere has been filled but its form and massing and granite construction are clearly visible.

The Andrew Johnson House, built c.1836, is the oldest extant building in Stone Mountain. (A log house was moved onto a downtown lot on Second Street after 1980 and in this nomination it considered noncontributing (photo 14.) Located at 5329 Mimosa Drive, the Johnson house served first as a residence and later a commercial building (photo 47). The two-story masonry building has a rectangular main mass with a side-gable standing-seam metal roof. It has two-foot thick cavity walls. An article on this house published in the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* on November 25, 1993, stated that each wall is composed of two courses of brick, an airspace, then two external brick courses. The air space was created by the placement of logs or framing members between the brick - for improved thermal insulation and fireproofing. The walls, both exterior and interior, are stuccoed with a mixture of sands, known locally as "Georgia Savannah Creek mortar." The Johnson house is one of only four buildings in the city stuccoed in this manner. Scoring was done on the exterior walls in the 20th century to suggest granite-block construction. Not one of the original chimneys is in evidence on the exterior. The placement of an interior chimney on the main façade was probably a later addition. The interior plan consists of a central hall, although one wall has been removed. Two small rooms comprise the west side while one large room encompassing three bays on the first floor,

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occupies the east side. The floor plan may have been altered when the house was converted to a hotel in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The second story is divided into a number of rooms, some of which still bear their hotel room numbers. The second floor features a wrap-around porch. During the Civil War, the Johnson house was used as a Confederate hospital, and it currently serves as a restaurant.

### Residential Buildings

Houses in the Stone Mountain Historic District represent house types and stylistic influences that are characteristic of 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century houses built throughout the Georgia Piedmont. Some of the earliest houses in the historic district were built in the Greek Revival style, such as the Wells-Dalton House at 1036 Ridge Avenue (photo 57). Built c. 1850, the Wells-Dalton House is a two-story stucco building with a full-width front porch supported by colossal Doric columns. The main entrance is surrounded by sidelights and a transom. The balcony entrance also features sidelights. The house features a Georgian plan with four rooms divided by central hall. Another example of Greek Revival-style architecture in Stone Mountain is the Wells-Dunham House at 5425 East Mountain Street (photo 22). The Wells-Dunham House, built in c. 1870, is a one-story stucco building with a truncated hip roof and one-bay front porch. The main entrance is surrounded by sidelights and a transom and the windows feature plain stone lintels. Both of these houses feature symmetrical floor plans organized around central halls with flanking rooms on each side.

Architectural styles built in Stone Mountain in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are mostly plain and less ornate than the high-style houses built in larger Georgia cities, such as Atlanta. Rather than the asymmetrical massing and the eclectic ornamentation of the Queen Anne style, houses from this period in Stone Mountain may be characterized as Folk Victorian. These are mostly traditional Georgia house types, such as gabled ells and central-hall plan houses, with elaborate jig-sawn ornament and sometimes additional roof gables added to break up the traditional massing of the house. These houses are located in the areas east and west of the commercial district and include 5459 East Mountain Street, a one-story, central-hall plan house with a large central gable that includes jig-sawn ornament and Queen-Anne window. The full-width front porch features decoratively sawn brackets and balusters. Another example includes a center-hall-plan house with multiple gables and elaborate trim on Forrest Avenue (photo 58).

Craftsman-style houses were built throughout Stone Mountain from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These houses were constructed in groups creating entire streets of Craftsman-style house and they were built individually as infill houses. Elements of the Craftsman style are exposed rafter ends, porches supported by massive wood supports, sometimes set on brick piers, decorative brackets, and windows organized in pairs and bands. Examples include 5429 East Mountain Street (photo 22, left), 6122 Ponce de Leon Avenue (photo 70), 6530 Memorial Drive (photo 66), and a series of houses on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street (photo 21).

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The English Vernacular Revival style is the last major architectural style of historic houses built in Stone Mountain. The English Vernacular Revival style, also called the Tudor Revival style, was built in the first four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This style borrowed heavily from Medieval English houses, especially their steeply pitched gable roofs, mixing of materials such as brick, stucco, and half timbering, as well as diamond-paned windows and arched entryways. 5250 Mimosa, for example, features a steeply pitched roof and diamond-paned windows (photo 51), and 5884 East Mountain Street includes a stone entrance vestibule and front-facing chimney, all characteristic of the style (photo 24, right).

Many houses in Stone Mountain are better understood as house types rather than by architectural style. *Georgia's Living Places*, a statewide study of historic house styles and types, defines house type as the combination of floor plan and the number of stories. This provides a basis for examining similarities among houses in cases where the house does not possess elements of an academic style. The Stone Mountain Historic District includes examples of almost all of the house types identified in Georgia. The hall-parlor house, originally an English vernacular house type, is among the earliest house forms in Georgia. This one-story house type consists of two unequal rooms with the entrance into the larger of the two rooms. This house type features a side-gabled roof with gable-end chimneys. Two examples of hall-parlor houses are 5265 West Mountain Street and 816 4<sup>th</sup> Street in Shermantown.

The I-house and the closely related one-story central-hall-plan house evolved from the hall-parlor-plan house. In Stone Mountain many of these date from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The house at 1060 Poplar Springs Road (photo 61) is an excellent example of I-house, which is a two-story, single-pile dwelling with a central hall dividing the two principal rooms. One-story, central-hall-plan houses are more common (photos 52 and 62).

The gabled-ell cottage was built throughout the historic district. It is a one-story house type with a cross-gable roof and a T- or L-shaped plan. Most gabled wings have full-width porches and chimneys located either at the gable end or at the intersection of the ridgeline. This house type was popular in Georgia between 1875 and 1915. Examples include 1115 4<sup>th</sup> Street, 1036 Ridge Avenue (photo 59), and a Craftsman-style gabled-ell cottage at 1056 Sheppard Drive (photo 45).

The Queen Anne cottage is a one-story house type. It consists of a square main mass with projecting front and side gables. There is no central hallway but instead a square-shaped entrance hall. Typically the porch is recessed in the ell formed by the intersection of the projecting front gable and the hipped roof mass. The Queen Anne type was constructed between the 1890s and 1930s. The house at 1114 Ridge Avenue (photo 68) is an outstanding example of the Queen Anne house type.



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### Section 7--Description

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The New South cottage, a house type closely related to the Queen Anne cottage, is also represented in the Stone Mountain Historic District. The New South Cottage is a transitional house type that includes the central-hall plan but the layout is asymmetrical because the projecting front gable resulted in the shifting forward of some interior rooms. 5442 East Mountain Street is an example of the New South Cottage (photo 23).

Also built in Stone Mountain during this period are the smaller and less common double-pen and saddlebag houses. The double-pen house type is a house composed of two roughly equal-sized rooms with one or more gable-end chimneys. An example of the double-pen house type is located at 1002 Hill Street. The saddlebag house type is also composed of two rooms but the central chimney is located between the two rooms. An example of the saddlebag house type in the historic district is located at 839 Main Street. These house types were most popular in Georgia between 1850 and 1900.

The shotgun house is a small one-story house type that is distinguished by its narrow, one-room wide and two- to three-room-deep plan. This house type was popular in Georgia between 1870 and 1920. Shotgun houses are often a traditional African-American house form and in Stone Mountain all of the surviving shotgun houses are located Shermantown, the African-American neighborhood located south of the commercial district. Some shotgun types have additions to the side and/or rear elevations. Examples of shotgun houses in the historic district include 802 3rd Street and 808 3rd Street.

The bungalow house type is the most common historic house type in Stone Mountain. These one-story houses have rectangular plans with low sloping roofs with either front-, side-, or cross-gables. Bungalows, which were popular in Georgia between 1900 and 1930, may be plain or feature Craftsman-style details. Bungalows may be seen photos 21, 24, 26, 28, 33, 53, 66, and 72.

### Community Landmarks

Community landmark resources in Stone Mountain include transportation-related buildings, churches, a recreation center, and a cemetery. Located along the rail line in the center of the commercial district, the railroad depot is among the most prominent landmark buildings (photo 2). Constructed in c.1857 with an addition built in 1914, the granite depot is a long, rectangular building sheltered by a hip roof with broad overhanging eaves. The depot currently houses city hall and the police station. A second transportation related building is the brick trolley barn located at 5384 Manor Street (photo 13). The trolley barn, built c.1920, is a two-story brick building with arched windows and decorative brick coursing. It now serves as a community arts center.

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### Section 7--Description

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Churches are the most numerous type of community landmark building in Stone Mountain. The Romanesque-style Stone Mountain United Methodist Church at 5312 West Mountain Street was built in c.1909 (photo 56). Like many buildings in Stone Mountain, the Methodist church is constructed of local granite. Two blocks south on Ridge Avenue is the First Baptist Church, designed by Atlanta architects Barili and Humphreys in 1938 (photo 48). It is a brick building designed in the Colonial Revival style with a pedimented portico and broken scrolled surround above the door. In the African-American community of Shermantown there are three churches, Bethsaida Baptist Church, Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church, and St. Paul A.M.E. Church. These are described in section on Shermantown.

The Rock Gym at 5265 Mimosa Drive is a granite gymnasium that was built by the WPA in c.1930 (photo 49). It features granite buttresses and sills and an open truss roof. Its open plan remains intact and the building now serves as a recreation center.

The Stone Mountain Cemetery, established in 1855, is located at the historic district's north boundary at the intersection of North Main Street, East Ponce de Leon Avenue, Silverhill Road, Memorial Drive, and the Georgia Railroad. The cemetery is divided into ten sections with 1,368 marked graves and approximately 400 unmarked graves. The overall character of the cemetery is picturesque with wrought-iron fences around family plots and granite retaining walls delineating some family plots. Grave markers include plain and ornate granite headstones, obelisks, and a few mausolea. The cemetery is planted with mature oaks, yews, and cedar trees across rolling hills. Some cemetery drives are lined with granite curbing. The cemetery is entered at the south end through granite pillars topped with acorn finials (photo 75). Near the front entrance lie uniform rows of markers for the approximately 150 Confederate soldiers interred in the cemetery (photo 76). Most of the identified African-American burials in Stone Mountain Cemetery are located in the eastern sections of the cemetery (photos 75-80).

### Shermantown

The African-American neighborhood of Shermantown remains a distinct community within Stone Mountain and includes house types specific to Shermantown as well as commercial buildings and community landmark buildings. Shermantown is located south of downtown along 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> streets. These streets continue the grid-iron plan established for downtown; however, Shermantown also includes curvilinear streets and lanes, such as Stillhouse Road, and building lots are much smaller than in other parts of Stone Mountain. During the 1980s, approximately 20 houses were constructed along 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> streets between Poole and Venable streets as part of a development called New Gibraltar. In addition an elementary school was constructed on 4<sup>th</sup> Street in 1956. Located between downtown and Shermantown, these buildings created a visual break in the continuity of the historic district. However, Shermantown, which had historically been isolated from

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### Section 7--Description

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the city's white neighborhoods, remains geographically linked to the rest of the historic district by the railroad and properties along Main and 2<sup>nd</sup> streets.

In "Georgia Community Development and Morphology of Community Types," Darlene Roth describes the appearance and development of African-American neighborhoods in Georgia like Shermantown:

In the South, every community and town of any size will have one or more black components: a separate town center and black residential areas . . . . The black service area(s) will be hidden within the black community. Sometimes a church or school will be the focus of the community. . . Residential areas will be separate from white residential areas . . . . The black sections of town (prior to World War II suburbanization) will differ from the white sections in their general landscape: the street grid will probably be incomplete, the streets narrow, the lots and dwellings small. These communities will contain architecture which includes rural, folk, and undecorated vernacular forms – such as shotguns, pyramidal hipped roof "boxes," saddlebags, and others.

The north-south streets in Shermantown are long, narrow blocks that are roughly parallel but not regular in width (photo 36). Small east-west alleys intersect the larger streets. Houses are set close to the street on narrow lots. Concrete curbing and remnants of granite curbing are located throughout the neighborhood. The oldest residential architecture in Shermantown dates to c.1880 and is located on 4<sup>th</sup> Street near Stillhouse Road (photo 39). Most of the houses in Shermantown are one-story, frame bungalows, cottages, and shotguns that were built in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These houses are small and plain with little stylistic ornamentation. Like other houses in Stone Mountain, they feature the distinctive use of granite foundations, piers, and chimneys (photos 33, 34, 37).

Stone Mountain's three African-American churches, Bethsaida Baptist Church, Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church, and St. Paul A.M.E. Church, are located in Shermantown. Bethsaida Baptist Church at 853 4<sup>th</sup> Street, is a c.1920 granite building with asymmetrical flanking towers, stained glass, and a gabled portico supported by wood posts (photo 38). St. Paul A.M.E. Church at 811 3<sup>rd</sup> Street was built in 1959. It is a brick building with symmetrical flanking towers, stained glass, and gabled portico (photo 35). Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church on Stillhouse Road, built in c.1954, is a concrete-block building with an entrance vestibule and rear social hall (photo 41).

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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**Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:**

nationally       statewide       locally

**Applicable National Register Criteria:**

A       B       C       D

**Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):**  N/A

A    B    C    D    E    F    G

**Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):**

Architecture  
Commerce  
Community Planning and Development  
Ethnic Heritage: Black  
Entertainment/Recreation  
Transportation

**Period of Significance:**

1836-1950

**Significant Dates:**

1836 - Andrew Johnson built one of the first--and oldest surviving--houses in Stone Mountain.

1845 - Georgia Railroad established a rail line through Stone Mountain.

**Significant Person(s):**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation:**

N/A

**Architect(s)/Builder(s):**

Barili and Humphreys (architectural firm)  
Wilson, J. A. (Architect)

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### Section 8--Statement of Significance

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#### **Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)**

##### Statements of Significance

The Stone Mountain Historic District is significant because represents an intact historic railroad town. It contains nearly every major element of a historic town in Georgia, including the homes of the town founders, the rail line, central business district, residential neighborhoods, an African-American community, and community landmark buildings. These resources collectively represent nearly a century and half of local growth and development in Stone Mountain. These community elements are distinguished by geographical, architectural, and landscape features literally taken from the neighboring Stone Mountain outcrop. Relatively rare anywhere in the state, an intact historic community such as Stone Mountain is extremely rare in the metropolitan Atlanta area.

The Stone Mountain Historic District is significant in the area of architecture because its houses, commercial buildings, and community landmark buildings are representative of building types and architectural styles that were built throughout Georgia during the late 19th and 20th centuries. Architectural styles associated with buildings in the historic district include Greek Revival, Italian Renaissance, Folk Victorian, Craftsman, and English Vernacular Revival. House types in Stone Mountain that have been identified as important in the historic context, *Georgia's Living Places: Historic Houses in their Landscaped Settings*, include I-houses, shotgun houses, bungalows, gabled-ell cottages, Queen Anne Cottages, central halls, hall-parlors, Georgian houses, and New South cottages. Commercial buildings which form the downtown commercial district and the city's numerous churches were also built in popular architectural styles, such as Romanesque, Italianate, and Colonial Revival. Many of these styles and house types were part of national trends in architecture during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In addition, many of the buildings in the historic district are built of local granite. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, granite was used for chimneys and foundations. In the early 20th century, granite composed entire buildings and can be seen throughout the district in foundations, chimneys, walls, and architectural details, as well as in fences, retaining walls and street curbs. In 1994, an architectural survey of the city recorded eighteen granite buildings. Granite was produced and sold locally at price comparable to brick so its use in Stone Mountain was widespread.

The district is significant in the area of community planning and development because the orientation of the main streets parallel and perpendicular to the rail line that bisects the town is characteristic of the railroad-strip town. According to the study, "Georgia Community Development and Morphology of Community Types," Stone Mountain exemplifies the railroad-strip town, which one of the most common town plans in Georgia. Perhaps the most typical of all railroad-strip towns is the orientation of Stone Mountain's commercial development on one side of the railroad. The depot is sited along the rail line wedged between the tracks and Main Street. The main commercial blocks are located on Main Street on the east side of the rail line. The commercial downtown is laid out on a grid-iron

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plan that extends north and south. This includes the African-American neighborhood of Shermantown where the lots follow the grid-iron plan. Beyond downtown to the east and west in the historically white residential areas the blocks are larger with larger lots and the more curvilinear streets are laid out in an irregular pattern. This intact plan reflects the historical development of the town of Stone Mountain from its very beginnings in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century through the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The historic district is significant in the area of commerce because its commercial buildings represent the town as a center of commerce in central DeKalb County. The central business district developed primarily along the railroad line and served the commercial needs of local citizens, quarry workers, and tourists. By 1890, after portions of DeKalb County were given over to form neighboring Fulton County, Stone Mountain was centrally located in county. Its central location allowed it to meet the commercial needs of the surrounding region. The historic commercial activity is represented in the commercial buildings that remain along the railroad line and form the city's downtown. By the 1920s, Stone Mountain supported the granite industry as well as drug stores, feed stores, banks, auto-related businesses (garages and auto sales), restaurants, hotels, and a variety of small businesses. The downtown blocks of continuous commercial buildings convey the significance of the historic district in the area commerce.

The Stone Mountain Historic District is significant in the area of transportation because the rail line, railroad depot, and the streetcar barn represent the important role of transportation in the development of Stone Mountain from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The stagecoach, train, and streetcar were all important modes of transportation in Stone Mountain prior to and through the advent of the automobile. While there are no remaining resources relating to the stagecoach line in the district, three resources still exist that are associated with the railroad line and the streetcar line. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, people moved from New Gibraltar at the base of Stone Mountain roughly one-half mile west to the city's current site, in anticipation of the coming of the railroad in 1845. This community did not just "spring up," but rather it grew around the railroad like other railroad strip towns in Georgia, such as Adairsville in Bartow County. The train brought visitors to the city and transported granite and cotton to regional markets. The railroad spur served a shuttle function for those who lived in Stone Mountain and worked in the quarries. African Americans who resided in Shermantown, as well as Welsh, Italian, Swedish, Norwegian, and Scottish stonecutters who lived in other areas, took the "dinky," a small train that ran on the railroad spur line, to the quarries. In addition, the streetcar system was significant in the history of Stone Mountain because it represents efforts by the Georgia Railway & Power Company (GR & P) to establish interurban streetcar service. This new streetcar was part of a network of interurbans planned by GR&P to connect Atlanta with cities throughout the Georgia Piedmont. The streetcar network never materialized and Marietta remained the only other city to have streetcar service to Atlanta. The importance of the automobile is represented in Stone Mountain by small

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filling stations constructed throughout the city in the first decades of the 20th century. These small buildings, sometimes with porte cocheres, reflect the local custom of building in granite.

The Stone Mountain Historic District is significant in the area of entertainment/recreation because the surviving commercial and hotel buildings represent the 19th- and early 20th-century tourism industry associated with the adjacent Stone Mountain. Before the city of Stone Mountain was founded the mountain was used as a gathering place and visual marker by the Creek and Cherokee Indians. Later, a stagecoach line ran trips from Milledgeville to Stone Mountain, making stops at Eatonton and Madison in 1825. Three years later another stage coach line made daily trips from Stone Mountain to Dahlonega. By 1828, Stone Mountain was so popular that Fourth of July parties were held on its summit for locals and visitors. Hotels such as Liberty Hall, Cloud's hotel, and the Stone Mountain House were established in Stone Mountain before the Civil War. Andrew Johnson and Aaron Cloud were competing inn keepers and by 1842 Cloud constructed a wood octagonal-shaped observation tower atop the mountain. "Cloud's Tower" was 165-feet tall with a telescope from which visitors could see five counties and the few small buildings that comprised Atlanta. Thomas Henry built another tower after Cloud's Tower was destroyed in a storm in 1849. Later entrepreneurs developed other ventures to lure tourists to the mountain, including astronomy lectures on the mountaintop.

The Southern Central Agricultural Society was among the most sophisticated efforts to bring tourists to Stone Mountain. John W. Graves, a planter from Newton County and owner of the Stone Mountain Inn, decided to promote an agricultural fair in Stone Mountain to draw guests to the mountain and his inn. Graves and sixty other men formed the Southern Central Agricultural Society and held the first fair in August 1846. Although the first fair included only three horses, two cows, and a former servant of George Washington, later fairs gained notoriety by offering exhibits on embroidery, vegetables, farm tools, caskets, and the magnetic telegraph. During 1848 and 1849, sideshows were added that included P. T. Barnum's trained animals (Tippo Sultan the largest elephant then in captivity) and "General Tom Thumb." By 1850, the fair grew too large for Stone Mountain and was moved to Atlanta and later Macon. The theme of entertainment/recreation is represented in Stone Mountain by the Andrew Johnson House (photo 47), Stillwell House (photo 55), and the Stone Mountain Inn (photo 6), all of which served as hotels for visitors to Stone Mountain during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Stone Mountain Historic District is significant in the area black ethnic heritage because of the historic buildings and landscapes associated with the African-American community called Shermantown, located south of downtown. The social center of Shermantown is Bethsaida Baptist Church, which was built c.1880. In addition, Shermantown includes two other nonhistoric churches and a few commercial buildings that serve the Shermantown neighborhood. This neighborhood is typical of African American communities in Georgia in its layout and location south of downtown. Shermantown was established after the Civil War. Reverend F. M. Simmons, the pastor of

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Bethsaida Baptist Church, along with members of other Southern African-American churches met with General William Tecumseh Sherman in Washington after the Civil War to discuss the treatment of newly freed men and women. Shermantown neighborhood was established after this meeting and is named in honor of General Sherman.

Shermantown is typical of African-American neighborhoods in small towns in Georgia in which every community and town of any size has one or more black components: a separate town center and black residential areas. The black service areas are usually hidden within the black community and sometimes a church or school is the focus of the community. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the black sections of town differed from the white sections in their general landscape in which the street grid is probably incomplete, the streets narrow, and the lots and dwellings are small. These communities contain architecture which includes rural, folk, and undecorated vernacular forms such as shotgun houses, pyramidal hip-roofed cottages, saddlebag houses, and others.

Shermantown was a geographically isolated and partially self-sufficient community; however, its residents maintained a relationship with the white community in Stone Mountain that was unusual in Georgia during the era of segregation. Although the Ku Klux Klan was revived in Stone Mountain in 1915, African Americans in the town enjoyed a remarkable level of integration with the white community. Many residents of Shermantown, for example, worked alongside whites at the Venable Brothers quarry and even commuted on the same train from downtown to the quarry.



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#### **Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)**

Contributing resources in the historic district are those constructed between 1836 and 1950 that are architecturally significant, represent a historic theme associated with the historic district, and retain historic integrity. Noncontributing resources are those constructed after 1950 and those that have lost their historic integrity. The two contributing structures identified in the historic district are the historic plan of Stone Mountain and railroad line that passes through town. The contributing site is the historic Stone Mountain Cemetery.

#### **Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)**

Stone Mountain experienced two major periods of growth: the first period occurred from 1836 to 1864 and the second began in the late 1880s and ended in 1930. In 1836, Andrew Johnson built his house and shortly thereafter began selling his land at the base of the mountain to citizens from the community. In anticipation of the railroad, they relocated approximately one-half mile to the west in the vicinity of the Johnson house, what is now known as Stone Mountain. This period of growth continued until July 1864 when Federal troops destroyed the railroad and most of the buildings in Stone Mountain. Following the Civil War, Stone Mountain was rebuilt and an African-American neighborhood called Shermantown was established on the city's south side. The next period of growth did not begin, however, until the late 1880's. In 1887, two brothers, William H. and Samuel H. Venable, purchased the Stone Mountain Granite and Railway Company. The company flourished because of the demand for granite and Stone Mountain experienced an extended period of economic growth that continued through the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The history of Stone Mountain is closely tied to the mountain for which the city is named.<sup>1</sup> With a base circumference of seven miles, the mountain rises 1,683 feet above sea level, approximately 700 feet above the surrounding lowland plain, exposing 563 acres of granite. The base is elliptical with its longest axis running northwest to southeast. The northern mountain face contains the Confederate Memorial, a carving project that began in 1923 and was completed in the 1970s.

In 1821, Indian lands that included the mountain had been ceded to Georgia. Five counties were created from this Creek Indian cession of 1821. The following year DeKalb County was created from lands that had been part of Henry County. Land was distributed to white settlers through land lotteries. Stone Mountain is situated within Land Lots 75, 76, 77, 86, 87, 88, and 127 of the 18th District of DeKalb County. The mountain and the site of the city of Stone Mountain became the

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<sup>1</sup> Most of the following text is condensed from the Historic Overview chapter of Mary Beth Reed's Historic Sites Survey of the City of Stone Mountain, DeKalb County, Georgia, 1994.

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property of Andrew Johnson by the late 1830s.<sup>2</sup> The Wade family history notes that John William Beauchamp, an early settler, sold the land to Johnson.

In 1839, New Gibraltar, the predecessor of Stone Mountain, was incorporated. Located on the north side of the mountain, New Gibraltar changed dramatically with the impending arrival of the Georgia Railroad. Land records from 1838 through the 1840s record settlement patterns shifting from New Gibraltar to the area around the railroad one-half mile west in what later became the city of Stone Mountain. Andrew Johnson had amassed such large land holdings in the area that he was largely responsible for the sales of all of the property around the new Georgia Railroad. Johnson's house was considered the center of town in 1843 when an amendment to the act of incorporation extended New Gibraltar's jurisdiction 600 yards in every direction from Andrew Johnson's house. In 1845, the Georgia Railroad was laid through town and two years later the name of the town was changed from New Gibraltar to Stone Mountain.

In 1838, the General Assembly created the Stone Mountain Academy, which was among Georgia's first schools. In addition, the University Boys School, was located east of Ridge Avenue. The preparatory school, built in 1900, was considered one of Georgia's best, with students coming from Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida. The three-story Italianate brick building later served as the Cheston King Sanitarium and was destroyed by fire in 1975.

#### Antebellum Period, 1845-1860

In 1850, Stone Mountain boasted 38 households, according the Federal census. Farming was the predominant occupation. The farming households were probably outside the city limits. One hundred eleven households were listed in the area. The total population comprised native Georgians (37%), South Carolinians (37%), North Carolinians (13%), and persons from Virginia (4), Maryland (3), New York (1), Connecticut (1), Pennsylvania (1) and England (2). Fifty-three households reported the value of their real estate between \$15 to \$30,000. The latter valuation belonged to Andrew Johnson, who owned either the largest quantity, or the most valuable real estate in the district. Twenty-seven reported real estate holdings worth less than \$1,000 in value. Eleven estimated the value of their real estate between \$1,000 and \$2,000, and 14 landowners reported real estate valued between \$2,000 and \$5,000. There were farmers (52), merchants (9), carpenters (9), stone masons (5), blacksmiths (2), clerks (2), railroad workers (2), and a gunsmith, a lawyer, a mail coach driver, a cabinetmaker, a boot maker, a superintendent of the Plank Road, a physician, a tailor and a sawmill worker. Two of the stone masons were English.

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<sup>2</sup> Eldridge, 14.

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By 1860, Stone Mountain's population increased to 164 households. The diverse range of occupations is dominated by farming and stonecutting, which represented the chief livelihoods with 61 farmers and 24 stonecutters. Also included in the 1860 census were merchants, a tin peddler, a barkeep, a shoemaker, a teacher, a hotelkeeper and a silversmith along with printers, railroad agents and workers, wheelwrights and wagon makers. The 1860 census lists 290 enslaved African Americans in Stone Mountain and its environs. S. F. Alexander, the hotelkeeper, owned 34 slaves; George K. Hamilton, a physician, owned 20 slaves in 1860; and Richard Holt, a merchant, owned 18 slaves. Most of the remaining slave owners were farmers who owned between one to twelve slaves.

From 1846 through 1849, Stone Mountain was site of the Southern Central Agricultural Society's annual agricultural fair. John W. Graves was the impetus for the fair's establishment at Stone Mountain. Graves was a Newton County planter and owned the lands upon which both the Stone Mountain Inn and the railroad depot stood. Graves suggested that Stone Mountain, with its natural attractions, might properly be made the point for the assembling of some of the prominent men of the state to organize an agricultural and international improvement jubilee association.<sup>3</sup> During this time, the tourist industry was booming and the newly built railroad made excursions convenient to Stone Mountain. Numerous hotels were established in the city prior to the Civil War. Liberty Hall was built by 1846, and Johnson's establishment and Cloud's hotel were also built during this period. An 1849 lithograph of the city depicts the Stone Mountain Hotel and its proprietor, Andrew Johnson, by the railroad right-of-way. S. F. Alexander and Josiah H. Clarke's hotel is described in an 1856 advertisement: "The Stone Mountain House . . . a new large brick building with new furniture . . . proprietors have long experience." The Stone Mountain House was destroyed by fire in October 1860.<sup>4</sup>

#### Civil War, Reconstruction, and Late-19<sup>th</sup>-Century Prosperity

During the Civil War, the city of Stone Mountain suffered from the absence of local men who were serving in the military during the Battle of Atlanta. Union forces in Stone Mountain destroyed the commissary stores, 200 bales of cotton, and other buildings, such as the depot. Sherman's strategy was to destroy the railroads that served Atlanta. This included the demolition of the rail line between Decatur and Stone Mountain on July 17, 1864. After the fall of Atlanta on September 2 of that year,

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<sup>3</sup> Anonymous, Pioneer Citizen's History of Atlanta, 1833-1902, (Atlanta: The Pioneer Citizens' of Atlanta, 1902), 228.

<sup>4</sup> Anita B. Sams, Wayfarers in Walton, A History of Walton County, (The General Charitable Foundation of Monroe, Georgia, no date), 99.

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Sherman began his March to the Sea, camping near Lithonia before continuing on to Savannah the next day.

During the late 1860s, the area that later became Shermantown was set aside for African Americans. Two large, undeveloped blocks, owned by the Venables, separated Shermantown from the main commercial district. Residents of Shermantown refer to these blocks as Indian burial grounds. The 1860 Slave Schedule for the district indicates that at least 290 African Americans lived in Stone Mountain and its environs. By 1882, blacks had begun to coalesce in Shermantown.

Indicators of economic success through the 1880s are contained within the state gazetteers and the federal census. Scholes' Georgia State Gazetteer published in 1880 estimated the town's population at 750. Two academies, one public school, and three churches (Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian), a sawmill, and cotton gin had been established. Cotton and granite were the principal shipments, with about 4,000 bales of cotton shipped annually. By 1893, the city of Stone Mountain was the second largest city in DeKalb County and had a population of 1,500.<sup>5</sup>

Until the 1870s, all of the Christian denominations in Stone Mountain worshiped in one building. This first ecclesiastical building was located on the site of the Presbyterian church on the southeast corner of Third and Church [Manor Drive] streets. The First Baptist Church, first known as the Rock Mountain Baptist Church, was formed in 1839 and is the oldest congregation in the city. Reconstituted in 1847 under Reverend David Cook, there were 21 members. Church records indicate both blacks and whites were members at least through 1867. Its first building was located near Second Street in 1873.<sup>6</sup> A second building constructed on Mimosa Drive was destroyed by fire in 1934.<sup>7</sup> A new building, designed by Barili and Humphrey's, was built in 1938.

The Stone Mountain Methodist Church was organized c. 1854 with a membership of seven families. The first building, a wood structure located at the corner of Ridge Avenue and West Mountain Street,

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<sup>5</sup> The Planning Departments of DeKalb County and Robert and Company Associates Architects and Engineers, Stone Mountain, DeKalb County, Georgia. (Atlanta: Robert and Company Associates Architects and Engineers, 1964), p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Kathryn Patton, ed., *A Sketchbook of Stone Mountain*, (Stone Mountain, GA: Friends of the Library, Stone Mountain - Sue Kellogg Branch of the DeKalb County Library System, no date), p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Miller and Maffett, p. 28.

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was razed in 1908, and replaced by the present church. Construction continued from 1908 until 1926.

Beginning in the 1880s, the Stone Mountain Presbyterian Church conducted services at the corner of Third and Church Streets in a frame building that was torn down in the 1930s and not rebuilt. Many of the descendants of the early church membership are now active in Memorial Drive Presbyterian and Eastminister Presbyterian Churches.<sup>8</sup>

The 1882 Stone Mountain business directory lists two African-American churches. Records of the First Baptist Church note that blacks were part of their congregation before the Civil War, and presumably this was the case in the Presbyterian and Methodist communities. Reverend Simmons and other respected members of Southern colored churches met with General William Sherman in Washington at the close of the Civil War to discuss the treatment of freedmen.<sup>9</sup> Bethsaida Baptist Church was organized in 1868 under the direction of Reverend R. M. Burson. The initial church was built during the pastorate of Reverend F. M. Simmons. Located on 4<sup>th</sup> Street in Shermantown, the current church building was constructed in c.1920. Quarry workers and Shermantown residents Louis and Jim Benefield cut and hauled stone that was donated by the Venable Brothers for the construction of Bethsaida Baptist Church. A pond near Poole Street was used by Bethsaida Church for baptisms.<sup>10</sup>

By 1917, Shermantown was bounded by between Venable, Lucille, and Second streets, and the mountain to the east. Prominent Stone Mountain businessmen owned the land, suggesting that the majority of lots were rental properties. The neighborhood boasted a number of community buildings including two lodge buildings, churches, and a school, which was located at the corner of Stillhouse and Fourth streets. This school taught elementary education for the African-American community. Another school, which was located on Venable Street, was replaced by the Simmons School on 4<sup>th</sup> Street in c.1956.

The thriving African-American community in Shermantown included a Negro baseball team which, according to long-time Shermantown resident Mr. Sam Nuckalls, played at a field now in the vicinity of Leila Mason Park. The talent exhibited by these men brought white and black spectators their

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Ms. Judy Burriss, conducted by New South Associates, 1993.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 113.

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playing field, and some of the players went on to play in the national Negro League. Many blacks in Shermantown were employed by the quarry industry and the Venable Brothers quarry was a major draw for blacks moving to Stone Mountain.<sup>11</sup>

#### The Granite Industry

The first commercial rock collecting in Stone Mountain began between 1845 and 1850, from partially disintegrated ledges. Weathered and less durable rock served as the first method of quarrying. A more systematic effort occurred after the Civil War with "mechanized techniques using pneumatic shears, saws and hammers."<sup>12</sup> In 1869, the Stone Mountain Railway and Granite Company was formed with John T. Meador, William A. Richardson, and W. B. Belknap as incorporators.<sup>13</sup> The company sought to construct a railway from the city to the Georgia Railroad and around the base of the mountain. In 1887, William and Samuel Venable of Atlanta purchased the mountain and the company for \$48,000. In 1911, the Venables let the mountain to the Weiblen Brothers of New Orleans who operated under the name of the Stone Mountain Granite Corporation until 1935.<sup>14</sup>

"During their peak production [in 1950s] the Venable Brothers quarried 20,000 carloads of stone from two large quarries on the south side of Stone Mountain. The output was transported from the quarries to the Georgia Railway on a spur which ran around the west side of the mountain."<sup>15</sup> Evidence of this can be seen in the concentration of construction during this period. In his paper, "Rocks to Riches," Gaines Brewster writes:

At the height of their operation, the quarries in Stone Mountain were turning out 200,000 paving stones and 2,000 feet of curbing a day. In addition, building stones

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<sup>11</sup> Mason, 114.

<sup>12</sup> Mark London, ed., Masonry: How to Care for Old and Historic Brick and Stone (Respectful Rehabilitation Series), quoted in Reed, Joseph, and Kehoe, 30.

<sup>13</sup> Reed, Joseph, and Kehoe, 25.

<sup>14</sup> Eldridge, 18-19.

<sup>15</sup> Herrmann, 80.

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went into the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary, the famous Fulton Tower Jail, many post offices, courthouses, warehouses and commercial buildings; into the foundations of skyscrapers, and tremendous blocks of granite were shipped to the seacoasts from Charleston to New Orleans for breakwaters.<sup>16</sup>

The following quarries were active during Stone Mountain's period of significance: Block Quarry comprised two small quarries located three and a half miles southeast of the city; Britt Quarry was a large quarry 250-foot square and up to forty-foot deep, located one- and one-half miles east of Stone Mountain; Ethel Quarry featured a quarry face 200-foot long and was located three miles east of the city; Flat Rock Quarry included two quarries located one-half mile north of the Stone Mountain carving; Kellogg Quarry, located on the east side of Stone Mountain, was operated by the Stone Mountain Granite Corporation (Weiblen and Sons) from 1916 to 1934, and by the Works Progress Administration from 1935 to 1940; Sexton Quarry was located three miles southeast of the city, Venable Estate Quarries included two large quarries located on the south side of Stone Mountain and several smaller quarries on the west and northwest sides of the mountain.<sup>17</sup>

The quarry industry fueled the city's development through the opening decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Stone Mountain quarries produced 200,000 paving stones that were used to construct the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary, the Fulton Tower Jail, and various post offices, courthouses, warehouses, and commercial buildings. It was also used as foundation material for skyscrapers and was extensively used by southeastern breakwaters.<sup>18</sup> This prosperity is reflected in the growth of the city and the scores of bungalows that were built in Stone Mountain between 1905 and 1930.

None of the granite quarries were located in or near town and the Stone Mountain Historic District does not contain any of the quarries associated with Stone Mountain.

#### Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

By 1890, portions of DeKalb County were ceded to form Fulton County and Stone Mountain's central location in the county made it a strong candidate for county seat. A battle was waged to move the county seat from Decatur at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1885, the DeKalb County Chronicle

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<sup>16</sup> Gaines Brewster, "Rocks to Riches or How Granite Has Benefited DeKalb," a paper presented at the DeKalb Historical Society, February 28, 1974, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Herrmann, pp. 91-95.

<sup>18</sup> Brewster, p. 5.

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argued that Stone Mountain was a proper place for the new seat not only due to its location, but also because of its ability to “procure building material at her very door.”<sup>19</sup> The issue was placed on a referendum on December 2, 1896 and Stone Mountain won by a vote of 814 to 160. Decatur proponents appealed to the Legislative Assembly which passed a bill to retain the county seat in Decatur, squelching Stone Mountain’s efforts to serve as the seat of government in DeKalb County.<sup>20</sup>

James Venable, nephew of quarry-owner Sam Venable, along with Colonel William Simmons, a former salesman and Methodist circuit rider, led the revival of the Ku Klux Klan in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Klan, which targeted its racist activities against blacks, Catholics, and Jews, responded to public outrage at several high-profile events. In 1913, Leo Frank, a supervisor at the National Pencil Company in Atlanta, was convicted of the murder of 14-year-old Mary Phagan. After his death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, Frank was abducted from the state prison in Milledgeville by a mob that transported him to Marietta where was lynched. In that same year, 1915, D.W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation* was released, which glorified the Klan as protectors of the Old South. Venable and Simmons organized rallies at the summit of the Stone Mountain that featured cross burnings that could be seen for miles. These rallies, which continued until the late 1950s, marked the founding of the modern Klan. Venable, a staunch segregationist, rose to the rank of Imperial Wizard by the late 1960s and remained active in the Klan through the 1970s. Venable’s house at 900 VFW Drive is located within the bounds of the historic district but is noncontributing because of the numerous nonhistoric alterations.

In 1916, a short-lived local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy was chartered. The Stone Mountain Chapter of the UDC helped maintain the Stone Mountain cemetery and the graves of the Confederate soldiers. The Atlanta Chapter of the UDC secured noted sculptor Gutzon Borglum to carve a Confederate Memorial on the mountainside. In 1915, the Venables deeded the mountain face and ten adjoining acres to the UDC. A deadline was included in the deed that stated that if the project was not completed in 12 years, the land would revert to the original owners. The project was still in the fund-raising stage when World War I halted its progress. By 1923, Borglum had prepared his design and was ready to begin. His work was never completed due to a number of factors, and Borglum destroyed his models. Augustus Lukeman became Borglum’s successor. Although Lukeman was partially successful, 12 years had elapsed and the Venables reclaimed the property. In 1958, the mountain and its surrounds were purchased by the state to establish a park and

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<sup>19</sup> Garrett, *Atlanta and Environs*, Vol. II, 91.

<sup>20</sup> Garrett, “The Early Days of Stone Mountain,” 6.



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complete the memorial.<sup>21</sup> Work on the carving resumed in 1964 and a dedication ceremony for the Confederate Memorial Carving was held on May 9, 1970.

On January 2, 1918, a fire burned a portion of Stone Mountain's commercial district. Seven buildings were destroyed or badly damaged when a fire spread from the H. C. Tuggle Drug Company store to the surrounding buildings. Among those buildings destroyed were the drug store, the Stone Mountain Bank, the Masonic Temple, the McCurdy Building, a livery stable, a cottonseed warehouse, and two blacksmith shops.<sup>22</sup> Stone Mountain, which did not have a firehouse, had to call upon the distant Decatur fire station. However, by 1924 a fire station was built on Second Street that featured a 42,000-gallon spring-filled reservoir and a volunteer fire department that consisted of a chief, assistant chief, and twelve men. In addition, after 1918 commercial buildings in downtown Stone Mountain were required to be built of masonry.

During the 1920s, the automobile industry brought business to Stone Mountain with several publicity stunts that used the mountain. In 1925, the Ford Motor Company wanted to show off its new Ruckstell axle. This new axle made the car strong enough to climb the mountainside. In 1929 another such car stunt was performed. These stunts both advertised the mountain and attracted visitors. In 1927, Elias Nour began his rescue career. This thirteen year old, whose family owned a diner at the head of the pedestrian trail to the mountain top, rescued a stranded mountain climber. Between 1927 and 1963, when the state built a fence around the summit, Nour rescued 36 people and six dogs.<sup>23</sup> In 1933, Nour was branded Stone Mountains "20<sup>th</sup> Century daredevil" when he drove a Model-T Ford that had been painted with anti-Depression slogans to the mountain top and then set it alight and pushed over the side of the mountain.

With the Great Depression, Stone Mountain's economy slackened through the 1930s. The demand for cut stone came to a virtual halt. In 1931, the Bank of Stone Mountain failed. In 1933, the Flat Rock quarry closed and in 1935 the Weiblen's granite quarry declared bankruptcy.<sup>24</sup> The Works

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<sup>21</sup> Willard Neal, *Georgia's Stone Mountain*, (Stone Mountain, GA: Stone Mountain Memorial Association, 1970).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 729.

<sup>23</sup> Freeman, 129-131.

<sup>24</sup> Freeman, 130.

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Progress Administration provided jobs for the unemployed quarry workers and stone cutters.<sup>25</sup> The Rock Gym, for example, was constructed under the WPA. In addition, the former Stone Mountain Inn served as a WPA mattress factory. The mountain continued to draw tourists to the area, in spite of the Depression. Nours stunts, including his "Suicide Derby" begun in 1934, were big attractions. The derby featured participants who raced down the mountain. According to David Freeman, "DeKalb police estimated that more than one thousand people came out to watch each one of these derbies."<sup>26</sup>

#### Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century

During World War II, quarry owners contributed the iron rails that served the "dinky" to the scrap metal drive. This was done in grand fashion as many young men from the city climbed aboard the old dinky for its farewell drive to the mountain. An innovative scrap rubber drive was also organized in Stone Mountain by Elias Nour. In 1942, Nour convinced Nash Motors to donate an old Model A Ford. For a piece of scrap rubber, viewers watched Nour drive a Model A to the top of Stone Mountain, strip the tires off (for the rubber drive), and send it barreling down the mountainside. This stunt differed from his earlier exploits because the Model A was loaded with images of the fascist leaders Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo. This venture raised almost a ton of rubber for the War effort.<sup>27</sup>

In 1955, the Stone Mountain Woman's Club began to sponsor a horse show to raise funds for their many projects. This show was first held in a field on West Mountain Street owned by James Venable adjacent to Gordon Street. This show was among the few owned, produced, and coordinated by women. In 1956, the Woman's Club moved to 5513 East Mountain Street, adjacent to what later became the Stone Mountain Memorial Park.

As the state-owned memorial park was being completed, the Stone Mountain Woman's Club began the push to revitalize and rehabilitate downtown Stone Mountain in conjunction with the opening of the new state park. A newspaper article about their work was aptly entitled "Woman's Club Symbolizes Ideal of Community Growth." In 1961, they organized a meeting of community leaders to

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<sup>25</sup> Freeman, 130.

<sup>26</sup> Freeman, 131.

<sup>27</sup> Freeman, 134.

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### Section 8--Statement of Significance

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develop a plan "to improve the physical and social contour of the community."<sup>28</sup> Their organizational efforts were the impetus that resulted in the 1964 Robert and Company Report and subsequent downtown revitalization.<sup>29</sup>

In 1963, the new Stone Mountain Industrial Park opened outside the City limits. This new park was slated to bring in major employers in the form of twenty-one industrial plants for research, development, testing, and evaluation.<sup>30</sup> Also in 1963, a new prison camp was completed in Stone Mountain Park. The small prison is located on the edge of Shermantown, at the north end of Venable Street, outside the historic district.<sup>31</sup>

By the mid-1960s, civic improvements occurred throughout Stone Mountain. In a 1966 report, the Stone Mountain Woman's Club cataloged all the improvements made since their first community improvement meeting in 1961. These improvements included the rehabilitation of the depot into City Hall, the razing of the old jail (the police officers themselves built the new jail), the remodeling of the parking plaza, the development of a youth corps, the designation of the city as a bird sanctuary, aiding the A.M.E. church with road improvements in Shermantown, and the opening of the Stone Mountain-Sue Kellogg Branch of the DeKalb County Library System, which was named in honor of a former women's club member.

The establishment of the state park and the completion of the memorial had a great impact on the city. In his book *Carved in Stone: The History of Stone Mountain*, David Freeman notes that, "opening in 1970 as a theme park, Stone Mountain now draws some five million visitors a year, exceeded only by the Disney theme parks in Orlando, Florida."<sup>32</sup> Additionally, transportation improvements such as the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit System (MARTA) and better roads allowed Stone Mountain residents access to jobs in Atlanta and Decatur.

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<sup>28</sup> 1966 Division Report, Stone Mountain Woman's Club, from the personal files of George Ann Hoffman.

<sup>29</sup> Freeman, 156.

<sup>30</sup> Martin, Atlanta and Environs, 382.

<sup>31</sup> The Stone Mountain Times, January 10, 1963, 7.

<sup>32</sup> Freeman, 3.

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### Section 8--Statement of Significance

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The city, which once catered to tourists visiting the mountain, now serves a destination with specialty shops and bed-and-breakfast inns. Stone Mountain is part of the Atlanta metropolitan area, surrounded by suburban growth. The district remains largely intact except for two new residential developments: one north of Shermantown and the other, called New Gibraltar, located on the east side of the city between Poole and Veneable streets close to Stone Mountain Memorial Park. Recently designated as a Georgia Main Street City, Stone Mountain has begun to foster preservation of its historic resources to achieve economic growth while maintaining its identity.

In 1997, Stone Mountain attracted national attention when it elected its first black mayor, Chuck Burris. Because Stone Mountain was the location of the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, Chuck Burris's election was seen as a victory for Stone Mountain and a symbol improved race relations in the progressive New South. Moreover, Mayor Burris resides in the former home of James Venable, former Mayor of Stone Mountain and Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan in Stone Mountain.

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreeage of Property                      Approximately 290 acres

### UTM References

|    |         |                |                  |
|----|---------|----------------|------------------|
| A) | Zone 16 | Easting 760940 | Northing 3744560 |
| B) | Zone 16 | Easting 761880 | Northing 3745160 |
| C) | Zone 16 | Easting 762520 | Northing 3744520 |
| D) | Zone 16 | Easting 762530 | Northing 3743350 |
| E) | Zone 16 | Easting 762070 | Northing 3743220 |

### Verbal Boundary Description

The historic distirct boundary is indicated by a heavy black line on the attached tax parcel maps, drawn to scale.

### Boundary Justification

The historic district boundary circumscribes the intact historic community of Stone Mountain. It contains virtually all of the historic properties associated with the history and development of the community. Related geographically as well as historically, these historic properties include founder's houses, the railroad line and major automobile thoroughfares, the central business district, traditionally white neighborhoods and Stone Mountain's historic African-American community, with community landmarks interspersed throughout.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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### State Historic Preservation Office

**name/title** Steven H. Moffson, Architectural Historian  
**organization** Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**street & number** 156 Trinity Avenue, S.W., Suite 101  
**city or town** Atlanta state Georgia zip code 30303-3600  
**telephone** (404) 656-2840 date October 1, 2000

Consulting Services/Technical Assistance (if applicable)      ( ) not applicable

**names** Robin Hubbell, Tracy Dean, and Staphanie Joiner  
**organization** Community Preservation Partners  
**street & number** 2625 piedmont Road, Suite 56213  
**city or town** Atlanta state Georgia zip code 30324

(HPD form version 02-24-97)



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### Photographs

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Name of Property: Stone Mountain Historic District  
City or Vicinity: Stone Mountain  
County: DeKalb  
State: Georgia  
Photographer: James R. Lockhart  
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
Date Photographed: January 2000

#### Description of Photograph(s):

1. Commercial district, photographer facing east.
2. Railroad depot, photographer facing northeast.
3. Main Street, photographer facing northeast.
4. Main Street, photographer facing northeast.
5. Main Street, photographer facing northeast.
6. Stone Mountain Inn, Main Street, photographer facing northeast.
7. Main Street, photographer facing northeast.
8. East Mountain Street, photographer facing east.
9. Main Street, photographer facing northeast.
10. Main Street, photographer facing northeast.
11. Main Street, photographer facing northeast.
12. Poole Street, photographer facing northwest.
13. Trolley Barn, 2nd Street, photographer facing northwest.
14. 2nd Street, photographer facing northwest.
15. East Mountain Street, photographer facing northwest.

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### Photographs

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16. East Mountain Street, photographer facing southwest.
17. East Mountain Street, photographer facing northwest.
18. East Mountain Street, photographer facing northeast.
19. 3rd Street, photographer facing north.
20. 3rd Street, photographer facing north.
21. 3rd Street, photographer facing northeast.
22. East Mountain Street, photographer facing east.
23. East Mountain Street, photographer facing northeast.
24. East Mountain Street, photographer facing northeast.
25. East Mountain Street, photographer facing southeast.
26. East Mountain Street, photographer facing northeast.
27. Rankin Street, photographer facing northeast.
28. 4th Street, photographer facing north.
29. Main Street, photographer facing northeast.
30. Main Street, photographer facing northeast.
31. 2nd Street, photographer facing northeast.
32. 2nd Street, photographer facing northeast.
33. 3rd Street, photographer facing north.
34. 3rd Street, photographer facing west.
35. St. Paul A.M.E. Church, 3rd Street, photographer facing northeast.

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### Photographs

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36. 4th Street, photographer facing north.
37. 4th Street, photographer facing north.
38. Bethsaida Baptist Church, 4th Street, photographer facing northeast.
39. 4th Street, photographer facing northeast.
40. Stillhouse Road, photographer facing northwest.
41. Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church, Stillhouse Road, photographer facing east.
42. Sheppard Drive, photographer facing northwest.
43. Cloud Street, photographer facing northeast.
44. Sheppard Drive, photographer facing southwest.
45. Hamilton Street, photographer facing west.
46. Sheppard Drive and railroad line, photographer facing north.
47. Andrew Johnson House, Mimosa Drive, photographer facing east.
48. First Baptist Church, Mimosa Drive, photographer facing east.
49. Rock Gym, Ridge Avenue, photographer facing west.
50. Stone Mountain Middle school, Mimosa Drive, photographer facing southwest.
51. Mimosa Drive, photographer facing northwest.
52. West Mountain Street, photographer facing northeast.
53. Kinnard House, West Mountain Drive, photographer facing south.
54. West Mountain Street, photographer facing northeast.
55. Stillwell House, Ridge Avenue, photographer facing northwest.

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### Photographs

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56. United Methodist Church, West Mountain Street, photographer facing northeast.
57. Ridge Avenue, photographer facing west.
58. Forrest Avenue, photographer facing northeast.
59. Ridge Avenue, photographer facing northwest.
60. Ridge Avenue, photographer facing northeast.
61. Poplar Springs Road, photographer facing northeast.
62. Forrest Avenue, photographer facing southeast.
63. Griffin Street, photographer facing north.
64. Memorial Drive, photographer facing southeast.
65. Memorial Drive, photographer facing east.
66. Memorial Drive, photographer facing northeast.
67. East Central Drive, photographer facing east.
68. Ridge Avenue, photographer facing northwest.
69. Ponce de Leon Avenue, photographer facing northwest.
70. Ponce de Leon Avenue, photographer facing northwest.
71. Ridge Avenue, photographer facing northwest.
72. Ponce de Leon Avenue and railroad line, photographer facing southeast.
73. Ponce de Leon Avenue, photographer facing northeast.
74. Moore Street, photographer facing northwest.
75. Stone Mountain Cemetery, photographer facing north.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Photographs**

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- 76. Stone Mountain Cemetery, photographer facing northeast.
- 77. Stone Mountain Cemetery, photographer facing southeast.
- 78. Stone Mountain Cemetery, photographer facing southwest.
- 79. Stone Mountain Cemetery, photographer facing southeast.
- 80. Stone Mountain Cemetery, photographer facing northeast.

National Register Map  
Stone Mountain Historic District  
Stone Mountain, DeKalb County, GA.  
Not to Scale

■■■■■ = Approx. National Register Boundary

