

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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LAVONIA COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

Name: Lavonia Commercial Historic District. (Lavonia MRA)

Location: Jones, Augusta, Vickery, Grogan, and Bowman Sts.

In Lavonia, Franklin County, Georgia, centered on the intersections of Jones Street/Augusta Road, Vickery Street, Grogan Street, and Bowman Street, and extending approximately a block in each direction.

Acreage: 16.5 acres.

Verbal Boundary Description and Justification:

The boundary of the Lavonia Commercial Historic District is described by a heavy black line on the attached map of the Lavonia multiple resource area. This boundary circumscribes the intact historic commercial area of Lavonia. This boundary circumscribes the intact historic commercial area of Lavonia. It does not include modern commercial buildings on all sides of the historic district.

- UTM Reference:
- (A) Z17 E306385 N3812640
 - (B) Z17 E306605 N3812270
 - (C) Z17 E306590 N3812120
 - (D) Z17 E306270 N3812190

Photographs: See photographs Nos. 1 through 7.

Description:

The Lavonia Commercial Historic District encompasses the historic central business district of Lavonia and is located in the center of the city. The central business district was laid out in a gridiron plan on the original plat of 1878. Vickery Street, Jones Street, and two originally un-named streets now known as East and West Main Streets run north to south, and Bowman Street and Grogan Street intersect in an east to west direction. Depot Street, which is today called West Avenue, runs in an east-west direction between Jones Street and West Main Street. The original plan remains fairly intact with only Bowman Street altered. This street now cuts across the town center and joins with the original end of Depot Street (West Avenue). The railroad bisects the central business district between East and West Main Streets in a north-south direction. A large open space on either side of the tracks has been retained and is used for parking on the southern end with a large open green space on the northern end. Architecturally, the district consists primarily of one to two-story, late nineteenth and early twentieth century brick

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buildings. These structures are pushed forward to the sidewalks and line the streets with unbroken facades. An old hotel which burned in the late 1970's has left a large gap in the center of East Main Street. Brick is used decoratively as well as structurally throughout the district in the form of piers, pilasters, stringcourses, parapet panels, and corbelled cornices. There is only one frame building within the district -- a wooden warehouse at the southeast corner of Grogan and West Main which has been covered in red and white metal siding. There is one granite building within the district at the northeast corner of the intersection of East Main and Grogan. This small, one-story structure has both smooth and rusticated masonry work with "Bank" carved above the door and "1898" in a stone balustrade at the top of the front facade. Cast iron columns, made in Winder, Georgia, are found in the dense grouping of one-story brick structures at the eastern end of Grogan Street. All of the two-story structures are located in the western portion of the district, with most located in the block bordered by Grogan Street, West Avenue, West Main Street, and Jones Street/Augusta Road. There are several distinguished structures in this area which formerly were used as banks. Only one structure continues this original use. Throughout the district, original plaster, wood, and press metal finishes remain in some buildings.

The Lavonia Depot is located in the northern portion of the district and is sited in the large open green space located on either side of the railroad tract. The Depot, which is sited on the east side of the tract, is a focal point in the central business district. This one-story frame structure has a hipped roof of tile, large brackets under the wide eaves, and loading docks along either side. The structure is presently used as the office for the Lavonia Chamber of Commerce.

There are several non-historic buildings within the district. Several of these buildings are of brick and stucco and in some cases are additions to historic structures. These buildings are considered to be compatible since they relate to the historic buildings through scale, texture, and materials. There are several service stations within the district; only one continues to be used for its original purpose. These service stations are also considered to be compatible since they visually illustrate the introduction and evolution of gas station architecture. Several buildings within the district have been altered with the addition of brick and stone veneer and wood, aluminum, and metal siding. The downtown area visually illustrates the history of Lavonia through the presence of the depot and railroad tracts, two historic cotton warehouses within the district, and the visibility of the industrial area with grain storage bins and older industrial buildings to the south. Historic residential sections are situated to the west, northwest, and northeast. Non-historic buildings which encroach on the district have been excluded. Landscaping in the town center is limited to the green space at the northern end with trees and shrubs planted around the depot.

Statement of Significance

Architecture. The Lavonia Commercial District is significant in the area of architecture because it contains a concentration of commercial buildings which continue to define the historic town center. This effect is due to the unbroken facades of buildings of similar

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Statement of Significance (Continued)

scale, texture, and materials. The symmetrical arrangement of buildings reinforces the original gridiron plan. The district is also significant for its collection of modest, turn-of-the-century brick buildings. These vary within the district from modest one-story false front designs to the more distinguished two-story brick structures with segmental arched windows, stringcourses, and corbelled cornices. The two-story brick structure originally used as the First National Bank of Lavonia features a cornice dentil molding. Several of the brick structures, especially the buildings at the eastern end of Grogan Street, contain cast-iron columns. Of special note is the one-story granite building at the corner of Grogan and East Main Street. This structure is unusual in its material as well as its design. An almost identical structure is located in the central business district of Lawrenceville, Georgia, approximately 60 miles from Lavonia. Much of the original frame character of buildings in the town center was lost in 1905. In that year a fire destroyed a block of buildings on East Main with only the Lavonia Bank with its granite structure surviving. The existing commercial structures are fine examples of vernacularized architecture found in many small Georgia towns. The Lavonia Commercial Historic District is also significant for its variety of building types. These include a depot, cotton warehouses, service stations, and the typical brick commercial retail stores. All of these structures visually illustrate the history of the community and the function they served in the development of this town center.

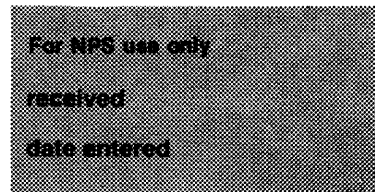
Community Planning and Development. The Lavonia Commercial Historic District is significant in the area of community planning and development since it represents a town center planned in a gridiron street pattern around the railroad. It is significant that the original street pattern remains fairly intact. It is somewhat unusual that a town planned along a railroad route such as Lavonia did not follow the typical linear pattern. Rather, the central business district of Lavonia was designed more as a square with the depot assuming the central position reserved for courthouses in county seat communities.

Commerce. The Lavonia Commercial Historic District is significant in commerce since it has served as the commercial center for Lavonia since its founding in 1878. The early character of the town was closely related with agriculture. The center of the town functioned as a "cotton yard." Businesses to locate here were cotton suppliers, buyers, and merchants. General merchantile establishments and livery stables developed at the edges of the district. With the decline of cotton and the rise of the automobile the character of the town center changed. The former cotton yard was paved and the livery businesses evolved into service stations. The businesses in the downtown area became more specialized and such enterprises as hardware, grocery, clothing, and drug stores appeared. Throughout its history this town center has served both the needs of city and county residents.

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Statement of Significance (Continued)

Transportation. In terms of transportation, the district is significant for containing Lavonia's historic depot and a portion of the railroad right-of-way. Lavonia was founded as a railroad town, and the central location of railroad facilities in downtown expresses the commercial opportunities afforded at this new railroad.

Form Prepared By:

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