

DATA SHEET  
PH028 1417

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NOV 5 1975  
RECEIVED  
DATE ENTERED JAN 20 1976

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC Penfield Historic District

AND/OR COMMON  
Penfield

## LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER  
Seven miles north of Greensboro on Ga. 5925

\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN  
~~Penfield~~ Greensboro vic. VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
10th - Robert G. Stephens, Jr.

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE  
Georgia 13 Greene 133

## CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

## OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME  
Multiple Owners

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
Penfield VICINITY OF

STATE  
Georgia

## LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Greensboro  
Greene County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
Greensboro Georgia

STATE

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE  
None

DATE

\_\_FEDERAL \_\_STATE \_\_COUNTY \_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located seven miles north of Greensboro along Georgia Highway 5925 is the nineteenth century community of Penfield. The town is centered around what was once the old Mercer University campus and consists of a nineteenth century residential community to the east and west of the campus area.

Presently the Mercer University campus area is defined on its grassy slope by three buildings: the Science or Academic Building, the Chapel and the President's House. Several other structures made up the college complex in the 1830's and 1840's, but have been destroyed. The Chapel (1846) was built by David M. Demarest at a cost of \$6794 and designed in a classical format 58' x 86', with 48 over 48 light sash and a temple form, six Doric columned portico. Above the portico is a bell tower; the interior is simple in design with a balcony running on 3 sides of the church. Science Hall, completed in 1853, is a two story brick building with central two story Ionic portico. It originally contained a "laboratory, a museum for geological specimens, the library, and several classrooms." Over the years it has served as the Penfield Grammar School and presently is used for occasional church related purposes. Located northeast of the Chapel is the President's House, completed over a period of years in 1857 as a two story frame, four room central hall plan building, presently with a central one story portico. A delicate dentil motif details the cornice. The interior architectural elements include simple pilaster supported frieze mantels and also details on all unpainted doors of feather edge graining. Previously on this site was built Steward's Hall. At least five other Mercer Institute and University buildings were a part of the nineteenth century complex. These, no longer standing, include a brick dormitory, a brick dining room, the Old Chapel, Phi Delta Literary Society Hall and Ciceronian Hall. The Brick Dormitory, erected in 1848-59 as a three story, twenty room building, 50' x 90', was built at a cost of \$7609; it was torn down after 1871 when Mercer moved to Macon. The Brick Dining Room, to the east of the President's House was built in 1833 and burned in 1843. The Old Chapel was built in 1833 of wood with a brick basement described as a "large commodious building 48' x 36', two stories high;" the total cost was \$1500; subsequently used as a dormitory; moved to nearby town of Woodville. Two literary societies built halls "of wood," Ciceronian in 1834 later replaced in 1848 and Phi Delta in 1836, replaced in 1860.

Directly across the grassy slope of the old Mercer campus are several 19th century brick commercial structures.

To the west of the Mercer campus is a residential area and remaining portions of the Female Academy that was established in 1838. The Female Academy, now the James Murray House is a two story frame structure with five bays. In plan it is basically a four room central hall downstairs with a smaller hall upstairs, thus accomodating another two rooms. The first floor hall features two identical staircases that approach the second floor from the rear as well as the front hall. Further to the west of the Female Academy is the Iverson-Brooks-Colclough House. This raised two story structure has a central two story square columned portico with fanlighted entrance, reminiscent of the work of c. 1820-30 architects Daniel Pratt and Collin Rodgers. Four room central hall in plan, this house and its landscape, although there was a restoration c. 1959-60 and presently unoccupied, maintains its nineteenth century character.

(continued)

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) History
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Penfield Historic District is significant because of its importance in early Georgia educational history and for its importance architecturally as a mid-nineteenth century community.

As early as 1794 a resolution was introduced in the Georgia Baptist Convention for the establishment of a manual labor school and for the training of ministerial students. It was not until 1823 that a committee was appointed to tour the state to find a location for such a school. The committee to select the site was composed of Jesse Mercer, Billington Sanders, Thomas Stocks, John B. Walker, Absalom James and James Armstrong. They chose a 450 acre site owned by James Redd seven miles north of Greensboro. The Georgia Baptist Convention voted unanimously to name the site Penfield in honor of Josiah Penfield, a jeweller who made the original gift of \$2500 for the new school. On the second Monday in January of 1833, Mercer Institute was begun with 39 students. The treasurer's report to the Georgia Baptist Convention in 1833, shows these items: "Paid John Wilson for erecting two hewed log cabins, \$300. Paid Herman Mercer for building kitchen, chimneys, etc. \$155. Before the end of the first year a two-story building was begun, costing \$1500..." By December of 1837 the Senate and House of Representatives of Georgia passed an Act authorizing the Georgia Baptist Convention to establish and endow a collegiate institution to be known as Mercer University. The Reverend Adiel Sherwood wrote in his third edition of the Gazateer of Georgia that "Penfield...is on the site of the labour school, called Mercer Institute, and now the seat of Mercer University. (Mercer was named for Jesse Mercer, one of the most outstanding Georgia Baptists and largest financial supporters of the school.) This town was surveyed in October 1837, and families fast improving lots. Being the location of an academy, college, and female school, and near enough to the railroad to enjoy its advantages yet escaping its corrupting influence, it will no doubt become a considerable town...A steam mill was to be erected this year, and the railroad will convey the best kind of lumber from Warren and Columbia counties..."

The Female Academy of which Adiel Sherwood wrote was begun in 1838 but became a town school after 1855.

By 1871 Mercer was moved to Macon, Georgia. After the Civil War, larger cities had begun a drive to have the Mercer complex moved to an urban area. Much of the Penfield campus property was sold to private individuals and some of the buildings were torn down. The Chapel and its surrounding property was given to the Penfield Baptist Church. The President's House was reserved as a pastoreum.

(continued)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Atlanta Constitution, Nov. 13, 1949.  
 Atlanta Journal, Nov. 6, 1949.  
 Bickers, Mrs. Carl G. Interview by Newell B. Tozzer and Elizabeth Z. Macgregor, May, 1975.  
 Jones, Mary Callaway. Mercer at Penfield 1833-1871; Centennial Celebration, May 27, 1933.  
 Macgregor, Elizabeth Z., Personal inspection, May, 1975.  
 Rice, Dr. Thaddeus B. and Carolyn W. Williams. History of Greene Co., Ga., Macon: J. W. Burke Co., 1961

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 305 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,7	29,99,0,0	3,72,79,0,0	B	1,7	29,99,0,0	3,72,66,5,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,7	29,77,0,0	3,72,66,5,0	D	1,7	29,77,2,0	3,72,79,4,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the intersection of the Penfield town limits on the east, and Georgia Highway #5925 to Woodville, follow the town perimeter northward for 700' then continue N.E. for 4000', then due north for 2300', then due west for 950' (behind the cemetery) then S.W. for 1200' then S.W. for 1000', south for 600', S.E. for 7000', to town perimeter, then north along perimeter for 500' to beginning point at Georgia highway 5925.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Elizabeth Z. Macgregor, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Section DATE May, 1975

STREET & NUMBER 270 Washington Street, SW, Room 703C TELEPHONE (404) 656-2840

CITY OR TOWN Atlanta STATE Georgia

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL  STATE  LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE David M. Sherman DATE 10-28-75

TITLE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
Acting	DATE <u>1/20/96</u>
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	
ATTEST: <u>Charles...</u>	DATE <u>1-19-76</u>
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET Description ITEM NUMBER PAGE 2

Across from the Female Academy Dormitory Building is a circle drive on which is located a Victorian brick Presbyterian Church (1876) and four frame late 19th century-early 20th century houses.

Behind the Female Academy is a series of structures including a brick store, two one-story late 19th century frame houses, the Billington Sanders House and two intrusions (of 20th century small frame houses). The Billington Sanders House is a two-story, frame, five bay structure with exterior side chimneys and a one-story shed porch supported by fluted doric columns. East of the Mercer complex are the remnants of a mill village that consists of three simple one-story unpainted frame houses. North of this area is the Penfield Cemetery in which is buried numerous personages associated with the community and Baptist organization, including the grave of Jesse Mercer.

Continuing eastward up Highway 5925 from the old Mercer campus is a series of houses that date in the nineteenth century with only three 20th century houses as noted on the sketch map.

The Armstrong-Bickers House is a five bay frame house with exterior side chimneys and a shed one-story porch; in plan the house is a 2 room central hall with rear additions. An outstanding interior feature is the front bedroom mantel which has an intricate feather edge graining pattern, in excellent condition. The Bickers House originally was located on the Mercer campus site, but was moved to its present location when Mercer was built.

Next to the Armstrong-Bickers House is the site of a building where Jesse Mercer published the Christian Index and Banner for many years

Built in 1845, the A. B. Sharpe House is a raised, hip roof five bay cottage with simple early Victorian porch detail. Shortly before, in 1840, the Peter Northern House was reputedly moved from Jones County to Penfield. This two-story frame structure was remodeled in the twentieth century, the portico having been changed in the 1910's. In plan this two over two room house with first floor rear additions was altered on the second floor to add boarding rooms during the Mercer era.

Across the street from the Northern House is the Dr. Robert J. Massey House, c. 1849-50, a raised cottage with two central chimneys and a shed Victorian porch. Relatively few changes have been made with the exception of the first floor porch supports that date from the turn of the century. Next door is the Macon-Malone-Conger House, c. 1840, originally one of the primary boarding houses for Mercer. This two-story frame house has five bays, two central chimneys and a large attic space.

The J.O. Boswell House, across the street, was built in 1902. It grew from a one room dwelling into its present form as a one and a half story frame house with central gable.

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Down the road is the Hobbs-Moss House, a plantation plain style with two front doors leading into relatively small rooms with an enclosed stairway. Traces still may be found of the original kitchen and connecting passageway which led from one of the rooms in the rear of the house covered by a shed roof.

Significance, page 2

Architecturally, the community of Penfield is a superb example of a nineteenth century town. Stylistically the structures range from plantation plain style, such as the Moss House, to early classical examples such as the Brooks House into the Greek Revival buildings of the Mercer campus as well as early Victorian designs on simple raised cottages.

Presently, Penfield is a slow-moving residential and agricultural community, seemingly not endangered by twentieth century intrusions.

Bibliography, page 2

Stark, William E., Jr., Penfield, Georgia, Its Place in History Today, January 1975.