

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Holman's Barber Shop

Other names/site number: Ret's Beauty Box; Modernistic Beauty Salon; Holman Barber & Hair Styling

Name of related multiple property listing:

Resources Associated with Segregation in Columbia, South Carolina, 1880-1960

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 2128 Gervais Street

City or town: Columbia State: SC County: Richland

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,


I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B ___ C ___ D

	<u>7/27/2021</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
Elizabeth M. Johnson, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer	
_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____	_____
Signature of commenting official:	Date
_____	_____
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Lisa Deline
Signature of the Keeper

9/10/2021
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District

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Site

Structure

Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce/Specialty Store

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant/Not In Use

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: commercial vernacular

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: Brick; Walls: Stucco, Concrete;
Roof: Other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Holman's Barber Shop is a rectangular, hollow concrete block commercial building with a brick veneer foundation, likely covering concrete block, and a flat roof composed of tar and gravel. It is a small, one-story building with a walkout basement and is approximately 1,452 square feet in size.¹ Holman's Barber Shop does not have a distinct architectural style, but is an expression of a mid-century vernacular commercial building with minimal exterior ornamentation. The building is located along the 2100 block of Gervais Street, and it is situated within a mixed-use section of the historically African American Lower Waverly community. The building's exterior remains largely unchanged since construction, with minimal cosmetic updates, and it overall retains its historic integrity from the period of significance.

¹ "Assessor Data View," Assessor's Database, Richland County Assessor's Office, accessed October 26, 2019, [http://www6.richlandcountysc.gov/assessorsearch/\(S\(4xjg5yqi1s3eajqs20ykjrrz\)\)/assessorview.aspx?id=R11406-09-05](http://www6.richlandcountysc.gov/assessorsearch/(S(4xjg5yqi1s3eajqs20ykjrrz))/assessorview.aspx?id=R11406-09-05).

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Narrative Description

Holman's Barber Shop is located at 2128 Gervais Street between Harden Street and Pine Street. It is bounded on the north by Gervais Street, to the east by 1121 Pine Street, to the west by 2124 Gervais Street, and to the south by 1119 Pine Street. The lots located east, west, and south of Holman's Barber Shop are vacant with no extant structures. The barber shop was historically located in the western half of the building, at address 2128, while the eastern half of the building was assigned the address 2128 ½ Gervais Street.

The building containing Holman's Barber Shop and the neighboring stores at 2128 ½ Gervais Street was likely constructed in 1944. While Lewis Holman had ownership of the land by 1929, records indicate that the building currently occupying the lot was not built until the 1940s.² Columbia's *Inspections of Plumbing & Sewers* records show that a new sewer line for a what is noted as a "new house" was put in at 2128 Gervais Street for a "Lewis Hallman" in April of 1944.³ While Holman's name is misspelled and the entry references a house, the record almost certainly reflects the pending construction of the barber shop and supports a 1944 construction date for the current building. This is further reinforced by the manuscript "The Cornerstones of Waverly." This source states that in 1944 Lewis Holman moved from his original barber shop business "at the corner of Gervais and Harden Streets" to the "existing sight[sic] at 2128 Gervais Street."⁴ Furthermore, the 1950 Sanborn Map indicates a structure next to 2124 Gervais Street that has the same footprint and location of the existing building. It depicts a hollow concrete block structure operating as a store with a basement. This structure also has first-story window openings that match the current window configuration.⁵ The existing building's inclusion on the 1950 Sanborn Map indicates that the extant structure was built prior to this date. Thus, while the exact construction date is unclear, the records suggest that the current building was constructed in the 1940s, specifically 1944, and that Holman's Barber Shop occupied this space by at least 1945, when it first appears in the city directory.⁶

Exterior

Holman's Barber Shop's façade faces north toward Gervais Street with a sidewalk running parallel to the street providing easy access to the store's northern (front) entrance (Photograph 1). A small section of the brick veneer foundation is visible, and the exterior wall is constructed of

² The property was transferred from Lethia E. Brooks to Lewis Holman in 1929. "Real Estate Transfers of Week Would Indicate Unusual Activity," *Columbia Record*, 24 February 1929; Deed of Sale from Lethia E. Brooks to Lewis W. Holman, 30 January 1929 (filed 18 February 1929), Deed Book D-E, page 559, Richland County Register of Deeds, Columbia, South Carolina.

³ Columbia (S.C.) Inspector of Plumbing and Sewers, *Inspections of Plumbing & Sewers 1941-1954*, Manuscript in the Books and Pamphlets Digital Collection of the Richland Library, Columbia, South Carolina, <https://localhistory.richlandlibrary.com/digital/collection/p16817coll11/id/4405/rec/15>.

⁴ Edith W. Bowles, Jannie Kershaw, and David Robinson, *The Cornerstones of Waverly*, ca. 1989. Manuscript in the South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia.

⁵ *Columbia, April 1950* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1950), sheet 50.

⁶ Holman's Barber Shop itself is not listed in the Columbia City Directory at 2128 Gervais Street until 1945, though it should be noted that there was no Columbia City Directory published in 1944. *Hill's Columbia City Directory* (Richmond, Virginia: Hill Directory Company, 1945), 37.

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hollow concrete blocks that have been parged and painted white. The façade contains two entrances. The west door accesses Holman's Barber Shop at 2128 Gervais Street. The east doorway leads into 2128 ½ Gervais Street. This section of the building has housed various businesses over the years, including Goodwin's Snack Bar from 1951 to 1961 and the Modernistic Beauty Salon from 1953 to 1987.⁷ The separate addresses are clearly delineated in gold lettering adjacent to the respective doorways. Both doors have six fielded panels with two smaller panels over four larger ones. This section of the building also contains two wood shop windows consisting of a transom window above a large, single-pane display window. The windows are protected by white metal bars, and have concrete sills. Both storefront windows appear to be the same height, but the shop window for 2128 Gervais Street is significantly wider than the shop window for 2128 ½ Gervais Street. Above the two doorways is a white, metal awning with a scalloped edge that once stretched across most of the façade, but now with deterioration only covers a portion of the 2128 ½ storefront. The section of the building above the awning is painted blue. The top section of the exterior wall is capped by a rowlock header course of bricks. These bricks are also painted blue, except for the corner edges, which are painted white.

The eastern elevation of the building faces Pine Street (Photograph 2). Its foundation is brick veneer likely covering concrete block, and its exterior wall is constructed with hollow concrete blocks. The top portion of the exterior wall is capped by a rowlock course of bricks. The eastern elevation provides two entrances to the structure's basement. One wooden door is located on the northern side of this elevation. This entryway is next to the concrete stairs that stretch from the doorway up a gradual incline to the Gervais Street sidewalk. The other wooden door is located on the southern end. Both entrances have adjacent wood windows to the north. The smaller of the two windows is on the far-northern edge along the sloped gradient. The larger of the two windows is located between the two wooden doorways. Both are rectangular, single-pane windows covered by white metal bars. An additional small, rectangular, three-pane wood window is positioned on the center of the building's upper-level. There is also a commercial exhaust fan located on the basement level along the far-southern edge.

The view of the south (rear) elevation of the building is heavily obstructed by a neighboring tree and creeping vines (Photograph 3). However, it appears to have the same brick veneer foundation (likely covering concrete block), exterior wall made of hollow concrete blocks, and a rowlock course of bricks at the top. There is also an entrance to the building's first story that is covered by a small, metal canopy. This entrance opens outward to a metal staircase that extends eastward toward Pine Street from the upper level to the basement level. Looking at the property from Senate Street, there are two visible windows. A smaller, rectangular wood window on the western side, and a larger, rectangular wood window on the eastern side. Both windows are located on the building's upper level.

The western elevation is similar to the eastern elevation. Its foundation is brick veneer likely covering concrete block, and its exterior wall is constructed with hollow concrete blocks

⁷ *Hill's Columbia City Directories, 1951-1981; Polk's Columbia City Directories* (Richmond, Virginia: R.L. Polk & Company, 1982-1987).

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(Photograph 4). The top of the exterior wall is also capped by a rowlock course of bricks. In contrast to the eastern elevation, the western elevation's exterior wall displays the remnants of a painted sign reading "Holman's Barber Shop" with "Holman's" being painted in red (now faded to pink) and "Barber Shop" being painted in blue. Next to the words is a picture of a barber's pole painted in its traditional blue, red, and white colored stripes. "Holman's" is the only word still fully intact, with the word "Barber" partially visible and "Shop" completely painted over. The western elevation contains one small, rectangular, single-pane wood window at the center-top of the exterior wall. There is no entrance to the building from the western elevation.

Interior

Based on information provided by Antonio Holman, Lewis Holman's grandson, the interior looked like any typical barber shop of the period during Lewis Holman's tenure as barber from 1945 to 1975. It had barber chairs, a sink, and a giant mirror across the wall with a corresponding long counter. There was also a row of folding chairs, possibly eighteen in total, that were set up to accommodate waiting customers. At some point, there was an interior access point between 2128 and 2128 ½ Gervais Street, but this is no longer the case.⁸ Additionally, both 2128 and 2128 ½ Gervais Street have their own separate bathrooms. The Holman family also noted that the interiors of 2128 and 2128 ½ Gervais Street have undergone multiple metamorphoses over the years. Different occupants placed their own distinct mark on the interior space. Essentially, these occupants made interior changes to better reflect their personalities and equipment needs. Since the equipment belonged to each individual business, when that business left, the equipment left too. Then, a new occupant would come in with new equipment and new ideas about interior layout and design. Consequently, both sides of the building have changed their interior appearance over the years.⁹

Integrity

The structure's exterior has changed little since its initial construction. A 1964 photograph taken of Rupert's Grill at 2124 Gervais Street shows Holman's Barber Shop in the background (Figure 1). Though the photograph only captures part of the barber shop's northern (front) and western elevations, the basic structure of the building appears unchanged.¹⁰ E.W. Cromartie II, whose family lived across the street from the barber shop, confirmed the building's historic integrity by stating that the current building has always looked the same.¹¹ Additionally, Willia Holman, Antonio Holman's wife, recalls the building being repainted several times and maintenance work being done to keep the building up to code, but there is no recollection of the Holman family making any extensive changes to the structure's exterior.¹² Furthermore, another photograph of Holman's Barber Shop from 2010 provides a better view of the barber shop and reaffirms its historic integrity (Figure 2). This photograph indicates that the barber shop's façade and awning

⁸ Antonio Holman, Lewis Holman's grandson, letter to Caitlin Cutrona, 25 October 2019.

⁹ Willia Holman, Antonio Holman's wife, telephone interview with Caitlin Cutrona, 30 October 2019.

¹⁰ *Rupert's Grill, 1964*, The State Newspaper Photograph Archive, Richland Library, Columbia, South Carolina, <https://localhistory.richlandlibrary.com/digital/collection/p16817coll21/id/4347/>.

¹¹ E.W. Cromartie II, a Waverly resident, interview with Caitlin Cutrona, 15 October 2019.

¹² Willia Holman, telephone interview with Caitlin Cutrona, 30 October 2019.

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were once painted blue. As mentioned previously, deterioration over time has significantly reduced the awning's size. The photograph also indicates that both doors leading into 2128 Gervais Street and 2128 ½ Gervais Street have been replaced.¹³ However, these changes are largely cosmetic and do not substantially impact the historic integrity of the building.

¹³ Historic Columbia Foundation, *Holman's Barber Shop*, in *Lower Waverly: Self-Guided Walking Tour* (Columbia: Historic Columbia Foundation, 2010), 6.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Ethnic Heritage: Black
Social History

Period of Significance

1945-1975

Significant Dates

1947

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Holman's Barber Shop is significant at the local level under Criterion A for Ethnic Heritage: Black and Social History based on its representation of both Black barber shops' and beauty salons' important functions within African American communities, and its connection with Columbia's segregation history. Operating for over seventy years within Lower Waverly, Holman's Barber Shop reflects Black barber shops' vital roles within local African American communities and is one of the only mid-century Black-owned barber shops in Columbia known to still stand and have integrity to its earliest years of operation. As reflected in the shop's listing in the *Negro Traveler's Green Book*, Holman's provided Black Columbians and other African Americans with an alternative public space where patrons could meet, freely converse, and receive quality, convenient service without fear of the harassment and degradation that often awaited them in the white-controlled spaces of mid-century Columbia.¹⁴ The operation of first Ret's Beauty Box and later the Modernistic Beauty Salon in the other half of the building provides a parallel story of beauty care, social history, and upward economic mobility for Black women. The building endures as a reminder of Black entrepreneurship in the face as adversity and of African Americans' broader resistance to the system of segregation. The period of significance extends from 1945, the first year that Holman's Barber Shop appears at 2128 Gervais Street in the Columbia City Directory, to 1975, the year of death of the shop's original owner and barber, Lewis Holman.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage: Black and Social History

Holman's Barber Shop: The Role of Barber Shops in the Black Community

Holman's Barber Shop is eligible for listing in the National Register as an intact example of the Black-owned barber shop, a vital community resource in mid-century cities like Columbia, South

¹⁴ Robert R. Weyeneth, "The Architecture of Racial Segregation: The Challenges of Preserving the Problematical Past," *The Public Historian* 27, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 34, DOI: 10.1525/tph.2005.27.4.11; *The Negro Motorist Green Book* (New York: Victor H. Green & Company, 1947-1951); *The Negro Traveler's Green Book* (New York: Victor H. Green & Company, 1952-1955). The boundaries utilized by Paul Fredrick Seman to delineate the Gervais Street-Valley Park Black business district roughly parallel the historic boundaries of the Lower Waverly community given by the Historic Columbia Foundation in their pamphlet *Lower Waverly: Self-Guided Walking Tour*. Both sources utilize Gervais Street, Harden Street, and Santee Avenue as boundary points. However, Historic Columbia establishes Lower Waverly's eastern boundary at King Street. In contrast, Seman uses Millwood Avenue as the Gervais Street-Valley Park neighborhood's eastern boundary. While recognizing these small differences, Seman's Gervais Street-Valley Park residential neighborhood can historically be described as the Lower Waverly community. Paul Fredrick Seman, "Structure and Spatial Distribution of Black Owned Businesses in Columbia, South Carolina 1900-1976" (M.A. thesis, University of South Carolina, 1977), 71-73; Historic Columbia Foundation, *Lower Waverly: Self-Guided Walking Tour* (Columbia: Historic Columbia Foundation, 2010), 1.

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Carolina, where segregation continued to define public life. While the property housed a number of Black-owned businesses over the years, its association with the barber shop run by Lewis Holman is its deepest and most significant, and speaks most clearly to the building's significance as a site of commercial and communal significance to African Americans.

Born in Holly Hill, South Carolina in June 1900 to James and Amanda Holman, Lewis Holman moved to Columbia to earn a degree from Allen University. While doing so, he pursued barbering as a source of income.¹⁵ Ultimately, Holman took up the trade as a career and established himself within Columbia's Lower Waverly neighborhood, an historically prominent African American neighborhood developed in the early twentieth century to the south of the older Waverly neighborhood. While predominantly residential in character, Lower Waverly also contained a number of Black-owned small businesses, including Holman's Barber Shop. Evidence of Lewis Holman's barbering first appears in 1928 when he is listed as a barber in the Columbia City Directory at 2103 Gervais Street. The length of Gervais Street between Harden and King streets represented the northern boundary of Lower Waverly (Santee Avenue marked the neighborhood's southern extent).¹⁶ From 1930-1932 and 1934-1936, Lewis Holman operated as a barber at 2101 Gervais Street. He then barbered at 2103 Gervais Street from 1937-1939 and 1941-1943.¹⁷ Around 1945, Lewis Holman relocated his business to 2128 Gervais Street—the year in which the shop is first listed in the Columbia City Directories as “Holman's Barber Shop.”¹⁸ Long home to both working-class and professional Black citizens, by mid-century Lower Waverly was also home to a number of local civil rights activists.¹⁹

During Jim Crow segregation, Black barber shops like Holman's often occupied the same level of significance within African American communities as other prominent Black community institutions, including churches, newspapers, and beauty shops.²⁰ On an economic level, Black barber shops offered African American entrepreneurs a relatively straightforward path toward financial security and autonomy. It is not surprising that Lewis Holman supported himself through barbering, since barbering represented one of the surest paths to successful business ownership for Black entrepreneurs. Barber shop startup costs were relatively minimal in comparison to other businesses, and customers would always need haircuts regardless of the

¹⁵ Bowles, Kershaw, and Robinson, *The Cornerstones of Waverly*; Antonio Holman, letter to Caitlin Cutrona, 25 October 2019; “Deaths and Funerals,” *The State* [Columbia, SC], 7 July 1975.

¹⁶ *Regular's Columbia City Directory* (Columbia: Piedmont Directory Company, 1928), 45.

¹⁷ *Hill's Columbia City Directories, 1930-1943*.

¹⁸ *Hill's Columbia City Directory, 1945*, 37. This name would later be modified in 1998 to Holman Barber & Hair Styling. *Polk's Columbia City Directory* (Livonia, Michigan: R.L. Polk & Company, 1998), 155.

¹⁹ Historic Columbia Foundation, *Lower Waverly*, 1. “2100-2300 Blocks of Gervais Street,” Historic Columbia, Historic Columbia Foundation, accessed October 26, 2019, <https://www.historiccolumbia.org/online-tours/waverly/2100-2300-blocks-gervais-street>. Though located in Lower Waverly, Holman's Barber Shop is also across the street from the Waverly Historic District, which was listed in the National Register in 1989. The Waverly Historic District encompasses the Historic Waverly neighborhood, which is traditionally defined as a twelve-block area bounded by Harden, Heidt, Taylor, and Gervais Streets. In contrast, Lower Waverly is historically defined as a separate community extending southward from Historic Waverly. *Waverly Historic District, Richland County, South Carolina*, Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, December 1989, 5; Historic Columbia Foundation, *Lower Waverly*, 1.

²⁰ Quincy T. Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line: Black Barbers and Barber Shops in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 3.

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current economic state.²¹ The financial stability afforded by barbering is illustrated by the large number of successful barber shops that populated African American communities, including in Columbia.²² Indeed, in 1950, Holman's Barber Shop was just one of at least twenty-seven Black barber shops that were located in Columbia. In fact, among Black-owned businesses, only grocery stores, restaurants, and beauty salons had more listings in the Columbia City Directory in that year.²³ As independent shop owners who catered to Black customers, barbering also gave African American barbers a fair degree of economic autonomy, as barber shop owners were not dependent on, or as susceptible to economic reprisals from, white customers.²⁴ Overall, then, barbering was an effective entrepreneurial outlet that helped Black community members, predominantly men, gain financial stability and autonomy.²⁵

In addition to providing Lewis Holman with economic security and autonomy, the barber shop at 2128 Gervais Street also supplied a valuable service that local white-owned proprietors denied African Americans. White barbers generally offered several justifications for their refusal to serve African American customers. Influenced by racist ideas concerning Black hygiene, and in keeping with custom-based segregation, white barbers often would not physically touch African American customers. Additionally, white barbers feared that catering to Black customers would drive away white patrons, and they also claimed that they did not have the special tools and expertise needed to cut "kinky" hairstyles.²⁶ Consequently, while some Black and white business types accepted customers of both races, Black barber shops primarily catered to African American customers, and white barber shops primarily catered to white customers.²⁷

Segregation may have prevented African Americans from being able to patronize Columbia's white-owned barber shops, but the quality of service they received at Holman's and other Black-owned shops led many Black patrons to embrace such businesses and genuinely prefer them over the white shops from which they were excluded. A similar dynamic unfolded in a host of Black-owned industries during segregation, with businesses at once being at least partial products of the system of segregation and as well as sources of individual empowerment and community pride for some African Americans. At the same time, Black customers did often dispute the quality of other Black businesses in comparison to similar white businesses that they could not patronize. However, few African Americans made this sort of comparison in the case of Black-owned barber shops, which were widely perceived as offering superior-quality haircuts to Black customers. African American consumers, particularly Black men, trusted Black barbers to groom and style their hair in the best way possible.²⁸

²¹ Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line*, 148.

²² Mills *Cutting Along the Color Line*, 146, 156.

²³ Hill's *Columbia City Directory*, 1950.

²⁴ Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line*, 222-223.

²⁵ It should be noted that while women did occasionally frequent barber shops, Black barber shops were predominantly male spaces. Consequently, this section focuses on the connection between Black men and Black barber shops. Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line*, 11.

²⁶ Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line*, 149, 189, 191, 201-202, 211-212.

²⁷ *Resources Associated with Segregation in Columbia, South Carolina, 1880-1960*, Multiple Property Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, September 2005, 8.

²⁸ Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line*, 6-7, 149.

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Though Black customers regularly frequented Black barber shops for their superior-quality haircuts, for many African Americans, going to a barber shop like Holman's has historically been about more than getting a trim. Made racially exclusive by both segregation and personal preference, Black barber shops provided African American customers with a "racialized public space" in which Black culture was embraced, rich conversation on topics ranging from sports to racial issues flowed, and African American customers found a refuge from the racial discrimination of the outside world. Such shops represented one of the few public spaces where African Americans could talk freely without fear of white scrutiny—specifically, African American men, who, notwithstanding Black women's occasional patronage of such shops, have historically predominated in such spaces.²⁹ As a male-dominated space, Black barber shops acted as places where African American men affirm their masculinity through spirited conversation and impressing their peers with their verbal reasoning skills. While Black barber shops provided a public environment enabling anyone in the barber shop to engage in discussion, the other customers in the shop were not afraid to question a person's authority and understanding of a topic. A customer's ability to hold his own within a conversation consequently marked him as a man amongst his peers.³⁰ In some cases, that masculinity was also reinforced through remarks, sometimes sexist, about women. Historian Quincy Mills argues that coarse discussion of women was rooted in a narrow vision of Black masculinity based on "the ability to resist the influence of women and remain the sole decision maker in the home and family." Notably, he also emphasizes that such talk was not universal and highlights other cases of male customers describing Black women in positive and empowering terms.³¹

The trust and support that Black men cultivated with one another inside barber shops over superior cuts and conversation likely helps explain how Holman's Barber Shop was able to remain in business until 2018, decades after many other types of Black-owned businesses were forced to close due to clientele moving on to newly desegregated white-owned establishments.³² As Holman's exemplifies, while desegregation and urban renewal negatively impacted Black businesses, integration did not have the same impact on Black barber shops as other commodity-based African American businesses. African American consumers could find cheaper goods at other institutions, but they could not find the same celebration of Black culture and heritage offered by Black barber shops. Thus, Black barber shops continued to fulfill important economic, cultural, and social functions within African American communities in both Columbia and across

²⁹ Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line*, 11, 172, 175, 185-186, 201-202, 211-212, 247; Quincy T. Mills, "Truth and Soul: Black Talk in the Barbershop," in *Barbershops, Bibles, and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought*, by Melissa Victoria Harris-Lacewell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 167-169.

³⁰ Earl Wright II and Thomas C. Calhoun, "From the Common Thug to the Local Businessman: An Exploration into an Urban African American Barbershop," *Deviant Behavior* 22, no. 3 (2001): 270, <https://earlwrightii.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/wright-calhoun-common-thug.pdf>; Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line*, 183, 185. See also, Ryessia Jones, "Shedding Hair and Baring Soul: Black Men's Talk at the Barbershop," (master's thesis, University of Louisville, 2012). Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line*, 10, 172, 179.

³¹ Mills, "Truth and Soul: Black Talk in the Barbershop," 182-186.

³² Holman's no longer appears in city directories after 2007, but family members revealed it actually remained in business until 2018. *Polk's Columbia City Directory* (Livonia, Michigan: Polk City Directories, 2008), 215; Antonio Holman, letter to Caitlin Cutrona, 25 October 2019.

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the nation.³³ E.W. Cromartie II, a longstanding resident of Columbia's Waverly community, goes so far as to state that "barber shops are the one thing that survive."³⁴

Holman's Barber Shop's endurance into the twenty-first century was attributable not just to the quality of the product being sold there, but of the shop's broader significance as a communal gathering space—in particular, for residents of the Lower Waverly community. Antonio Holman, Lewis Holman's grandson, described the barber shop as "the place to get together, especially on the weekend."³⁵ At Holman's Barber Shop, African American customers came together to discuss both community and national events. This discussion was occasionally augmented by a game of checkers, or a shoeshine. The barber shop's pivotal role within the community is further illustrated by the fact that local politicians would stop by Holman's from time-to-time to ask for community assistance.³⁶ The Holman family's description of the barber shop's significant functions within the Lower Waverly community is echoed by E.W. Cromartie II, whose family owned a liquor store along Gervais Street close to Holman's Barber Shop until 1996.³⁷ The Cromartie family also lived directly across the street from the barber shop at 2127 Gervais Street from at least 1945 to 1954.³⁸ Living and working in close proximity to the shop, Cromartie unsurprisingly came by for a trim from time-to-time and occasionally visited the shop for other reasons. Having done so, Cromartie readily attests to the shop's importance to the local community.³⁹

While Holman's Barber Shop was one of a number of mid-century barber shops that served Black Columbians, most of those shops have since been demolished. Out of the approximately seventy-one buildings listed in city directories between 1945 and 1960 that housed Black barber shops, fifty-four are known to no longer stand.⁴⁰ Despite this significant loss, there are at least eight Black barber shops that operated in Columbia from 1945-1960, not including Holman's Barber Shop, that are still extant. Of these eight remaining Black barber shops, six of the barber shops are located outside of the Lower Waverly community. The addresses of these six barber shops are: 1105 Lady Street, 1212 Main Street, 1519 ½ Harden Street, 1003 Washington Street,

³³ Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line*, 244-247, 254; Alexia Jones Helsley, *Columbia, South Carolina: A History* (Charleston: The History Press, 2015), 128.

³⁴ E.W. Cromartie II, interview with Caitlin Cutrona, 15 October 2019.

³⁵ Antonio Holman, letter to Caitlin Cutrona, 25 October 2019.

³⁶ Antonio Holman, letter to Caitlin Cutrona, 25 October 2019.

³⁷ *Polk's Columbia City Directory* (Detroit, Michigan: R.L. Polk & Company, 1996), 108.

³⁸ *Hill's Columbia City Directories, 1945-1954*.

³⁹ E.W. Cromartie II, interview with Caitlin Cutrona, 15 October 2019.

⁴⁰ *Hill's Columbia City Directories, 1945-1958, 1960*. Seventy-one specifically refers to the number of buildings that were used as Black barber shops from 1945-1960, though due to access issues the year 1959 is not included in this count. Some Black barber shops moved locations during the 1945-1960 time period. For instance, in 1951, Service Barber Shop was located at 2351 ½ Gervais Street. By 1954, it had moved to 2342 ½ Gervais Street. Therefore, it is important to note that the figure seventy-one indicates the number of *buildings* associated with Black barber shops during this time period, not the number of Black barber shops. Additionally, while every effort was made to identify all of the Black barber shops listed in the business section of the Columbia City Directory, it is possible that there were more Black barber shops that were not included in this count. Furthermore, there were several buildings identified as Black barber shops from 1945-1960 that were hard to determine whether they had been demolished or were still extant. While the numbers given in this section are approximate, they demonstrate that a significant number of Black barber shop buildings from the period of significance have been destroyed.

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3432 Farrow Road, and 2339 Elmwood Avenue. Two of these barber shops, LeVan's Barber Shop (1212 Main Street) and Buck's Barber Shop (1105 Lady Street), were owned by African American barbers who exclusively served white customers.⁴¹ Additionally, only the businesses at 3423 Farrow Road and 2339 Elmwood Avenue continue to operate as barber shops.⁴² Two of the eight remaining Black barber shops that were in operation during the 1945-1960 time period are located along Gervais Street between Harden Street and Millwood Avenue. These extant Black barber shops are Davis Barber Shop (2242 Gervais Street) and Little Wonder Barber Shop (2108/2114 Gervais Street).⁴³ In addition to these two barber shops, 2103 Gervais Street, the former site of Holman's Barber Shop before it relocated to 2128 Gervais Street, is extant, but was not a purpose-built barber shop and is altered.⁴⁴ Unlike Holman's Barber Shop, however, none of the buildings that once housed the three extant Black barber shops in the Lower Waverly community have any external indications of their barber shop past, with Holman's retaining the best integrity of the three.

In telling how Stokely Carmichael, the leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, was refused service as a child by the Irish and Italian barbers in Bronx, New York, historian Quincy T. Mills ultimately concludes that "the black barber shop gave him something a white shop could not offer: a space in which to experience black culture and collective history, not to mention a decent haircut."⁴⁵ This comment encapsulates the significant functions fulfilled by Black barber shops within Black communities, and the many reasons why African American customers consciously chose to frequent Black barber shops over white barber shops. Though Black barber shops were once prevalent throughout Columbia, Holman's Barber Shop is one of a few known examples of historic Black barber shops still extant, making it a valuable resource for telling the story of such properties' long-standing role in local African American communities. In addition, it is also the only confirmed Black barber shop in the Lower Waverly community that retains its original appearance. As such, Holman's Barber Shop is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A based on its representation of the vital role Black barber shops had and continue to have within African American communities, both in Columbia and across the nation.

As evidenced by the above, Holman's Barber Shop represents the important barber shop functions and services described above for the Lower Waverly community. Lewis Holman, a Black man who turned to barbering as an income source, represents the economic success and autonomy provided by barber shops to Black entrepreneurs. Additionally, the barber shop itself operated as a public space where community members gathered and openly discussed issues of

⁴¹ "William Levan Moves Business," *The State*, 19 January 1950; "Allsbrook to Open Shop on Assembly," *Columbia Record*, 26 March 1948.

⁴² Hannah Slater and Kelly Ann Krueger, "This Edgewood Barber's Modesty Belies his True Impact on Neighborhood," *Columbia Voice*, last modified April 17, 2018, <https://columbiavoice.cic.sc.edu/this-edgewood-barbers-modesty-belies-his-true-impact-on-neighborhood/>.

⁴³ *Hill's Columbia City Directories*, 1945-1960. From 1945-1975, there were ten Black barber shops, not including Holman's Barber Shop, that operated along the 2100-2300 blocks of Gervais Street. Davis Barber Shop and Little Wonder Barber Shop are the only two that have buildings that are still standing. *Hills' Columbia City Directories*, 1945-1975.

⁴⁴ *Columbia, April 1919* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1919), sheet 50.

⁴⁵ Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line*, 217.

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local and national importance, thus illustrating the public space sheltered by racial privacy that Black barber shops created for African American customers to talk freely. Finally, as a business that was in operation for almost seventy-five years, Holman's Barber Shop symbolizes the continuing importance that Black barber shops hold for African American communities.

Holman's Barber Shop: Segregation and the Green Book

Segregation is a central aspect of Columbia's history from the late nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century. Segregation in Columbia was enforced both by law and custom. By law, schools could not be racially mixed and intermarriage between Blacks and whites was forbidden. By custom, the City of Columbia was divided into Black and white neighborhoods.⁴⁶ Holman's Barber Shop has a significant connection with segregation in Columbia through its listing in the *Negro Travelers' Green Book*.

While African American customers found safety and security within the confines of their local Black barber shops, needing to have their hair cut when away from home often involved a host of difficulties. Not every town that a Black traveler passed through had a Black barber shop, forcing African American travelers to endure the inconvenience of going miles out of their way to have their hair cut.⁴⁷ Black customers' difficulties in finding a barber shop that would accommodate their haircutting needs represent the larger challenges that African Americans faced when traveling during the systematic racial segregation of the Jim Crow era.⁴⁸ For African Americans, preparing for travel could mean the difference between a smooth trip and serious, sometimes life-threatening, difficulties with hostile whites.⁴⁹ On the road, Black travelers had to navigate where to find necessities such as food, water, and shelter.⁵⁰ To help African Americans negotiate these obstacles and prepare wisely, a variety of travel guides were published specifying where Black travelers might find welcoming accommodations. One such widely-used travel guide was the *Negro Travelers' Green Book*, commonly referred to as the *Green Book*, produced by the Victor H. Green Company based in New York.⁵¹ The *Green Book* enabled African Americans to travel, particularly by car, in a more secure manner while concomitantly giving them the ability to purposefully patronize Black-owned businesses or Black-receptive, white-owned businesses.⁵² While the first publication in 1936 only covered businesses in the New York Metropolitan Area, later editions encompassed all fifty states and select international destinations such as Mexico and the Caribbean.⁵³ Columbia, South Carolina first entered the *Green Book's*

⁴⁶ *Resources Associated with Segregation in Columbia*, 8.

⁴⁷ Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line*, 188.

⁴⁸ Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line*, 201.

⁴⁹ "Life or death for black travelers': How fear led to 'The Negro Motorist Green-Book,'" *The Washington Post* [Washington, D.C.], 1 June 2017.

⁵⁰ Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line*, 201.

⁵¹ Weyeneth, "Architecture of Racial Segregation," 36.

⁵² "Green Book Historic Context and AACRN Listing Guidance (African American Civil Rights Network," National Park Service, last modified July 30, 2020, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/green-book-historic-context-and-aacrn-listing-guidance-african-american-civil-rights-network.htm>.

⁵³ "Life or death for black travelers.'"; *The Negro Travelers' Green Book* (New York: Victor H. Green & Company, 1957), 3; Jacinda Townsend, "How the Green Book Helped African-American Tourists Navigate a

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pages in 1938, though only hotels and tourists homes were listed for Columbia for this year.⁵⁴ However, by 1939, the information given for Columbia included a range of businesses from hotels to gas stations to drug stores.⁵⁵

Starting in 1939, Black travelers looking for a trim could walk into Lewis Holman's barber shop, then located at 2103 Gervais Street. Listed in the *Green Book* at 2103 Gervais Street from 1939-1941, this listing changed by 1945 when Holman's Barber Shop moved to its current location at 2128 Gervais Street.⁵⁶ Subsequently, the *Green Book* address for Holman's Barber Shop from 1947-1955 is given as 2138 Gervais Street—signifying a small typo in the given address.⁵⁷ The listing of barber shops like Holman's amongst more obvious destinations for travelers also speaks to the broader social importance of Black barber shops and beauty salons, which might be of interest to a traveler for their social aspect even if a haircut was not in order. While Holman's Barber Shop was not the only Black barber shop listed in the *Green Book* for Columbia, it demonstrated greater longevity as an operational barber shop and today retains the most integrity.

In surveying Columbia's *Green Book* Black barber shop listings, two barber shops, Stratford's and Mack's, are named alongside Holman's Barber Shop in 1947.⁵⁸ Additionally, Stratford's continues to be listed from 1948 to 1951 before disappearing from the *Green Book's* pages.⁵⁹ While Holman's Barber Shop was not the only Columbia-based Black barber shop given in the *Green Book*, it appears to be the only barber shop that continued functioning after its initial inclusion in the *Green Book*. After Lewis Holman moved his barber shop to 2128 Gervais Street, 2103 Gervais Street became a sandwich shop in 1945.⁶⁰ In 1949, Stratford's Barber Shop was replaced at 1003 ½ Washington Street by a barber named Perry C. Ferguson.⁶¹ By 1952, the building was occupied by a liquor store.⁶² Mack's barber shop at 1110 Harden Street is also included in the *Green Book* in 1947. However, the 1946-1947 Columbia City Directory makes no mention of a Mack's barber shop. In fact, the directory lists a Bessie Mitchell, a maid, as

Segregated Nation," *Smithsonian Magazine*, April 2016, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/history-green-book-african-american-travelers-180958506/>.

⁵⁴ *The Negro Motorist Green Book* (New York: Victor H. Green & Company, 1938), 17.

⁵⁵ *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, 1939, 39.

⁵⁶ *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, 1939-1941; *Hill's Columbia City Directory*, 1945, 37. While it is unclear how Holman's Barber Shop was included in the *Green Book*, many *Green Book* sites were listed in the travel guide either through the recommendation of Black postal workers or Black travelers. Townsend, "How the Green Book Helped African-American Tourists Navigate a Segregated Nation."

⁵⁷ *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, 1947-1951; *The Negro Traveler's Green Book*, 1952-1955.

⁵⁸ *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, 1947, 72.

⁵⁹ *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, 1948-1951.

⁶⁰ *Hill's Columbia City Directory*, 1945, 37.

⁶¹ There does seem to be some inconsistency between the *Green Book* information and the Columbia City Directory. The city directory lists Stratford's Barber Shop at 1003 ½ Washington Street from 1942-1948. However, in contrast to the *Green Book*, the city directory cites Aaron Stratford as working for Bull City Barber in 1949. He then begins barbering for James Holman in 1950. *Hill's Columbia City Directories*, 1942-1950; *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, 1948-1951.

⁶² *Hill's Columbia City Directory*, 1952, 186. The *Green Book* does list Stratford's in 1951 at 2121 Read Street. However, the Columbia City Directory for this year designates that address as vacant, making it hard to confirm any occupancy of that address. *Hill's Columbia City Directory*, 1951, 138; *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, 1951, 62.

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residing at 1110 Harden Street.⁶³ In terms of longevity, then, none of the other Black Barber shops listed in the *Green Book* for Columbia compare to the length of service Holman's Barber Shop offered to its customers, both within the Lower Waverly community and to out-of-towners. Furthermore, in contrast to the other listed addresses, Holman's Barber Shop retains its original appearance. In its current condition, a passerby can easily identify the shop's name from its display window and vestiges of the painted sign from the western side of the building facing Harden Street. As such, Holman's Barber Shop is still distinctly identifiable as a barber shop, providing a visual history of a *Green Book* site.

Holman's Barber Shop is not Columbia's only existing *Green Book* site. For instance, the Harriet M. Cornwell Tourist House, a Columbia *Green Book* building, was included in the National Register of Historic Places in 2007.⁶⁴ At the same time, Columbia's *Green Book* sites have proved fragile over the years with only approximately a quarter of the listed sites still standing.⁶⁵ Thus far, Holman's Barber Shop has escaped the fate of demolition suffered by other Columbia *Green Book* sites. Consequently, Holman's Barber Shop has much to contribute in terms of telling and documenting Columbia's *Green Book* heritage. While many *Green Book* sites have been removed from Columbia's urban landscape, Holman's Barber Shop is a visual reminder of Columbia's story as a segregated city, as well as a story about how local African Americans opened their homes and businesses to help Black travelers mitigate white violence, travel safely, and exercise agency in their travel decisions.⁶⁶

2128 ½ Gervais Street: The Role of Black Beauty Salons in the Black Community

The same building containing Holman's Barber Shop also housed different Black beauty salons over the years at 2128 ½ Gervais Street. Just like Black barber shops fulfilled significant economic, cultural, and social functions for African American men, Black beauty salons provided parallel services for African American women. Similar to the entrepreneurial opportunities provided by Black barber shops, Black beauty parlors offered a pathway toward economic success and financial independence for African American women.⁶⁷ Few employment opportunities were available to Black women outside of domestic work, factory work, or agricultural labor. Such positions were typically characterized by arduous work done for paltry wages. In the case of domestic workers, these women also sometimes had to handle unwanted sexual attention by their white male employers.⁶⁸ In contrast, Black beauty culture, with relatively little education and overhead required, enabled African American women to enter a profession, become business owners, and attain a level of economic self-sufficiency not

⁶³ Hill's *Columbia City Directory*, 1946-1947, 451.

⁶⁴ Harriet M. Cornwell Tourist Home, *Richland County, South Carolina*, Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, October 2007.

⁶⁵ "Columbia's Green Book Sites," Historic Columbia, Historic Columbia Foundation, accessed October 26, 2019, <https://www.historiccolumbia.org/GreenBook>.

⁶⁶ National Park Service, "Green Book Historic Context and AACRN Listing Guidance."

⁶⁷ Catherine Davenport, "Skin Deep: African American Women and the Building of Beauty Culture in South Carolina" (M.A. thesis, University of South Carolina, 2017), 3, <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5220&context=etd>.

⁶⁸ Davenport, "Skin Deep," 11; Blain Roberts, *Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women: Race and Beauty in the Twentieth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 86, 90.

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achievable through other means of employment.⁶⁹ Working as a beautician also gave some African American women greater flexibility to schedule their work hours around their social activities, and, for Black beauticians who ran beauty parlors from their homes, the chance to work while keeping an eye on their children.⁷⁰

Owning their own beauty shop or working for a Black owner also meant that African American beauticians could free themselves from white employers and white economic dependence. The economic self-sufficiency afforded by Black beauty salons enabled Black beauticians to embrace social and political activism more easily than other Black employees working in white-dependent occupations.⁷¹ As such, Black beauticians were vital participants in the civil rights movement. For example, Bernice Robinson, a Black beauty salon owner, was involved in civil rights activism in Charleston, South Carolina in the 1950s. As a member of the local NAACP, Robinson's beauty salon was the center of both her NAACP recruitment efforts and her voter registration work.⁷²

African American beauticians who owned or worked at Black beauty salons also played a significant role in promoting Black beauty and femininity in an effort to counter negative racial stereotypes.⁷³ Spurred on by the New Negro Movement formed after World War I, Black women were encouraged to cultivate a refined and respectable appearance to help redefine Black identity and public representation. As Catherine Davenport explains in her work on Black beauty culture, during the New Negro Movement, African Americans worked to "replace racist imagery" with representations of "independent, self-confident, and successful" African Americans. Black beauty salons and their beauticians played a critical role in cultivating this image of respectability.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the existence of Black beauticians and Black beauty salons inherently subverted the beauty standard of the time that insisted that only white women could be beautiful.⁷⁵ In this way, Black beauty salons not only helped raise African American women's economics status, but Black beauticians also sought to bolster Black women's self-esteem and self-respect.⁷⁶

Similar to the public-private space created by Black barber shops, Black beauty salons provided an important community space in which African American women took refuge from outside

⁶⁹ Davenport, "Skin Deep," 4, 17; Roberts, *Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women*, 70, 86. Beauty culture is the term that African American women gave to Black-owned and operated hair and skin care businesses in the 1900s. Davenport, "Skin Deep," 2.

⁷⁰ Roberts, *Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women*, 90-91.

⁷¹ Davenport, "Skin Deep," 13; Roberts, *Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women*, 72, 229-230.

⁷² Roberts, *Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women*, 229-230.

⁷³ Roberts, *Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women*, 58.

⁷⁴ Davenport, "Skin Deep," 17-20; Roberts, *Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women*, 65-66.

⁷⁵ Davenport, "Skin Deep," 2.

⁷⁶ Black beauticians' roles in promoting Black beauty and respectability did create controversy. Critics, like Booker T. Washington, argued that in pressing or straightening African American women's hair, Black beauticians endorsed a Black female image that too closely adhered to white beauty ideals. Such critics contended that Black beauticians facilitated African American women's efforts to deny their blackness by conforming to white beauty standards. Roberts, *Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women*, 59, 65-69.

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racial discrimination and discussed local and national news amongst friends.⁷⁷ Free from white surveillance, Black beauty parlors were places where African American women could competently have their hair styled while talking and debating with other community members about issues affecting the nation and their own neighborhood.⁷⁸ Just like Black barber shops were predominantly male spaces, Black beauty salons were places where African American women could relax and unwind. Inside a Black beauty salon, African American women indulged in pampering and self-care after time spent working long hours and navigating the racial discrimination of the Jim Crow era.⁷⁹ In the beauty shop, Black women could forget about work, husbands, and children and instead focus on rest, relaxation, and good conversation.⁸⁰

Considering the important functions Black beauty salons fulfilled in African American communities, it is not surprising that Black beauty parlors and Black beauticians were ubiquitous throughout the United States in the twentieth century.⁸¹ In describing Black beauty salons' prevalence, historian Blain Roberts writes that "In towns and cities across the South, beauty parlors consistently ranked among the most numerous black-owned and -operated businesses after World War II."⁸² Paralleling Black beauty salons' popularity across the South, the 1950 Columbia City Directory lists fifty-four Black beauty parlors. To provide some perspective, of the Black businesses given in the 1950 business section of the Columbia City Directory, only Black grocery stores numbered higher than Black beauty salons at fifty-nine. The next closest Black business type in terms of prevalence was Black-owned and -operated restaurants at forty-nine.⁸³ While Black beauty salons proliferated across Columbia during the early-to-mid-twentieth century, many of these Black beauty shops have since been demolished.⁸⁴

In 1950, one Black beauty salon was recorded in the Columbia City Directory along the 2100-2300 blocks of Gervais Street—Ret's Beauty Box at 2128 ½ Gervais Street.⁸⁵ With Loretta Jones as proprietor, Ret's Beauty Box operated out of 2128 ½ Gervais Street from 1945 to 1950.⁸⁶ In 1947, Ret's was advertised in *The Lighthouse and Informer* with the slogan, "You've tried the rest now try the best."⁸⁷ Ret's Beauty Box was eventually replaced in 1953 by the Modernistic Beauty Salon.⁸⁸ Occupying 2128 ½ Gervais Street until 1987, the Modernistic Beauty Salon was operated by Carolyn R. Harrison throughout its duration at this address.⁸⁹ Harrison was the daughter of a Richland County farmer and hailed from a large family. Her education ended after

⁷⁷ Davenport, "Skin Deep," 20-21.

⁷⁸ Roberts, *Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women*, 58, 101-103.

⁷⁹ Roberts, *Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women*, 97, 103.

⁸⁰ Davenport, "Skin Deep," 20-21; Roberts, *Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women*, 58, 99.

⁸¹ Roberts, *Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women*, 85-86, 94-95.

⁸² Roberts, *Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women*, 94-95.

⁸³ *Hill's Columbia City Directory*, 1950.

⁸⁴ Davenport, "Skin Deep," 20-21; *Ruth's Beauty Parlor, Richland County, South Carolina*, Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, August 2020, 13-14.

⁸⁵ *Hill's Columbia City Directory*, 1950, 65.

⁸⁶ *Hill's Columbia City Directories*, 1945-1950.

⁸⁷ "Ret's Beauty Box," *Lighthouse and Informer* [Charleston, SC], 2 February 1947.

⁸⁸ *Hill's Columbia City Directory*, 1953, 71.

⁸⁹ *Hill's Columbia City Directories*, 1951-1981; *Polk's Columbia City Directories* (Richmond, Virginia: R.L. Polk & Company, 1982-1987).

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the eighth grade and by 1930, at the age of eighteen, she was living in Columbia as a lodger and working as a cook for a private family, who was almost certainly white. A decade later she was no longer working outside the home and had married a car mechanic. The couple rented their house at 1511 Manning Avenue.⁹⁰ Although it's not clear exactly when Harrison began work as a beautician, it was a career change she made well into adulthood, likely in her thirties or later. Harrison's age, background, and education were not barriers to her entry into the profession, demonstrating the importance of salon work as a means of upward economic mobility for Black women. It is likely that the Modernistic Beauty Salon helped secure the eventual purchase of her home on Manning Street (which, according to assessor records, remains in the family) and it also ensured she did not have to return to working for a white employer. Although the salon closed in 1987, Harrison's role in Black beauty culture was recognized in her obituary in 1998, which describes her as a beautician.⁹¹ Harrison's success as the proprietor of the Modernistic Beauty Salon illustrates how the beautician profession could open doors for Black women, who were otherwise often excluded from professional opportunities by pervasive racism and sexism.

Though documentation detailing the specific activities that took place in the beauty parlors operating out of 2128 ½ Gervais Street is scarce, it is likely that these beauty salons fulfilled similar functions for the Lower Waverly community as Black beauty salons did for African American communities across the state and the nation. Therefore, within one building, the story of Black barber shops' and beauty salons' impact on the local Black community can be told. Like Holman's Barber Shop, the various Black beauty parlors that operated out of 2128 ½ Gervais Street were joined on the 2100-2300 blocks of Gervais Street by several other Black beauty salons including the Meroline Beauty Shop (2349 Gervais Street), Sparlux Beauty Salon (2326 Gervais Street), the Gervais Street Beauty Salon (2356 Gervais Street), and the Style Crest Beauty Studio (2317 Gervais Street).⁹² Unfortunately, the majority of the Black beauty shops that once populated Gervais Street from Harden Street to Millwood Avenue are no longer extant. Consequently, as one of the few extant Black beauty shops along the 2100-2300 blocks of Gervais Street, 2128 ½ Gervais Street stands as an important remaining symbol of Black beauty parlors' historic role in the local African American community.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

Lewis Holman

Lewis Holman continued to barber into his seventies until he was no longer able to do so. At that point, Herbert Bell, Lewis Holman's associate barber, began overseeing the barber shop's operations.⁹³ Though Holman's Barber Shop is only listed in the Columbia City Directories until 2007, the Holman family revealed that the barber shop was actually in operation until 2018.⁹⁴ Beyond his role as a barber, Holman was an active participant in the Chappelle Memorial

⁹⁰ U.S. Federal Census, 1930, 1940.

⁹¹ "South Carolina Obituaries," *The State*, 31 October 1998.

⁹² *Hill's Columbia City Directories*, 1961, 1962, 1964.

⁹³ Antonio Holman, letter to Caitlin Cutrona, 25 October 2019.

⁹⁴ *Polk's Columbia City Directory* (Livonia, Michigan: Polk City Directories, 2008), 215; Antonio Holman, letter to Caitlin Cutrona, 25 October 2019.

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African American Methodist Episcopal Church, which is currently located at 1101 Pine Street in Columbia. For instance, Holman was a member of the church's building committee when the current church building was finished in 1950, and he also served as the church's Head Steward.⁹⁵ Lewis Holman died in July 1975.⁹⁶ His wife Lucile Holman, who he married in 1928, passed away in September 2008. However, the property remains within the Holman family to this day (2021).⁹⁷

The Gervais Street-Valley Park Black Business District

Holman's Barber Shop and the adjacent businesses at 2128 ½ Gervais Street are associated with the former Gervais Street-Valley Park (Lower Waverly) Black business district. As discussed earlier, Holman's Barber Shop was not the existing building's only occupant; in fact, multiple businesses operated adjacent to Holman's Barber Shop at 2128 ½ Gervais Street.⁹⁸ Goodwin's Snack Bar operated out of 2128 ½ Gervais Street from 1951-1961.⁹⁹ During most of this time, the business was listed under a Mrs. Carrie G. Weathers, though from 1954-1956 the business was listed under Ned Weathers, Carrie Weathers' husband.¹⁰⁰ The businesses at 2128 Gervais Street and 2128 ½ Gervais Street constitute a portion of the Gervais Street-Valley Park Black business district, which was described by a local publication as an area that "once flourished with both the homes and the businesses of prominent African Americans."¹⁰¹ The Gervais Street-Valley Park Black business district was located along the eastern portion of Gervais Street, and it was roughly bounded by Harden Street and Millwood Avenue.¹⁰² From 1920 to 1949, the number of Black businesses in this business district expanded exponentially from a mere sixteen businesses in 1920 to sixty-seven in 1949.¹⁰³ The establishments in this former business district represent the alternative spaces utilized by Columbia's African American population to combat segregation and its inherent indignities.¹⁰⁴

However, the Gervais Street-Valley Park Black Business district was not the first or largest Black commercial area to emerge in Columbia. The first Black business district to develop in Columbia was the Washington-Assembly Street Black business district, which formed at the intersection of Washington, Lady, Assembly, and Park streets. Owing to its proximity to Columbia's central business district along Main Street, the Washington-Assembly Street Black

⁹⁵ "Our History," Chappelle Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Church, accessed January 7, 2021, <https://www.chappellememorial.org/our-history>; "Holman Rites," *Columbia Record*, 7 July 1975; Bowles, Kershaw, and Robinson, *The Cornerstones of Waverly*.

⁹⁶ "Deaths and Funerals," *The State*, 7 July 1975.

⁹⁷ "Obituaries," *The State*, 22 September 2008; Bowles, Kershaw, and Robinson, *The Cornerstones of Waverly*.

⁹⁸ It should be noted that while these businesses occupied a different address than Holman's Barber Shop, these businesses were all housed within the same hollow concrete block building encompassing both the 2128 and 2128 ½ Gervais Street addresses.

⁹⁹ *Hill's Columbia City Directories*, 1951-1961.

¹⁰⁰ *Hill's Columbia City Directories*, 1954-1956; "Deaths and Funerals," *The State*, 14 November 1986.

¹⁰¹ Ginetta V. Hamilton, *Waverly: A Historical Perspective Through the Eyes of Senior Citizens* (Columbia: Bishops' Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1996), 12; The existence of a Black business district along Gervais Street is also confirmed by Paul Fredrick Seman. Seman, "Structure and Spatial Distribution," 69-74.

¹⁰² Seman, "Structure and Spatial Distribution," 41-49.

¹⁰³ Seman, "Structure and Spatial Distribution," 70-74.

¹⁰⁴ Weyeneth, "Architecture of Racial Segregation," 34.

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business district contained a wider array of Black businesses than the Gervais Street-Valley Park Black business district.¹⁰⁵ For example, in 1976, the Washington-Assembly Street Black business district housed fourteen different types of Black businesses, whereas only nine different Black business types existed in the Gervais Street-Valley Park Black business district for that same year.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, due to its central location, the Washington-Assembly Street Black business corridor contained more specialized shops that offered services not utilized on a consistent basis by African American customers, such as apparel, real estate, and law offices.¹⁰⁷ In contrast to the commercial nature of the Washington-Assembly Street Black business district, the Gervais Street-Valley Park Black business district consisted of neighborhood businesses that serviced the Gervais Street-Valley Park (Lower Waverly) residential area.¹⁰⁸ Predominant business types included grocery stores, eating and drinking establishments, and personal services. As neighborhood shops, the Gervais Street-Valley Park Black businesses tended to offer services that met their African American customers regular consumer needs.¹⁰⁹

Black business districts developed in part as an African American response to segregation. African Americans devised numerous strategies to mitigate the racial indignities and discrimination constantly present during segregation. Strategies included preparing in advance for excursions to white-dominated downtowns to avoid having to utilize segregated drinking fountains and restrooms. Strategies also included creating alternative spaces, such as a Black business district, in which Black businesses could provide African American customers with services not readily available from white institutions. Consequently, through their association with the Gervais Street-Valley Park Black business district, Holman's Barber Shop and its adjacent stores symbolize the entrepreneurial spirit and innovation demonstrated by local African Americans as they constructed alternative spaces in Columbia in response to systematic racial discrimination.¹¹⁰

Beyond its inclusion in the Gervais Street-Valley Park Black business district, Holman's Barber Shop and the neighboring stores at 2128 ½ Gervais Street also mirror African Americans' economic success in the personal services and retail food industries, thereby serving as another symbol of African Americans' response to racial discrimination.¹¹¹ Black businesses, particularly in retail, historically struggled to compete with their white competitors. White businesses simply had greater access to capital and merchandise that attracted Black customers.¹¹² However, African American businesses in the personal services and retail food industries, such as Black barber shops, beauty salons, funeral homes, and restaurants, did not face the same level of competition from their white counterparts.¹¹³ I.A. Newby, in his work *Black Carolinians*, observes that successful Black businesses "provided services in which blacks served blacks—

¹⁰⁵ Seman, "Structure and Spatial Distribution," 60, 79.

¹⁰⁶ Seman, "Structure and Spatial Distribution," 82.

¹⁰⁷ Seman, "Structure and Spatial Distribution," 83.

¹⁰⁸ Seman, "Structure and Spatial Distribution," 69, 74.

¹⁰⁹ Seman, "Structure and Spatial Distribution," 82-83.

¹¹⁰ Weyeneth, "Architecture of Racial Segregation," 34.

¹¹¹ *Resources Associated with Segregation in Columbia*, 8, 13.

¹¹² Juliet E.K. Walker, *The History of Black Businesses in America: Capitalism, Race, Entrepreneurship*, Twayne's Evolution of Modern Business Series (New York: MacMillan Library Reference USA, 1998), 215.

¹¹³ Weyeneth, "Architecture of Racial Segregation," 34.

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undertaking, beauty and barber shops, and eating facilities.”¹¹⁴ Connecting Newby’s statement to Columbia, in 1976, 48.94% of the businesses in the Gervais Street-Valley Park Black business district offered either personal services, such as barber shops and beauty salons, or were eating and drinking places.¹¹⁵ Black businesses were particularly successful in the personal services and retail food industries because they provided services to African American customers that were not typically offered by white businesses during the Jim Crow era. For instance, historian Quincy Mills argues that “black barbers, beauticians, and undertakers did not compete with their white counterparts, who generally did not want to handle black bodies.”¹¹⁶ As stated earlier, the businesses operating out of 2128 and 2128 ½ Gervais Street were Holman’s Barber Shop and an assortment of restaurants and beauty salons. Therefore, apart from their location in a Black business district, as stores that offered either personal services or food, Holman’s Barber Shop and the other businesses at 2128 ½ Gervais street signify a proactive African American response to segregation by providing services to Black customers that white businesses refused to offer.¹¹⁷

Public historian Robert Weyeneth contends that “The black business district was a cornerstone of African-American life during Jim Crow.”¹¹⁸ The Gervais Street-Valley Park Black business district has been decimated by vacancies and demolitions. As an example, of the twenty-seven known Black businesses operating along the 2100-2300 blocks of Gervais Street in 1951, at least seventeen businesses have since been demolished.¹¹⁹ As a result of this widespread demolition, many perennial community institutions have been lost. For example, the Waverly 5-and-10 cent store at 2313 Gervais Street, a business managed by the civil rights activist George Elmore, was razed in 2012.¹²⁰ Other demolished Black businesses include E.W. Cromartie Liquors at 2201 Gervais Street, which once hosted the famed Joe Louis, 2369 Gervais Street, the site of Black businesses like the Waverly School of Beauty Culture, and 2375 Gervais Street, the long-standing home of Waverly Dry Cleaners.¹²¹ Because of these losses, Holman’s Barber Shop currently stands in the middle of largely vacant lots and vacant buildings—a remaining example of the African American-owned businesses that once formed a vibrant Black business corridor.

¹¹⁴ I.A. Newby, *Black Carolinians: A History of Blacks in South Carolina from 1895 to 1968* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1973), 247.

¹¹⁵ Seman, “Structure and Spatial Distribution,” 80-81.

¹¹⁶ Weyeneth, “Architecture of Racial Segregation,” 34; Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line*, 149.

¹¹⁷ *Resources Associated with Segregation in Columbia*, 13.

¹¹⁸ Weyeneth, “Architecture of Racial Segregation,” 34.

¹¹⁹ *Hill’s Columbia City Directory*, 1951, 64.

¹²⁰ Jeff Wilkinson, “Columbia Wants a Law to Protect Historic Buildings,” *The State*, 17 October 2018. George Elmore is primarily known for his role in challenging South Carolina’s all white primary through his 1947 lawsuit, which he, along with the NAACP, initiated after he was refused the right to participate in the Democratic Party’s primary in 1946. Carolyn Click, “One Man’s Sacrifice Ends White Voting ‘Clubs’” *The State*, 3 March 2003; William V. Moore, *Elmore v. Rice*, South Carolina Encyclopedia, Institute for Southern Studies, University of South Carolina, last modified September 20, 2016, <https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/elmore-v-rice/>.

¹²¹ Hamilton, *Waverly: A Historical Perspective*; *Hill’s Columbia City Directories*, 1951, 1961.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 0.020

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 34.002188° Longitude: -81.010381°
2. Latitude: Longitude:
3. Latitude: Longitude:
4. Latitude: Longitude:

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the nominated property is demarcated on the accompanying Richland County Tax Map, and followed the property lines of parcel #R11406-09-05. The map is drawn at a scale of 1"=100'. The property is bounded by Gervais Street to the north, 1211 Pine Street to the east, 1119 Pine Street to the south, and 2124 Gervais Street to the west.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The demarcated boundary corresponds to the property's legal boundaries given by the Richland County Tax Map, and it encompasses the entire building containing Holman's Barber Shop and Ret's Beauty Box/Modernistic Beauty Salon.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Caitlin Cutrona
organization: Public History Program
street & number: University of South Carolina
city or town: Columbia state: SC zip code: 29208
e-mail ccutrona@email.sc.edu
telephone: (717) 860-9378
date: December 6, 2019

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer,

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photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Holman's Barber Shop

City or Vicinity: Columbia

County: Richland

State: South Carolina

Photographer: Caitlin Cutrona

Dates Photographed:

- September 25, 2019 (Photograph 1)
- October 15, 2019 (Photograph 2)
- October 26, 2019 (Photograph 3)
- December 5, 2019 (Photograph 4)

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 4: North elevation (Façade), camera facing Southeast

2 of 4: East elevation, camera facing West

3 of 4: South (Rear) elevation, camera facing Northwest

4 of 4: West elevation, camera facing East

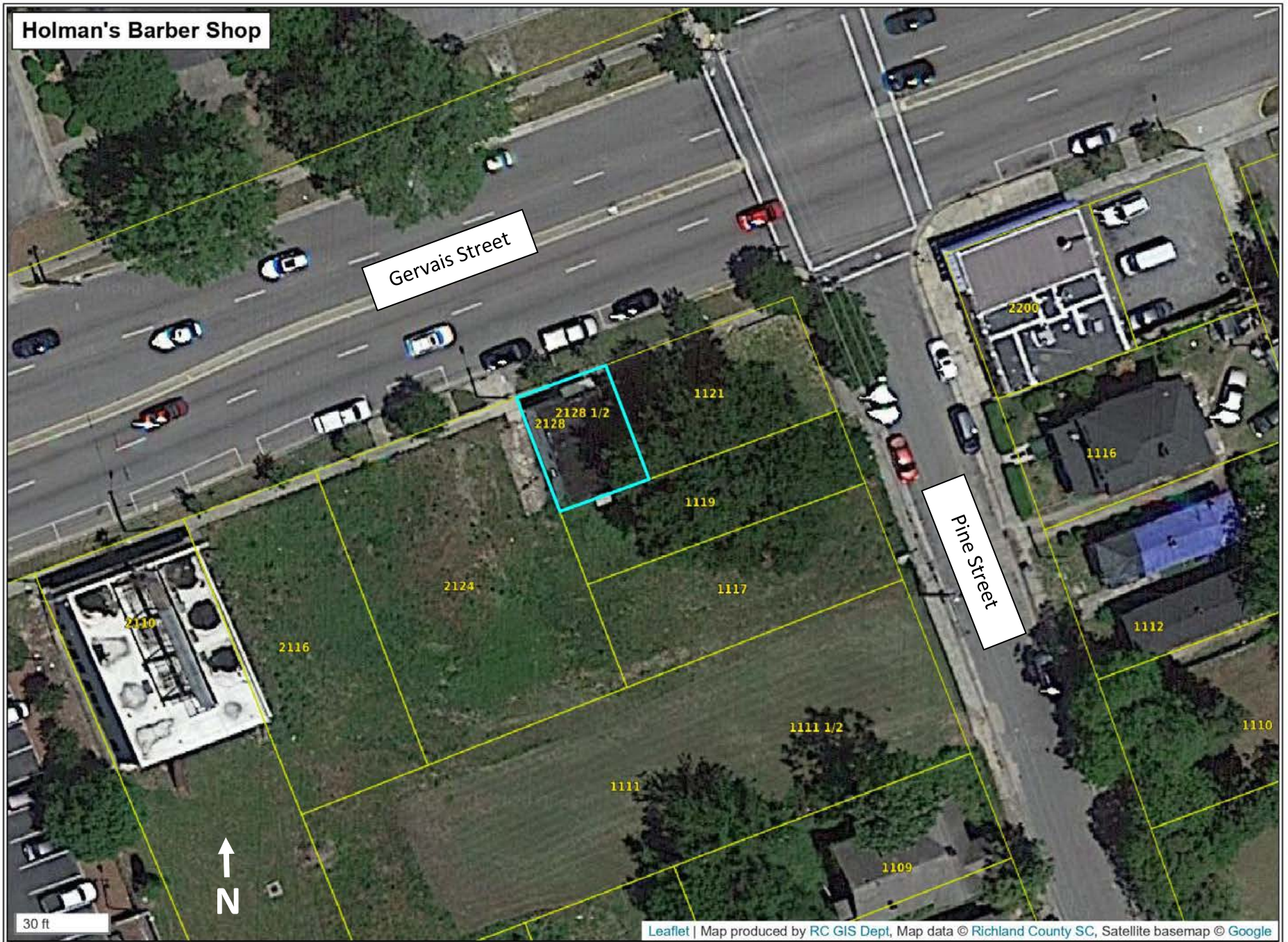
Index of Figures

1 of 2: Historic Photograph of Rupert's Grill. Holman's Barber Shop is in the background with portions of its façade and western elevation visible, *Rupert's Grill, 1964*, The State Newspaper Photograph Archive, Richland Library, Columbia, South Carolina.

2 of 2: Holman's Barber Shop photograph reflecting the cosmetic changes that the building has undergone within the past decade, Historic Columbia Foundation, *Holman's Barber Shop*, in *Lower Waverly: Self-Guided Walking Tour* (Columbia: Historic Columbia Foundation, 2010), 6.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



Holman's Barber Shop

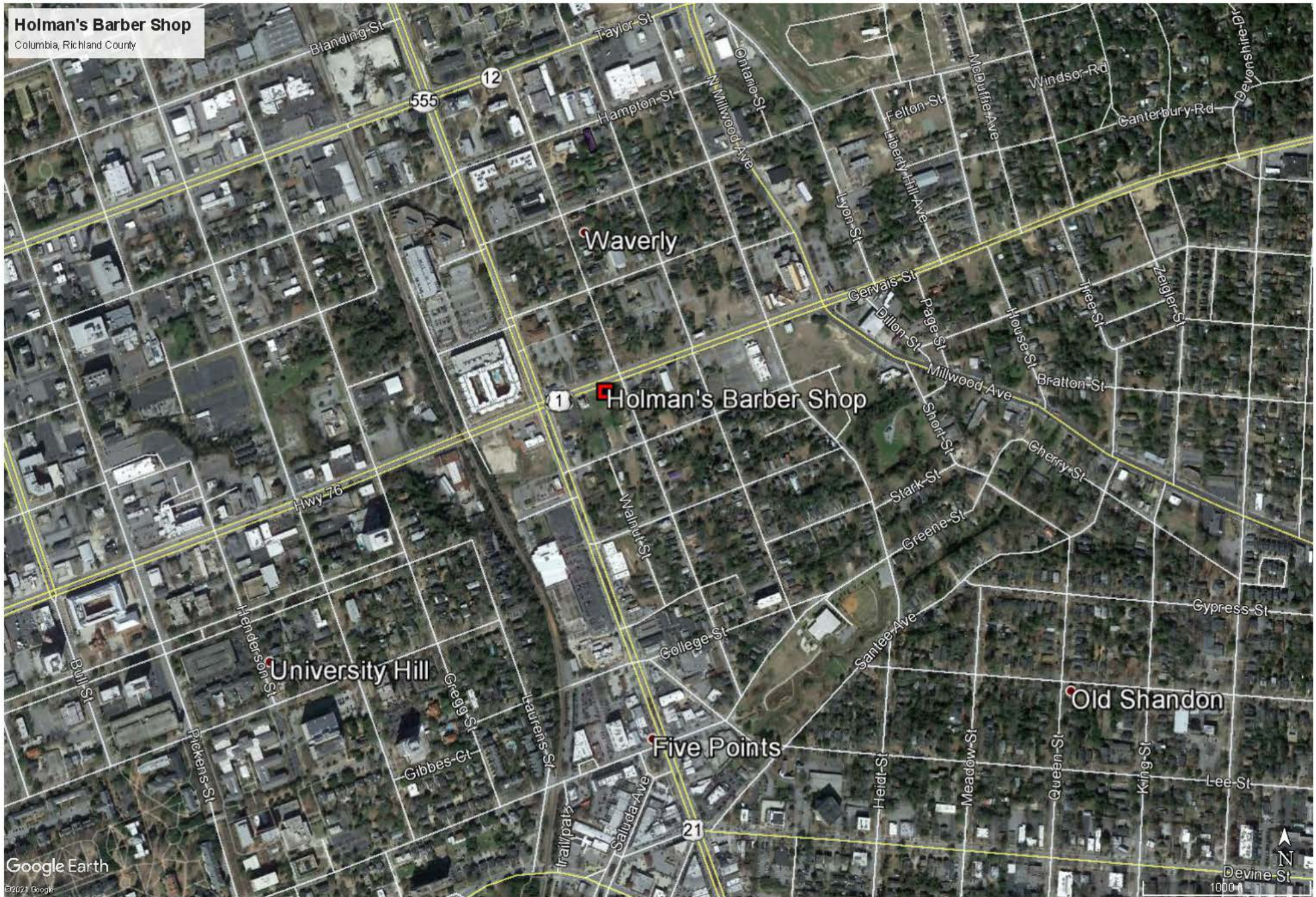
Columbia, Richland County

Holman's Barber Shop



Holman's Barber Shop

Columbia, Richland County



1

Holman's Barber Shop

Waverly

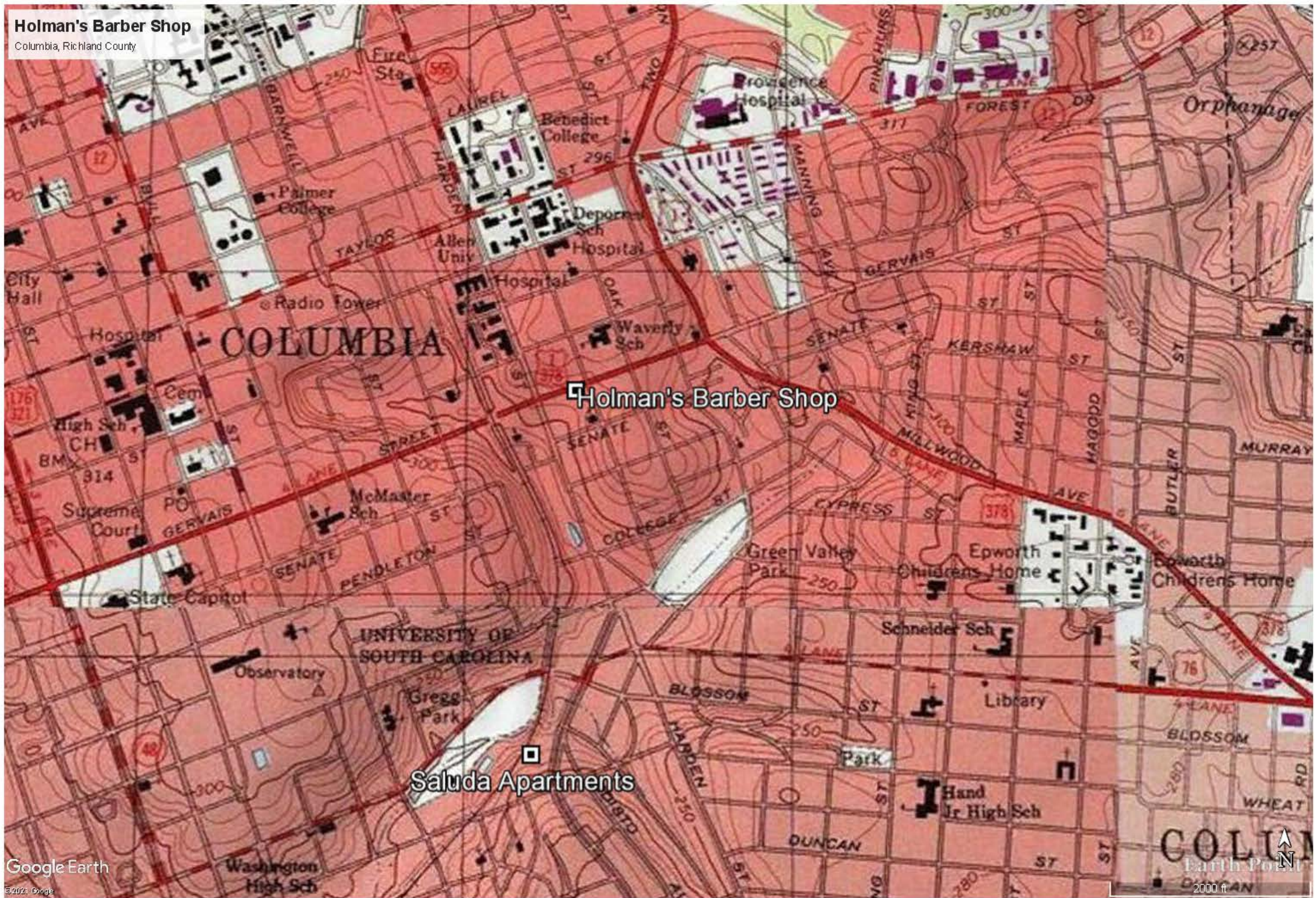
University Hill

Five Points

Old Shandon

Holman's Barber Shop

Columbia, Richland County



Holman's Barber Shop

Saluda Apartments

Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4



Figure 1



Figure 2



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 7/27/2021 Date of Pending List: 8/11/2021 Date of 16th Day: 8/26/2021 Date of 45th Day: 9/10/2021 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject Date

Abstract/Summary
Comments:

Recommendation/
Criteria

Reviewer Lisa Deline Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2239 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



July 27, 2021

Ms. Joy Beasley
Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street NW, Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Beasley:

Enclosed is the National Register nomination for Holman's Barber Shop in Columbia, Richland County, South Carolina. The nomination was approved by the South Carolina State Board of Review as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level of significance. We are now submitting this nomination for formal review by the National Register staff. A letter of support for the nomination is attached below. The submitted PDFs contain the true and correct copy of the nomination for Holman's Barber Shop to the National Register of Historic Places.

If I may be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address below, call me at (803) 896-6179, or e-mail me at vharness@scdah.sc.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Virginia E. Harness". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Virginia E. Harness
Architectural Historian and National Register Co-Coordinator
State Historic Preservation Office
8301 Parklane Rd.
Columbia, SC 29223



CITY OF COLUMBIA
SOUTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

July 8, 2021

Elizabeth Johnson
Director of Historical Services, D-SHPO
SC Department of Archives and History
8301 Parklane Road
Columbia, SC 29223

Dear Ms. Johnson,

It is our pleasure to nominate Holman's Barber Shop at 2128 Gervais Street in Columbia to the National Register of Historic Places. We hope that, after reviewing this information on the historical and cultural significance of Holman's Barber Shop to the residents of Columbia, you will also find that this location meets the standards for the National Register of Historic Places.

Holman's Barber Shop operated for over 70 years in Lower Waverly and is significant in reflecting the important role that Black barber shops have within the African-American community. Holman's Barber Shop was also listed in the Negro Traveler's Green Book.

The building was constructed and first began operating as Holman's Barber Shop in approximately the mid 1940's, and it first appeared on the Columbia City Directory in 1945. Additionally, it is one of the only mid-century Black-owned barber shops in Columbia known to still stand and have integrity to its earliest years of operation.

I find the history of this building to be culturally significant, and I greatly appreciate the historical value that it brings to the City of Columbia. As such, I support its nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. We appreciate the vital role which preservation plays in the City of Columbia, and we thank the staff of the Department of Archives and History, the Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer and the State Review Board for their work.

Sincerely,

Stephen K. Benjamin
Mayor
Columbia, SC