

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

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 Joel Chandler Harris House

AND/OR COMMON

The Wren's Nest; Snap Bean Farm

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 1050 Gordon Street, S.W.

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Atlanta

__ VICINITY OF

sixth

STATE

Georgia

CODE

13

COUNTY

Fulton

CODE

121

3 CLASSIFICATION**CATEGORY**

DISTRICT
 BUILDING(S)
 STRUCTURE
 SITE
 OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC
 PRIVATE
 BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS
 BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED
 UNOCCUPIED
 WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
 YES: RESTRICTED
 YES: UNRESTRICTED
 NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE
 COMMERCIAL
 EDUCATIONAL
 ENTERTAINMENT
 GOVERNMENT
 INDUSTRIAL
 MILITARY
 MUSEUM
 PARK
 PRIVATE RESIDENCE
 RELIGIOUS
 SCIENTIFIC
 TRANSPORTATION
 OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Joel Chandler Harris Memorial Association

STREET & NUMBER

1050 Gordon Street, S.W.

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

Georgia

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Fulton County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Capitol Hill

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE none known

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

The Harris house is a one and one-half story assymmetrically massed, frame house with many gables and woodwork trim. The front porch which wraps around the first floor on the east, is enclosed by fretwork porch rails and low arches composed of knee braces filled with latticework. Painted in two shades of gray, the house is covered with clapboard siding, except for the two upper levels of the front which are decorated with fish scale patterned shingles.

The roofline of the front of the house is composed of a low gable roof, cut by a small gable over the front stairway and a small jerkinhead gable which frames a many-paned semi-circular window. These are surmounted by another narrower story with a steeply pitched hipped roof, broken by an eyebrow dormer. The roofline is marked by several tall interior brick chimneys with corbeled caps.

The interior is furnished in a simple Victorian style with dark wood trim, a different fireplace mantel in every room, and original gas-electric lighting fixtures. The most interesting room is the living room which has six stained glass windows. Joel Chandler Harris' bedroom, where he did most of his work is intact, with original furniture and personal belongings.

The house is virtually unchanged since Harris died there since the Joel Chandler Harris Memorial Association bought the property so soon after his death and they have not made any major changes. However, some of the wall coverings and details of the interior are in need of restoration work.

Although Harris was not a wealthy author, he did move his family from downtown Atlanta into this larger home in 1881. Harris' daughter, Julia, in her biography of her father, supplied the following early description. He rented this house at 214 Gordon Street (the number was later changed to 1040) in West End, which at that time was an unincorporated village outside the city of Atlanta but connected with it by mule-drawn trolley cars.

Two years later he purchased the property, called the "Broomhead tract," which consisted of a frame house on a lot of a little more than five acres. The house was a simple one-story structure which had a hallway running from the front to the rear. The cottage was much remodeled and renovated to house the Harris family which included six children and Grandmother Harris plus a menagerie of pets. Harris constructed a second floor room, originally designed as a "study among the treetops" but he never used it, preferring instead to work in his room or on the porch, in the midst of family activities. He also added the wide enclosed porch which wraps around the front of the house and where he often wrote and entertained.

By 1890 the house's foundations were hidden by flowering shrubs, and the low latticed arches of its porch were screened by rose-vines, wisteria and English ivy. A long row of ancient apple trees bounded the southern extremity of the lot and dark cedars bordered the front walk. On both sides of the house were rose-beds fringed with violets.

Harris spent most of his time at home, even doing his writing here rather than at the

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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1881 - 1908

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Wren's Nest, presently located on a busy Atlanta street, was Joel Chandler Harris' rural home, his cottage retreat on "Snap Bean Farm" where he did most of his writing from 1881 until his death in 1908. The prominent Southern journalist had just published his first Uncle Remus book when he moved to this house, which he remodeled into a rambling frame cottage with many gables and a heavily latticed porch, surrounded by gardens and trees.

While Harris was still a young man, his column featuring Uncle Remus and his critter friends gained popularity throughout the world. Best remembered as the creator of Uncle Remus, Harris also was a well-known editor of the Atlanta Constitution and published a great variety of material. His works describing in careful detail aspects of his native Georgian environment, are recognized today as a most valuable part of Americana.

Biography

The famous Southern journalist and author was born near Eatonton, Putnam County, Georgia in 1848, and lived all but six months of his life in Georgia. Until age fourteen, he lived with his mother in Eatonton, where she supported them both by working as a seamstress.

In 1862 he answered an advertisement in The Countryman, the only paper ever to be published from a plantation, and was hired as printing devil by Joseph A. Turner, the plantation owner and editor. Turner encouraged Harris' interest in reading and writing by offering unlimited use of his personal library and by allowing him to publish small articles in the paper.

It was also during his apprenticeship at "Turnwold Plantation" that Joel began his life-long friendship with the slaves and the forest animals which later filled his stories and brought him fame. An old black man named George Terrell who was a friend of young Harris at Turnwold was the model for his Uncle Remus.

Harris' stay at the Turner plantation came to an end in 1864 when the left wing of Sherman's army swept across Putnam County, destroying the plantation. He found work for a short time as a type-setter on the Macon Telegraph, and then for six months in New Orleans as secretary to the publisher of the Crescent Monthly. He returned to Georgia and worked on the Monroe Advertiser in Forsyth. By 1870 his reputation as a newspaper humorist was sufficient to secure him a generous offer from the Savannah Morning News.

In Savannah he met Esther LaRose, daughter of a French-Canadian landowner and steamboat captain, and in April 1873 they were married. When a yellow fever epidemic swept Savannah in 1876, Harris resigned his position and moved his family to Atlanta. There, he soon

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Avary, Myrta Lockett. Joel Chandler Harris and His Home. Atlanta, Ga.: Appeal Publishing Co., 1913.
- Cousins, Paul M. Joel Chandler Harris: A Biography. Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University, 1968.
- Ginzmer, George Harvey. "Joel Chandler Harris," Dictionary of American Biography vol. viii. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943. (cont'd)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3

UTM REFERENCES

A	16	738800	3735830	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Joel Chandler Harris' rural home is now located on a busy city street and all the property surrounding that of the memorial association is developed commercially or as private residences. Although Snap Bean farm was approximately five acres, some of the land has been sold and only the section of about three acres presently owned by the memorial association retains the character of the Harris property. The relocated log cabin and the concrete amphitheater do not contribute to the national (cont'd)

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Blanche Higgins Schroer, Landmark Review Project

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

May 15, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Landmark Designated Dec 19, 1962
 Boundary Certified: Blanche Higgins Schroer
June 11, 1977

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) 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DATE

12/2/77

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Joel Chandler

CONTINUATION SHEET Harris House ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

newspaper office. He was fond of referring to himself as the "farmer of Snap Bean Farm." His home eventually became known as "The Sign of the Wren's Nest" from the discovery one day in 1900 that a wren had built its nest in the mailbox. The Harris children put up a second mailbox so that the birds would not be disturbed.

Harris built homes for three of his children (two of which remain) on lots on the west side of his property facing Lawton Street. West End is part of the city of Atlanta today and the Harris House is located on a busy city street, and some of the original Harris land has been sold and developed. A large brick church was built ca. 1950 on former Harris property, on the lot immediately east of the Harris House on Gordon Street. The two remaining houses that Harris built for his children are private residences in between other homes and businesses.

The Harris Memorial Association has erected a barbed wire fence to separate their property from that of the church on the east and the alley and parking lot on the south. Within the approximately three acres still surrounding the Harris House there are gardens and paths--one is a sidewalk made of marble slabs, each carved with the name of a Georgian author. The memorial built a concrete amphitheatre in the southwest section of the property, the setting for their annual May festival.

In 1948 Walt Disney filmed "Song of the South" there and at that time they enclosed a small portion of the porch on the east side to create a set of a cabin interior, and they moved a ca. 1850 one-room log cabin to the backyard, for filming purposes. These two props remain today.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Joel Chandler
 Harris House ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

joined the staff of the Atlanta Constitution which Evan P. Howell had recently bought. For 24 years Harris remained at the Constitution writing political editorials, feature articles, fiction, book reviews and special items.

Harris' literary career grew directly out of his newspaper work. One of his jobs with the Constitution was writing a daily column devoted to "pithy and philosophical sayings." One day he forsook the column's regular format and wrote an old story of Uncle George Terrell about Br'er Fox and Br'er Rabbit, which he remembered from his boyhood days. The column brought a flood of letters from readers asking for more of these old negro folk tales. For the next 15 years "Uncle Remus" told one story after another, newspapers from coast to coast reprinted the column, and at age 32, Joel Chandler Harris was known throughout the country.

With the success of his column, C. Appleton & Company persuaded Harris to publish the stories in book form, which they released in 1880 as Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings. Many other books followed, preserving with the greatest fidelity the whimsical charm of the negro folk tales, in a Middle Georgian dialect.

Harris always insisted that none of the stories were his own; that all were true folk tales. He also resisted the label of folklorist and said he was "only a compiler... there is nothing here but an old man, young boy, and a poor reporter." Harris wrote many other books in the Uncle Remus cycle and produced a wide variety of other material also. He published several volumes of children's stories, a few poems, various articles and editorials for the Saturday Evening Post, two novels and a number of short stories depicting certain Georgia types and conditions, with the insight of a man who had spent his whole life among them. From 1907 until his death in July 1908 he was editor of Uncle Remus's Magazine, a short-lived Southern monthly.

The Uncle Remus stories were printed in at least 27 languages. The most popular story, "The Wonderful Tar Baby," was dramatized in a Walt Disney movie, "Song of the South," which was filmed at the Wren's Nest and was translated into 11 languages including Arabic and Hindustani.

In the characteristically humble inscription he wrote for his tombstone, Joel Chandler Harris expressed how he wished to be remembered:

I seem to see before me the smiling faces of thousands of children--some young and fresh--and some wearing the friendly marks of age, but all children at heart, and not an unfriendly face among them. And while I am trying hard to speak the right word, I seem to hear a voice lifted above the rest, saying, "You have made some of us happy." And so I feel my heart fluttering and my lips trembling and I have to bow silently, and turn away and hurry into the obscurity that fits me best.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Joel Chandler
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Jones, Lynda. "Joel Chandler Harris, Georgia's Aesop" reprint from Southern
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CONTINUATION SHEET Joel Chandler Harris House ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

significance of the landmark.

As illustrated on the accompanying sketch map, entitled Joel Chandler Harris House, prepared by B. H. Schroer, and dated 1975, beginning at the northwest corner of the property, the boundary line runs east along the south curb of Gordon Street, then south along the barbed wire fence bordering land of the neighboring church to the east, then west along the barbed wire fence bordering on an alley and opposite a parking lot, then north along the property line which is marked by a hedge separating the landmark from a residence and service station on the west, to the beginning point on Gordon Street.