

RECEIVED

AUG 17 1993

941

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in "Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms" (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Downtown Douglas Historic District
other names/site number n/a

2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by Jackson Street, Pearl Avenue,
Cherry Street, and the Georgia-Florida Railroad.
city, town Douglas (n/a) vicinity of
county Coffee code GA 069
state Georgia code GA zip code 31533

(n/a) not for publication

3. Classification

Ownership of Property:

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

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property:

	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>
buildings	59	14
sites	0	0
structures	2	0
objects	1	0
total	62	14

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 1
Union Banking Company Building (12-10-82)

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

COMMERCE; specialty store, department store, financial institution,
business, warehouse
GOVERNMENT; courthouse, post office
RECREATION AND CULTURE; theater
TRANSPORTATION; rail-related
HEALTH CARE; hospital
DOMESTIC; single dwelling, hotel

Current Functions:

COMMERCE; specialty store, department store, financial institution,
business
GOVERNMENT; courthouse
RECREATION AND CULTURE; theater
TRANSPORTATION; rail-related
FUNERARY; mortuary
DOMESTIC; single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Italianate
Queen Anne
Classical Revival
Italian Renaissance
Bungalow/Craftsman
Moderne
Art Deco
Other: Folk Victorian

Materials:

foundation brick
walls brick, stucco, stone, weatherboard
roof asphalt
other metal, terra cotta, wood

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

The Downtown Douglas Historic District consists of the intact historic development in the city of Douglas's central business district. It includes commercial, governmental, railroad-related, and several residential buildings that have historically made up the downtown area. The district is concentrated along the main north-south corridor of Peterson Avenue and is located at the junction of two rail lines. The Atlantic Coastline Railroad borders the district on the south, and the Georgia-Florida Railroad borders it on the west. The town plan of Douglas was laid out in 1854 in a grid pattern with the courthouse square as the focus of the central business district. Commercial development focused around the square until the railroad came in the 1890s and development shifted south toward the rail lines.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7

The district has developed from its founding in 1854 to the present, with most development dating from the 1890s through the 1920s.

The majority of buildings in the district are one-, two-, and three-story attached, masonry commercial buildings. These buildings are concentrated along the north-south corridor of Peterson Avenue and the east-west corridor of Ward Street. (Photos 2,8) For the most part, these buildings are typical of the kinds of commercial buildings built in small Georgia cities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They are of brick construction with the common front facade features of first-floor transparent storefront with transoms, large display windows, entrances, and bulkheads; upper-floor windows with flat or segmentally arched openings; and decorative building cornice of corbeled brick or pressed metal. Several buildings have a stuccoed exterior finish. Many of these buildings have Italianate, Folk Victorian, and Neoclassical Revival stylistic influences.

Several "landmark" commercial buildings in the district stand out due to their construction techniques or stylistic features. The former Union Banking Company Building (now Coffee County Bank) is a large, three-story building constructed in 1910 that is important for its construction technique. (Photo 5) It was the first building constructed with a reinforced concrete frame in this part of the state. The building was individually listed in the National Register on 12-10-82. The theater building was constructed in 1940 and is a good example of the Moderne style of architecture with its plain stuccoed facade separated into horizontal bands and cylindrical corner tower made of metal. (Photo 10) The former hospital/hotel building is a two-story, brick-veneered building with Neoclassical Revival front portico. (Photo 15) According to Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, the building was constructed by 1920 for use as a hospital and was being used as a hotel by 1930.

The county courthouse and the former post office building are the two remaining historic governmental buildings in the district. The courthouse is located on the courthouse square, which was originally laid out as the focus of the central business district and around which the commercial area developed until the railroad arrived. (Photo 4) The existing courthouse building was constructed in 1940 and replaced an earlier courthouse which burned in 1938. The current courthouse was designed by architect William J. J. Chase and is an example of the Art Deco style. A 1911 Confederate monument still stands on the courthouse grounds. The former post office building (now the Federal Building) was constructed in 1925 by plans from the U. S. Treasury Department's Supervising Architect, who was then James A. Wetmore. (Photo 12) This freestanding two-story, brick building is a simplified example of the Italian Renaissance Revival style.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7

The historic railroad-related buildings remaining in the district represent the important link that historically existed between the railroad and the central business district. These buildings include the depot and a former tobacco warehouse. The depot was constructed c.1907 and is a brick building covered by a large hipped roof with widely overhanging eaves supported by large wooden brackets. (Photo 14) Six-over-six windows remain intact, although now protected by plywood sheets since the building is vacant. An addition was made to the depot in 1912, and the building was used until the late 1960s. The brick warehouse at the intersection of the Atlantic Coastline Railroad and Peterson Avenue was constructed as a tobacco warehouse. (Photo 7) It is a large brick building with stepped parapet walls typical of a turn-of-the-century warehouse.

There are several residential buildings located within the district. These houses were constructed at the edges of the downtown commercial area. They have become separated from other historic residential development by modern commercial development on the periphery of the traditional central business district. The large Queen Anne-style Peterson House and two Craftsman-style houses are located on Peterson Avenue just north of the courthouse. (Photo 6) The Peterson House was home to the prominent Peterson family, who played a major role in the development of Douglas. The large, wood-framed house is an excellent example of the Queen Anne style. Its surrounding yard is an intact example of New South landscaping. Characteristics of this late-19th-century type of landscaping are its informal, almost casual quality and its great variety of landscape features. These features include soft, curvilinear lines and contours; trees and shrubbery blended together for overall effect; an occasional specimen plant; carpet of grass that ties the various features together; and a transparent cast iron fence. Another group of houses is located along Columbia and Bryan Streets between the commercial area and the rail lines. These houses are fairly substantial wood-framed, turn-of-the-century houses that probably once housed local business leaders.

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):

Architecture
Commerce
Community Planning and Development
Politics/Government
Transportation

Period of Significance:

1854-1942

Significant Dates:

1854 - town plan laid out
1895 - railroad constructed in Douglas
1910 - Union Banking Company building constructed
1940 - Coffee County Courthouse constructed

Significant Person(s):

n/a

Cultural Affiliation:

n/a

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

Chase, William J. J.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8

Significance of property, justification of criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above:

Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)

The Downtown Douglas Historic District is the historic central business district in the city of Douglas. The district's development began when the town plan was laid out in 1854 and has continued up to the present. The district is significant in the areas of architecture, commerce, community planning and development, politics/government, and transportation. These areas of significance support National Register eligibility under Criteria A and C.

In the area of architecture, the district is significant for its concentration of commercial, governmental, railroad-related, and residential buildings that make up the city's historic downtown business district. These buildings were constructed from c.1880 into the 1940s. The attached masonry commercial buildings form the core of the district with their concentrations along Peterson Avenue and Ward Street. These buildings are typical of the kinds of commercial buildings constructed in small Georgia downtowns during the late 19th to mid-20th centuries. Several "landmark" commercial buildings represent examples of buildings constructed for specific types of commercial enterprises. These include the 1910 Union Banking Company building constructed with a reinforced concrete frame to provide a fireproof building, the 1940 Moderne-style theater building, and the c.1920 former hospital building also used as a hotel.

The 1940 county courthouse is an example of the kind of building constructed for the major governmental building in a county seat. It is the work of architect William J. J. Chase who designed a large number of public buildings throughout Georgia, including several county courthouses. Its simplified Art Deco style is similar to other Georgia county courthouses built in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The 1925 former post office building is another example of the type of early 20th-century governmental building constructed in small Georgia cities.

The railroad depot and former tobacco warehouse are the remaining transportation-related buildings in the district that represent the important role the railroad once played in downtown commercial activity. The c.1907 brick depot with large hipped roof and widely overhanging eaves supported by brackets is typical of depots in the state. The remaining warehouse is an example of the type of large brick warehouse building used to store goods to be shipped by rail.

Residential buildings included in the district are located on Peterson Avenue on the north edge of the commercial area as well as on Columbia

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8

Avenue and Bryan Street near the intersection of the rail lines. These late-19th- and early 20th-century houses represent the residential buildings that often were located immediately adjacent to downtown commercial and public buildings in small cities. These houses were the homes of prominent business and community leaders, as in the case of the large, Queen Anne-style Peterson House.

In the area of commerce, the district is significant as the historic commercial center of Douglas that served the commercial needs of the city and the surrounding area. The city's commercial center developed from the time the town's plan was laid out in 1854 up through the mid-20th century, with the greatest development being after the arrival of the railroad in the 1890s. This commercial activity is represented by the historic commercial and railroad-related buildings that remain within the downtown area.

In the area of community planning and development, the district is significant for representing the development of the city's central business district within the town plan. The 1854 town plan was a grid pattern that focused on the courthouse square at the center of a surrounding commercial area. This was a traditional way of laying out county-seat communities throughout Georgia. The commercial area followed this development pattern until the railroad came through in the 1890s. Commercial development then shifted south toward the rail lines in a pattern seen in other historic communities in Georgia which were founded prior to the local arrival of the railroad. The town plan's grid pattern and the commercial area's historic development patterns can still be seen today within the district.

In the area of politics/government, the district is significant for its role as the governmental center of Douglas and Coffee County. This role is represented by the presence of the historic county courthouse and the former post office building. The current courthouse building sits on the original courthouse square where previous courthouses have been located and represents the seat of government for the surrounding county. The former post office represents the federal government's presence within the city.

In the area of transportation, the district is significant for the important role of the railroad in downtown Douglas's development. The railroad arrived in Douglas in the 1890s and was the catalyst for a period of great growth in the city from the 1890s through the 1920s. The railroad's role is represented by the concentration of commercial development near the rail lines and, specifically, by the remaining depot and former tobacco warehouse used to store goods to be shipped by rail, and by the historic rail lines themselves.

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8

National Register Criteria

The Downtown Douglas Historic District is eligible under Criterion A for its development as the city's central business district from the city's founding up to the present. It is eligible under Criterion C for its intact concentration of historic commercial, governmental, railroad-related, and residential buildings that together make up downtown Douglas.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

n/a

Period of significance (justification)

The beginning of the period of significance is 1854, when the town plan was laid out in the existing grid pattern. The end of the period of significance is 1942, the 50-year cut-off date when the district documentation was completed.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

Contributing resources within the district are those constructed up through 1942 that retain their historic integrity and have historically been part of the downtown area. Several commercial buildings located on corner lots have covered front facades but exposed and intact side facades. Despite their covered front facades, these buildings continue to make a contribution to the district due to their prominent corner locations and intact side facades, and therefore are counted as contributing resources. The two contributing structures are the historic rail lines, and the contributing object is the historic monument on the courthouse square. Noncontributing resources are those constructed after 1942 or those that have lost their historic integrity due to alterations.

Developmental history/historic context (if applicable)

The land which is today Coffee County was once occupied by the Creek Indians. Known as the "Wiregrass Country", the area was first settled by whites about 1800. The whites traded with the Creeks, who had no formal towns within the present county boundaries, but who traversed the area while on hunting expeditions between the Ocmulgee River and the Okefenokee Swamp. There were no large-scale problems between the Creeks and the whites, but the United States Army

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8

maintained small forts throughout south Georgia to protect white settlers from Indian attacks. One of the forts was located about five miles northeast of Douglas, and in 1837 it sheltered nearby residents from a band of Indians who wandered through the area robbing houses and killing a black slave. By 1840, all of the Indians had been removed from Georgia, and white settlement proceeded, unhindered by threat of Indian attack or prior habitation.

Coffee County was formed by the Georgia Legislature in February 1854, from lands in Irwin, Telfair, Clinch, and Ware Counties. The new county was named for General John Coffee, a hero in the War of 1812. Henry Peterson, a resident of the newly formed county, offered 50 acres of land near the county's center for development of a county seat. Named Douglas in honor of the presidential candidate Stephen Douglas who was running against Abraham Lincoln, this plot of land was divided into lots, and in 1858 the first courthouse was constructed. Development in the new town centered between the courthouse and the nearby Hilliard log hotel (now the location of Sims Funeral Home), roughly following the Sparta model for town development. A race track was laid between what is now the courthouse lot and the present train depot, and on court days, horse races were held for local entertainment.

Douglas, and the rest of Coffee County as well, remained agriculturally oriented through the 1860's, with small businesses developing to support agricultural activity. During the Civil War, however, business activity in Douglas slowed to a trickle, and the town nearly died out as business shifted to the railroad towns of Hazlehurst and Pearson. At the end of the war, the county sold the old courthouse and the lot on which it stood to Benejah Peterson. A new courthouse was built, and the old one became a school and community building.

As economic recovery proceeded, local residents branched out from strictly agricultural concerns and began investigating the importance of their abundant pine resources. By the early 1870s, there were turpentine stills in various parts of the county. During the next decade, thousands of acres in the county were placed under turpentine leases. Douglas's wealthy class began developing during this period as visionary businessmen invested in the naval stores industry in Coffee County. By the early twentieth century, Coffee County would lead the world in naval stores production.

In 1895 the railroad came to Douglas from Axson, then called McDonalds Mills. By 1900, the town was connected to Waycross and points beyond by the Waycross Air Line Railroad. Access to the railroad meant the attraction of new businesses to Douglas. During these years, the Ashley-Price Lumber Company opened an operation, the Georgia and

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8

Florida Railroad established their machine shops, and the Georgia Normal Business College held its first classes.

As growth occurred, the railroads changed the orientation of the town from one centered around the courthouse to one oriented toward the rail line. Commercial structures and trading concerns, including the Coffee County Bank and the Douglas Hotel began appearing south along Main Street (Peterson Avenue) from the courthouse to the railroad. Increased business activity in Douglas brought about many city improvements. Street lights and water lines were installed, streets were paved, and sidewalks were laid in and around the downtown area.

It was also during this period that the residential area along Gaskin Avenue was first developed. Many of those houses were built from the profits of the naval store industry, or from profits derived from related industries or the railroad. These houses were built on a large scale, primarily in the Queen Anne, Folk Victorian, and Neoclassical Revival styles. Somewhat more modest housing in the same styles developed between Gaskin and Madison north of Ward during this same period.

Even as the naval stores industry was developing in Coffee County, another industry was in its early stages. The county's tobacco industry had its origins on a farm two miles south of Nicholls owned by S. J. Brown. Brown was the first farmer in the area to grow tobacco on a large scale. Other farmers followed Brown's lead, and in 1914, the railroads began encouraging production through their agricultural and industrial departments. A Bright Leaf Tobacco belt was formed with Douglas as the unofficial center, and meetings were held to discuss the profitability of establishing a tobacco market in south Georgia. Between 1917 and 1920, the railroads brought in experienced tobacco men from North and South Carolina to advise farmers, and railroad agents and tobacco warehousemen distributed free tobacco seeds. The Georgia Tobacco Company was established in Douglas, and the first warehouse was constructed.

Within a year, a second warehouse was built. By 1918, Coffee County was producing tobacco on a commercial scale, with more than 5000 acres under cultivation. In 1919, the Georgia State Agricultural College hired a full-time field agent to deal with the tobacco crop. Tobacco demanded a high price, and the spread of the cotton boll weevil encouraged even more farmers to plant heavily in tobacco. The tobacco market at Douglas flourished, and in 1919, that market exceeded all other markets in the state.

The prosperity produced by the successful tobacco and naval stores industries solidified development of the downtown commercial district, which looked in 1920 much as it does today. Between 1930 and 1940,

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8

the last remaining block of underdeveloped commercial land, located on Peterson south of Bryan, was filled with buildings. In 1938, the brick courthouse burned to the ground, and the present courthouse was completed in 1940.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Douglas continued to expand its role in the southeast tobacco market, becoming the largest warehouse center in the state and one of the largest in the region. Other industries such as peanut and pecan processing plants, textile mills, and naval stores processing plants also located in the county. Demolition and alteration of structures has occurred. Fulton Federal stands on the site of a former hotel, and Trust Company Bank is located in an old building altered beyond recognition. Several structures have been covered with aluminum siding, but most of these facades can be restored. Today, Coffee County is the second fastest growing industrial county in Georgia. Douglas has become a Main Street city and is striving successfully to preserve its architectural and cultural heritage as well as its economic viability.

9. Major Bibliographic References

Carithers, Julie. Historic District Information Form, September 18, 1989. On file at the Office of Historic Preservation, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia, with supplemental information.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): (x) N/A

- () 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 #

Primary location of additional data:

- (x) State historic preservation office
- () Other State Agency
- () Federal agency
- () Local government
- () University
- () Other, Specify Repository:

Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

Cf-097, Cf-269 to Cf-300

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 30 acres.

UTM References

- A) Zone 17 Easting 324040 Northing 3487475
- B) Zone 17 Easting 324500 Northing 3487445
- C) Zone 17 Easting 324450 Northing 3486670
- D) Zone 17 Easting 324035 Northing 3486690

Verbal Boundary Description

The district boundary encompasses the intact historic downtown area of Douglas roughly bounded by Irwin and Jackson Streets to the north, Pearl and Madison Avenues to the east, Cherry Street to the south, and Columbia Avenue and the Georgia-Florida Railroad to the west. The boundary is drawn to scale on the enclosed historic district map.

Boundary Justification

The district boundary encompasses the concentration of intact historic development in Douglas's central business district. Outside the district boundaries is nonhistoric commercial development.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Debbie Curtis, Architectural Historian
organization Office of Historic Preservation, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
street & number 205 Butler Street, S.E., Suite 1462
city or town Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30334
telephone (404) 656-2840 **date** July 1, 1993

(HPS form version 10-29-91)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Photographs

Name of Property: Downtown Douglas Historic District
City or Vicinity: Douglas
County: Coffee
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: March 1992

Description of Photograph(s):

1 of 16: Intersection of Madison Avenue and Ward Street, district boundary; photographer facing northeast.

2 of 16: Ward Street between Madison and Peterson Avenues; photographer facing southwest.

3 of 16: Commercial building on Ward Street; photographer facing south.

4 of 16: Coffee County Courthouse on Peterson Avenue between Ward and Ashley Streets; photographer facing southwest.

5 of 16: Union Banking Company Building at the corner of Peterson Avenue and Ward Street; photographer facing northeast.

6 of 16: Peterson House at the corner of Peterson Avenue and Irwin Street; photographer facing northwest.

7 of 16: Tobacco warehouse on Peterson Avenue south of the Atlantic Coastline Railroad line; photographer facing southwest.

8 of 16: Peterson Avenue between the Atlantic Coastline Railroad and Bryan Street; photographer facing northwest.

9 of 16: Corner of Peterson Avenue and Bryan Street; photographer facing northwest.

10 of 16: Historic theater building on Ashley Street between Peterson and Madison Avenues; photographer facing northeast.

11 of 16: Former Coca-Cola Bottling Company building on Ashley Street between Madison and Pearl Avenues; photographer facing northeast.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

12 of 16: Former Post Office building on Ashley Street between Madison and Pearl Avenues; photographer facing north.

13 of 16: Ashley Street between the Georgia-Florida Railroad line and Peterson Avenue, rear of former hospital/hotel building on right, brick warehouse on left now demolished due to fire; photographer facing northwest.

14 of 16: Railroad depot on Ward Street at the Georgia-Florida Railroad line, brick warehouse on left now demolished due to fire; photographer facing northwest.

15 of 16: Former hospital/hotel building on Ward Street between Ford Alley and Peterson Avenue; photographer facing southwest.

16 of 16: Peterson Avenue between Bryan and Ward Streets; photographer facing northeast.