

Ball Ground Historic District Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

ATLANTA (December 17, 2009) – The Ball Ground Historic District, located approximately 10 miles northeast of the county seat of Canton, Cherokee County, Georgia, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 4, 2009. The nomination was sponsored by the Cherokee County Historical Society. Nomination materials were prepared by a consultant.

The name “Ball Ground” reputedly derives from the Cherokee Indian ball game that may have occurred near the town site. Ball Ground owes its growth to the arrival of the Marietta and North Georgia (later L & N) Railroad in 1882, and the development of the marble industry in north Georgia in the late 19th century. Mined in nearby Pickens County, much of the marble was finished or turned into monumental pieces in Cherokee County. During the peak of its growth in the 1920s, Ball Ground had four marble finishing mills near the railroad line.

The district was listed in the National Register as significant for its representative collection of the types of commercial buildings commonly found in small Georgia towns, as well as its good examples of residential types and styles. The district is centered on Old Canton Road and Gilmer Ferry Road (Georgia Highway 372), extending in four directions from that intersection. Most of the commercial buildings are located in a central three-block area along Gilmer Ferry Road, and date primarily from the 1900s to the 1930s. One- and two-story brick buildings characterize this area. Marble and other stones are sometimes used as secondary materials or simple trim on these buildings. Most commercial buildings once had flat roofs with parapets, but they have been topped with non-historic gable-front metal roof extensions. The original building form is usually still visible. Metal sheeting has also been placed on the upper facades of some stores, obscuring a few historic details. First-floor storefront areas generally remain intact. Most houses date from the 1880s to the 1950s, ranging from two-room workers’ cottages to expansive hilltop landmarks. Few have a formal academic style. House types represented include central hallway, side-gabled cottage, gabled front and wing, bungalow, ranch, I-house, and Georgian house, as defined in *Georgia’s Living Places: Historic Houses in Their Landscaped Settings*. Stylistic influences include Queen Anne, Folk Victorian, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman. The Alfred W. Roberts House, listed in the National Register in 1985, is one of Ball Ground’s largest houses, reflecting elements of several styles as its locally prominent owners expanded it over time.

There are also a few large industrial and warehouse buildings related to the marble and monument industry, usually located near the railroad. Community landmark buildings include an elementary school (circa 1948 with later additions), a former downtown post office (circa 1966), the Ball Ground Baptist Church (1916 with later alterations) and cemetery, the Old Methodist Church

(1916), the former City Hall (circa 1900), the Ball Ground Community Cemetery, Lion's Club Field, and the former Masonic Hall (1923).

Ball Ground's significance is derived not only from its architecture, but also from the role its central business district played in the town's development and commerce. The town was a primary location for the buying and selling of goods and services for northeastern Cherokee and adjacent counties. Much of this commerce was related to the marble finishing industry, which brought banks, general merchandise stores, professional offices, and other establishments to the community. The mail-order monument business was a major catalyst for growth. The district's significance is also reflected in its development. It is a typical crossroads town with a railroad. In Ball Ground's case, major development did not occur until after the railroad arrived, making possible the marble finishing industry. The primary orientation of the town is not toward the railroad, but the railroad corridor did influence subsequent street patterns and business locations.

The National Register of Historic Places is our country's official list of historic buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts worthy of preservation. The National Register provides formal recognition of a property's architectural, historical or archaeological significance. It also identifies historic properties for planning purposes and insures that these properties will be considered in the planning of state or federally assisted projects. National Register listing encourages preservation of historic properties through public awareness, federal and state tax incentives, and grants. Listing in the National Register does not place obligations or restrictions on the use, treatment, transfer, or disposition of private property.

The Historic Preservation Division (HPD) of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources serves as Georgia's state historic preservation office. Their mission is to promote the preservation and use of historic places for a better Georgia. HPD's programs include archaeology protection and education, environmental review, grants, historic resource surveys, tax incentives, the National Register of Historic Places, community planning and technical assistance.

The mission of the Department of Natural Resources is to sustain, enhance, protect and conserve Georgia's natural, historic and cultural resources for present and future generations, while recognizing the importance of promoting the development of commerce and industry that utilize sound environmental practices.

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