

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER/GEORGIA REGISTER NOMINATION

1. Name: Dewey City Historic District.

2. Location: The district is located within the city limits of Thomasville, Thomas County, Georgia, approximately one mile west of the county courthouse. Boundary streets are Martin Luther King, Jr. on the east, Felix Street on the north, Culpepper Street and Burns Street on the west, and Wolfe (a.k.a. Wolf) Street on the south.

USGS Quadrangles: Thomasville and Pine Park, GA.

3a. Description: The Dewey City Historic District is a relatively intact historically African-American residential neighborhood west of downtown Thomasville in southwest Georgia. The district is rectangular in shape, and lies on flat land between creeks. It is laid out in roughly a gridiron pattern with streets running east to west and north to south. This distinguishes it from nearby neighborhoods and the rest of the city, which has northeast-southwest and northwest-southeast streets. It is also clearly delineated by industrial sites to the south and west, and parks and vacant land to the north. Dewey City is bounded on the east by the National Register-listed Stevens Street Historic District, a predominantly African-American neighborhood. The railroad corridor lies in close proximity. House types represented in Dewey City include several common types found in working-class neighborhoods from the late 19th century to the present. Examples of gabled wing cottages, shotgun houses, pyramid cottages, side-gabled cottages, bungalows, American Small Houses, and ranch houses are all present. Most have few stylistic details, although some Craftsman elements are evident on bungalows. Common changes include closed-in porches, artificial siding, and other replacement materials. Yards are typically well kept and informal, with few plantings. Non-residential properties include Mount Zion Primitive Baptist Church (c.1949), St. James Primitive Baptist Church (1953), Beulah Hill Missionary Baptist Church (1959), a child-care facility, and the Douglass School campus with a mixture of historic and non-historic buildings. Almost half of the buildings in the district are noncontributing, mostly due to their recent construction dates. Deep, rectangular lots face the major east-west streets. All but two of the streets are paved, and several have curbs. Sidewalks exist only in the school block. The district contains many mature trees and vacant wooded lots. Most of these vacant lots apparently never had houses, and served as side yards for neighboring properties. A state of Georgia historical marker on a vacant lot identifies the site of a transitory Civil War prison camp. Ditches are still evident, but much of the site may have been destroyed or may lie under more recent housing construction. Since this site has not been conclusively investigated, it is not included in the period of significance for this nomination. An oak tree still standing on McKinley Street is the subject of local lore as a lynching site during the "Jim Crow" era.

3b. Period of Significance: 1899-1962.

3c. Acreage: Approximately 150 acres.

3d. Boundary Explanation: The proposed boundary includes the intact and contiguous neighborhood of Dewey City, as platted in the four phases of its historical development.

4a. National Register Criteria: A and C.

4b. National Register Areas of Significance: Architecture, Community Planning and Development, Education, and Ethnic Heritage-Black.

4c. Statement of Significance: The area now known as Dewey City was sparsely settled by whites in the early 19th century, but no above-ground resources survive from that time. Dewey City has a distinct identity as an African-American neighborhood with clear boundaries defined within four historic plats. The first plat, known as the Quinn and Cochran Addition, was filed in 1899. Recorded in 1904 as the "Dewey City Subdivision," it was likely named after Admiral George Dewey, hero of the Spanish-American War. Charles Bluett Quinn bought the land outside Thomasville to provide housing for blacks. Subsequent plats were Homestead Park (1911), Pine Summit (1911), and Douglass Heights (1947). Douglass Heights lots were sold between 1947 and 1961, with the first major wave of development ending c.1962. The Dewey City Historic District is significant in the area of architecture, because it contains representative house types popular in working class neighborhoods in Georgia from the early to mid 20th century. The district is also significant in the areas of community planning and development and African-American ethnic heritage as a good example of a planned subdivision established during an era of housing segregation. It is a distinguishable entity that has remained a stable African-American neighborhood since its inception, with primarily single-family, owner-occupied houses. Migration from farms to jobs in Thomasville drew new residents. Periods of significant growth occurred in the 1920s and after World War II. Residents included laborers, domestics, yardmen, and railroad workers. The district is also significant in the area of education, because the neighborhood schools were highly regarded both for academics and athletic teams. Some families boarded their children in the neighborhood to attend the schools. In 1950 Douglass High School became the first black school in the region to have a gym.

4d. Suggested Level of Significance: The Dewey City Historic District is being nominated at the local level of significance as an important early through mid-20th-century African-American residential neighborhood in Thomasville.

4e. National Register Status: The nomination was prepared in part with a grant from the Historic Preservation Fund.

5. Sponsor: The nomination is sponsored by the city of Thomasville. Nomination materials were prepared by Thomasville Landmarks, Inc.