

**City of Wrens District Boundary
Nomination Report
Recommendation to City Council
Wrens Historic Preservation Commission**

The Wrens Historic Preservation Commission recommends to the Wrens City Council as noted in the Wrens Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section IV-B, that a historic district be designated within the city limits. The historic district referred to as the Wrens Historic District I meets the historical, cultural, architectural, and aesthetic criteria as required under Section IV-B.

Physical Description

The Wrens Historic District I encompasses an area commencing at the corner of McCollum and Walker Streets, continuing west to Matthews Street. At the corner of Matthews and Walker Streets, continue north for one block. At the corner of Matthews and King Streets, travel west for one block crossing US 1 and including two triangular parcels on the western side to Frederick Street. Travel north along Frederick Street crossing Russell Street to include the Methodist Church parcel and then take in one-half block between Frederick and Main Streets, proceeding north along the west side of Main Street (including Pope Hill) to the intersection of Quaker Road. Cross US 1 and travel east to include one-half block fronting Main Street on the eastern side. The district boundary runs south on the eastern side of Main Street to include one-half block until it turns east to take in one-half block on the northern side of Barton Street. The district takes in the eastern one-half block of Barton Street east to Lamar Street. At Lamar Street, it continues south to take in the northern one-half block of Broad Street east to

McCollum Street. From McCollum Street, the district proceeds south to the intersection of McCollum and Walker Streets.

Cultural and Architectural Significance

The Wrens Historic District I is primarily comprised of historic commercial buildings dating from the 1880s – 1940s. The downtown commercial district is a good example of a late 19th-century to early 20th-century commercial district, typical of small towns in Georgia, which were established and flourished when railroads were a major component of development.

Commercial, as well as residential structures, were built when the railroad came to Wrens. These early commercial areas often had mixed uses. Shops, warehouses, and residences all shared a densely populated area. The Wrens Historic District I still has these characteristics and is worthy of preservation.

Wrens was founded as a crossroads community at the junction of Wrightsboro Road and Patterson's Bridge Road (present-day U.S. Highway 1) near Pope Hill. The first settlers located near this crossroads around the time of the American Revolution. John Wren acquired 600 acres of land from Mund Gross in 1839, part of which became the City of Wrens, including most of its commercial business district.

The Augusta, Gibson, and Sandersville Railway asked for a right of way through the property of William John Wren for a new train line that would begin in Augusta and terminate in Sandersville. The railroad insisted that the town be named Wrens. The railroad, established in 1885, also built a depot. The railroad did a lucrative business in freight of cotton, logs, and fertilizer, but by 1893 was bankrupt. The depot was originally in the middle of Broad Street at the intersection of Center Street, and was moved twice to its present location. The depot has been bricked on the exterior for use as a community center.

In deeding the land for the rail and depot, William John Wren also deeded land for a park, called "Kill Kare," located on the block where the Wrens post office now stands. William John Wren made several other gifts of land, such as the property for the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and Wren family cemetery. Wren had many properties that are now part of the historic downtown or have become archaeological sites: mercantile store, planing mill, flour mill, and the Wren's bank. Wrens was president of McNair-Young Oil Company, the town's largest industry when he died in 1919. He had served in the Georgia legislature. The Wren family built a large Neo-classical home that stands today fronting Williams Street with US 1 on the west side and Estelle Street on the east side.

The Wrens Institute was an early school of 1898 on the west side Patterson Bridge Road. In 1913, it was accredited as one of a handful of Class One, four-year high schools in the state. The school outgrew its quarters again, and this time a modern brick building was constructed in 1919, where the modern Wrens Library is located today. The high school building was demolished. Associated with the school is a building that is still standing, the circa 1942-1946 Agricultural building, now used as the Wrens Human Development Center.

Wrens is home to the McCollum House that is in a severe state of deterioration and in dire need of preservation. This house and library was named for Professor McCollum, a teacher and superintendent of Jefferson County schools for 75 years. He is also responsible for naming the Central Savannah River Area in a contest in 1950. His house is currently privately owned and should be turned over for public use.

The City of Wrens received Transportation Enhancement Funds to make major streetscape improvements to its downtown historic district. Plans are underway to add streetscape improvements and complement the town's original plan where the railroad went down Main Street.

In 2005, the City of Wrens received Survey and Planning grant funds for its Historic Preservation Commission to conduct a historic resources survey of about 300 historic structures. This survey will inventory the city's historic resources with a report analyzing the architecture.

The downtown is also home to a historic water tower built in the 1920's. As this is one of the older water towers in the region it is recommended to be painted.

Wrens also has a number of well-maintained historic residences that are worthy of recognition. Many were documented in a 1978 historic resources survey conducted by the Historic Preservation Division, however, many resources were not recorded and little is known about them. The new Historic Resources Survey should document these unrecorded buildings.

Residential

- William Wren House, Neo-Classical, 103 Williams, circa 1900s
- Stone House, 208 Stone, circa 1900
- Carpenter-Wren House, 207 Stone Street, circa 1900
- Avery House, 302 Stone, circa 1900
- Mrs. C.P. Wren House, Main and Hill Streets, circa 1920
- Barton-Fleming House, 103 Barton Street
- Pope Hill, Main Street, circa 1830
- Railley-Howard House, Main Street, circa 1884, owned by Wrens DAR
- Parish and Tiffany Howard House, 100-200 block of Stone Street
- In addition, vernacular historic housing should be considered for National Register of Historic Places nomination on the following streets: Stone, Cotton, Speering, Ellis, Frederick, Quaker, Howard, King, Walker, Kings Mill, and one block of Russell Street.

Commercial

Entire downtown district. The Historic Preservation Division evaluated the commercial historic district in 2003 for NR eligibility. There are a few facades that need to be uncovered in order to have a contiguous historic district.

Other possible NR properties include:

- Stone Building, Cotton Street, Built 1906
- Coca Cola Bottling Company, Estelle Street
- Estelle Street buildings

Industrial

- Community House is the former railroad depot, moved and altered

Institutional

- Presbyterian Church Property, 401 Kings, Circa 1900 (site of Erskine Caldwell home)
- Presbyterian Church, Patrick and Kings streets, Built 1895
- Agricultural Building of Wrens, used as ROTC and Human Development Center building, setback on Main Street
- Wrens Baptist Church, circa 1930, Main Street
- Wrens United Methodist Church, Russell Street

Archaeological

- Wrens Institute, Main Street
- Community Flour Mill Site, Broad Street
- Presbyterian Church Cemetery
- Wrens High School Site (site of library)