

Chapter One

Stone Mountain Historic District Overview

The Stone Mountain Historic District consists of historic residential, commercial and institutional buildings constructed from the early-nineteenth century into the mid-twentieth century. These historic resources are set within a historic landscape consisting of a grid pattern of streets and street trees.

This section defines the building types and architectural styles found within the Stone Mountain Historic District.

Historical Overview of Stone Mountain¹

Stone Mountain experienced two periods of growth: from 1836 to 1864 due to the economic changes brought by the railroad; and from the 1880s to the mid-twentieth century due to the proliferation of granite quarrying operations in the vicinity of the mountain. Originally part of the Creek Nation, Stone Mountain and the surrounding area was forcefully ceded from the Creeks to the State of Georgia in 1821. Over the next two years, six counties, including Dekalb County, were formed from this cessation. A land lottery distributed land lots of 202.5 acres that divided up the six counties. During the 1830s, area pioneer Andrew Johnson purchased the majority of land lots 75, 76, 77, 86, 87, 88 and 127 of the 18th District of Dekalb County. These lots would eventually comprise the area of today's Stone Mountain. The town developed around Andrew Johnson's land holdings as he sold parcels to settlers. As Andrew Johnson was the central figure in the community, a stone marker was placed in front of his home from which the city limits were drawn "600 yards in every direction from his house." As plans for a railroad became known, the community grew around the tracks to the west of the enormous granite outcropping that gave the town its name, first called "New Gibraltar" and finally "Stone Mountain." The railroad reached Stone Mountain by 1845 and initiated an economic boon for the area by creating a quick and efficient way for farmers to get their agricultural products to more and larger markets.

During the first period of growth, farming was the predominant occupation of the community. The 1850 Federal Census states that of the 38 households within the city limits and the 111 households within the area, 52 were farmers (about 1/3 the population). Only five households were recorded as stonemasons. By 1860 there were 164 households within the city limits. As evidenced by these statistics, farming was still the major occupation in the area. Both inhabitants and sightseers found the natural beauty of the mountain to be unique and awe-inspiring. The annual agricultural fair run by the Southern Central Agricultural Society was held in Stone Mountain from 1846 to 1849, drawn largely by the unusual stone monadnock. The agricultural fair helped spur the construction of hotels in Stone Mountain that in turn helped build the town's reputation as a major tourist destination.

During the Civil War most of the men between the ages of 16 and 35 served in the Confederate Army which caused an economic slowdown in the area. During the Atlanta Campaign in July of 1864, a federal cavalry brigade under General Kenner Garrard destroyed several miles of the Georgia Railroad and, after some fighting, forced fleeing Confederates to burn cotton, commissary stores and the water tower. During Sherman's March to the Sea during November 1864, the train depot and other public buildings were burned by the Union Army. The destruction wrought by the war throughout the South caused a serious economic depression that the area did not recover from until the last two decades of the century.

Granite that had been quarried from weathered outcroppings early in the century was acquired from deeper under the surface with the introduction of pneumatic shears, saws and hammers late in the 19th century. With the opening of the Stone Mountain Railway and Granite Company in 1869, the granite industry became the mainstay of the local economy. The company quarried

the granite and used their railroad spur, which traversed from the mountain to the Georgia Railroad in town by the depot, to deliver granite to builders throughout the state.

In 1887 William and Samuel Venable purchased the company and increased its operational output. At its peak, the Stone Mountain Railway and Granite Company produced 200,000 paving stones and 2,000 feet of curbing daily. There were a number of other quarrying operations in the Stone Mountain vicinity beside the Venable Brother's company, making it a major area industry. The community's prosperity during the early 20th century caused a boon in construction; the abundance of house types found in Stone Mountain, most numerous being the bungalow, can be traced to this period of economic success.

The stock market crash of 1929 caused bank failures throughout the country, including the Bank of Stone Mountain in 1931. The Great Depression had a severe effect on Stone Mountain and President Roosevelt's New Deal programs brought much needed employment. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) provided jobs for unemployed quarry workers by building the Rock Gym and operating a mattress factory in town. In spite of economic conditions, tourists still came to see Stone Mountain.

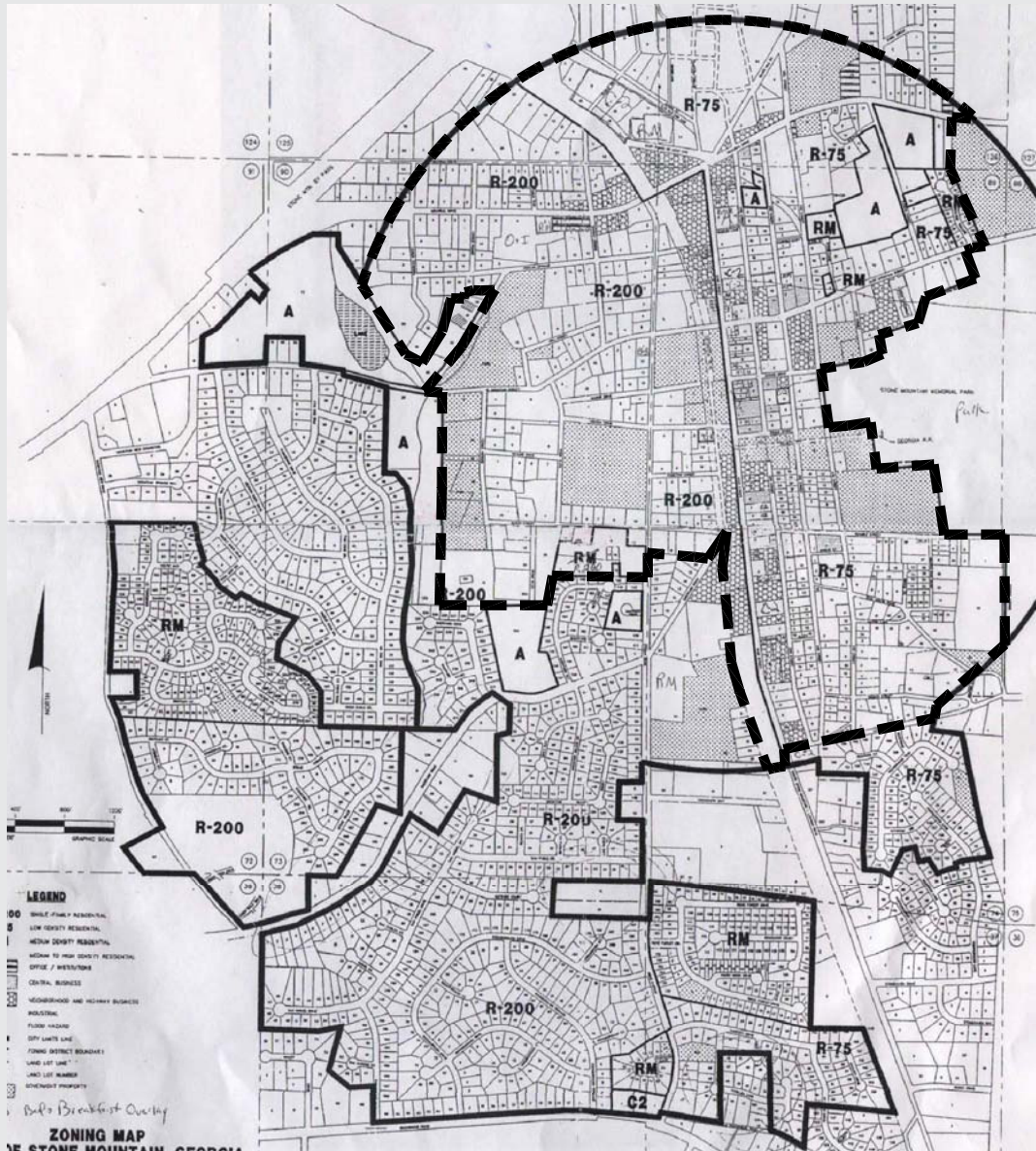
In the 1950s, the Venable family sold their property to the State of Georgia to create a memorial park at their quarry that included the mountain. As quarry industries closed, other industries took their place and were housed at the Stone Mountain Industrial Park established in 1963. With the expansion of Stone Mountain Memorial Park during the 1960s and its continual development and evolution, the park continues to be a significant part of the local economy.

Shermantown

Shermantown is a late nineteenth century African-American neighborhood within the Stone Mountain city limits. It is located south of downtown along 2nd, 3rd and 4th Streets. Similar to the City of Stone Mountain, the streets laid out in a gridiron pattern with a few curvilinear streets in the neighborhood, such as Stillhouse Road. Building lots tend to be smaller in this community than in the rest of the city. Like many African-American communities in Georgia, the architecture is mainly undecorated, vernacular forms such as bungalows, shotguns and other small cottage type houses. There are three churches located in Shermantown: Bethsaida Baptist Church, Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church and St. Paul A.M.E. These churches are community focal points providing gathering places and social opportunities for the residents. Two recognizable commercial buildings are an important link to Shermantown's history when it was a sustainable community in its own right.

1. This brief history of Stone Mountain was derived from the *Stone Mountain Historic District Form* completed by Steven H. Moffson of the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

Map of Stone Mountain Historic District



The Stone Mountain Historic District boundary begins at the northern and eastern most points of the city limits, proceeding west to incorporate properties located on Ferndale Street to the intersection of Poplar Springs to Sexton Drive, proceeding southward along Sexton Drive to include McCurdy Park, proceeding south to include properties on Gordon Street, VFW Drive and Cloud Street, proceeding to the intersection of Sheppard Road, proceeding southward to include all properties fronting Main Street to the southern most boundary of the City intersection with Lucille Street, proceeding in an easterly direction to include properties facing Lucille Street.

FAQs About Local Historic Districts

Do I have any say as to whether my property is included in a Local Historic District?

Yes. Before a local historic district is designated, all residents and owners of property in the proposed local district have the opportunity to express their views at public hearings with the Stone Mountain Historic Preservation Commission and the Mayor and City Council.

Will inclusion in a Local Historic District restrict how I may use my property?

No. Historic district designations do not restrict zoning or land use. There are no new restrictions placed on how properties in historic districts may be used.

What might happen to the value of my property if it is included in a Local Historic District?

Designation of an area as a historic district will not directly affect property values. Because local historic district properties have some protection and tax incentives available, owners may be more inclined to make improvements to their properties, and this may increase the value of all property in a given district.

Are all buildings in historic districts, such as the Stone Mountain Historic District, necessarily historic?

No. When the boundaries are drawn for a local historic district, it will often include non-historic properties as well. Changes made to non-historic properties can often be done in a way that will enhance or be in keeping with the character of the entire district. Improvements will often increase property values to both historic and non-historic structures within a district.

Will inclusion in a local historic district prevent me from making changes to my property?

No. Designation as a local historic district does not prevent owners from making changes to their properties, but designation does ensure that any changes do not detract from the architectural, historical, and/or aesthetic qualities of the district. Alterations to the exteriors of properties within local historic districts must receive prior approval from the Historic Preservation Commission. Owners must apply to the Commission for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA).

A Certificate of Appropriateness is not required for minor repair or routine maintenance work, such as painting or replacing a broken window pane. However, a COA would be required for work that physically alters the property, such as enclosing a porch or adding a fence or retaining wall.

Where can I go for assistance in developing design changes that will be appropriate for the historic district?

Historic district property owners who want assistance in planning historically appropriate designs may contact the City of Stone Mountain, or the Historic Preservation Commission. The City and Commission cannot develop plans or designs, but they can offer some suggestions based on the Stone Mountain Design Guidelines. Commercial property owners can seek design assistance through Main Street Stone Mountain. Consultations in the early design stages of projects are especially encouraged.

If I am unhappy with a decision made by the Commission concerning my Certificate of Appropriateness Application, may I appeal?

Yes. Appeals may be made to the City of Stone Mountain Mayor and Council and then to the County Superior Court.

High Style or Vernacular

A building with minimal architectural ornamentation is considered to be the equal of a building with numerous decorative elements. An unadorned building is sometimes referred to as **vernacular**, meaning that it is the work of a craftsman following local building traditions without a conscious attempt to mimic current architectural fashion. **High-style** buildings, on the other hand, are often architect-designed and show the influence of current architectural styles. Such buildings are accentuated with architectural elements and details that reflect a specific architectural style or styles. Both vernacular and high-style buildings can have a identified **building type**.



The two examples above are both Georgian house types. The two examples vary in that the left example is vernacular, having been designed by local craftsman with minimal stylistic elements, and the right example was designed with architectural ornamentation in the Greek Revival style. Though the right example is considered high style, it is no more important than its vernacular counterpart.

Architectural Styles and Building Types

This section illustrates architectural styles, as well as residential and commercial building types, that are found within the Stone Mountain Historic District. A majority of the architectural resources date from the mid-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century. A general understanding of these historic resources and their character-defining features will be helpful to anyone considering a rehabilitation or new construction project that the Historic Preservation Commission will review.

The **architectural style** of a building is defined by the exterior materials, detailing and decorations; these features are usually associated with a particular architectural style, such as Federal or Italianate. **Building type** is determined by the overall form, or “envelope,” of the building and is not affected by exterior ornamentation. Building type may take into account multiple variables, such as interior floor plan, height, roof shape and the location of chimneys.

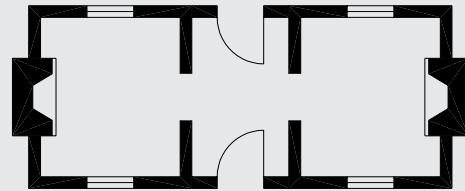


The two examples above are both examples of the Georgian Cottage building type. However, the houses illustrate two different architectural styles. The house on the left is Queen Anne style and the house on the right is Greek Revival style.

Residential Building Types

Central Hallway (1840-1900)

- symmetrical front, usually with chimneys at each end
- consists of a two rooms with a hallway between
- one room deep



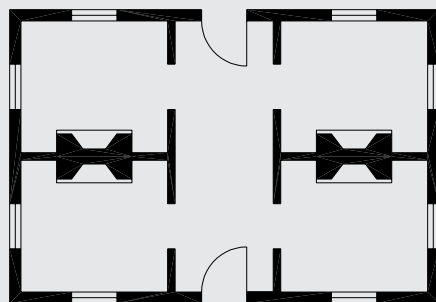
I-House (1840s-1880s)

- one room deep
- at least two rooms wide
- typically chimneys are located on the exterior gable ends
- the subtype is based on the central hallway, hall-parlor, double pen and saddlebag house types



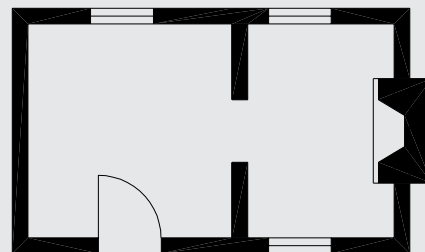
Georgian Cottage & House (1850-1900)

- square or nearly square in plan
- symmetrical front facade with central hallway flanked by two rooms on either side
- hip or gabled roof



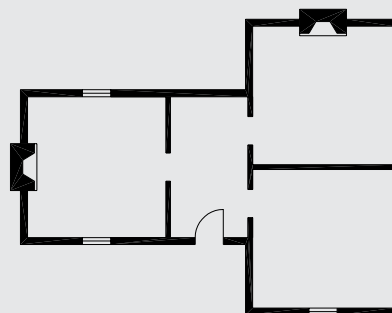
Hall Parlor (1850-1930)

- two unequal rooms wide, with entrance into the larger of the two rooms
- one room deep
- typically has a gabled roof



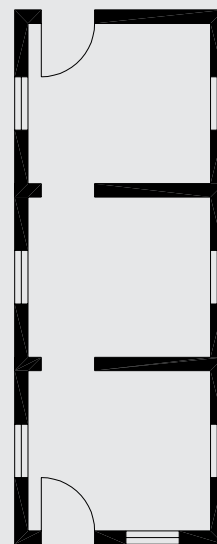
Gabled Ell (1875-1915)

- L or T shaped in plan
- gable front at one end
- recessed wing with entrance that is parallel to the front facade



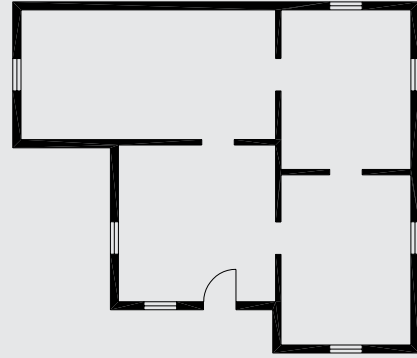
Shotgun (1870s-1920s)

- one room in width
- typically three rooms deep
- no hallway is present
- typically doors all line up



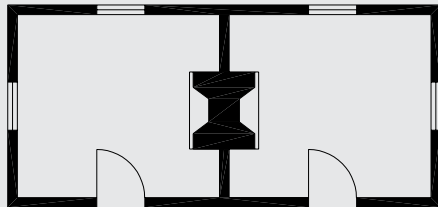
Queen Anne Cottage (1880-1890s)

- square main mass with a hipped or pyramidal roof
- projecting gables facing both the front and side
- interior rooms are arranged in an asymmetrical plan with no central hallway



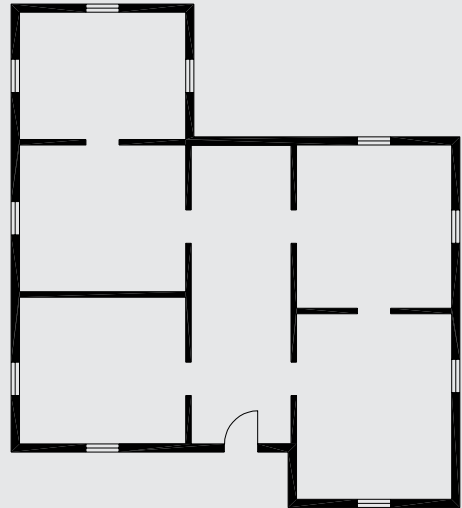
Saddlebag (1880-1930)

- central chimney in gabled roof, flanked by one room on either side
- can have either one central exterior door, or two doors leading into each room



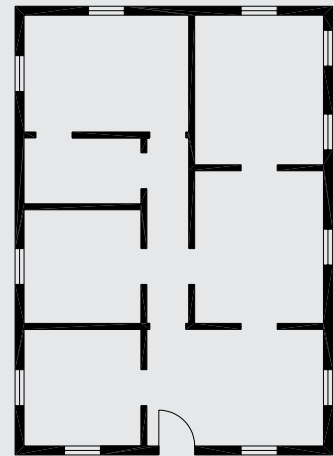
New South Cottage (1890-1920)

- square main mass, usually with a hipped roof and gabled projections
- central hallway plan emphasizes symmetry, with one or both of the side rooms projecting forward
- a pair of gables, either over projecting rooms or flush with the wall of the main mass, frequently adds to the symmetrical look of this type



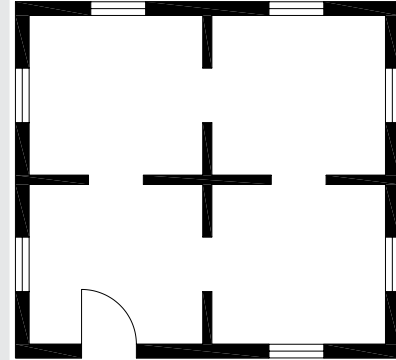
Bungalow (1900-1930s)

- 1 to 1 ½ stories
- overall rectangular in shape
- low-pitched roof with wide overhang
- subtypes based on roof shape: front gable, side gable, hip, and cross gable



Pyramid Cottage (1910-1930)

- square main mass
- typically with four principal rooms
- steeply pitched pyramidal roof



Extended Hall-Parlor (1920s-1930s)

- long, rectangular shape
- entrance is on narrow facade
- three or more rooms deep
- no recessed front porch



Temple Front Cottage (1920s-1930s)

- long, rectangular shape
- entrance is on narrow facade
- three or more rooms deep
- full-width, recessed front porch



Inline Ranch (1935-1975)

- one-story, linear plan
- typically two rooms deep
- low pitched roof
- mixed use of materials: brick, stone and wood



Minimal Cottage (1944-1955)

- small footprint
- typically one-story
- steeply pitched roof, with shallow rake and eaves
- mixed use of materials: brick, stone and wood



Minimal Traditional Cottage (1944-1955)

- small footprint, typically one-story
- dominant front gable with asymmetrical massing
- mixed use of materials: brick, stone and wood



Residential Building Styles

Greek Revival (1830-1865)

- low pitched gabled or hipped roof
- cornice lines emphasized with wide, divided band of trim (entablature)
- entry porch is supported by square or round prominent columns
- front facades are usually symmetrical and feature an entrance with sidelights and a transom light over the door



Italianate (1850s-1870s)

- asymmetrical massing is typical, though more formal examples in cities are often symmetrical
- widely overhanging boxed eaves often with decorative brackets
- typically tall narrow windows, often paired or arched with decorative window hoods
- may feature quoins, a cornice with dentils, or columns



Queen Anne (1880s-1910s)

- asymmetrical form and variety of exterior surface textures, materials, and details
- irregularly shaped, steeply pitched roofs with cross gables, usually with a dominant front-facing gable
- wrap around porches with slender turned posts and balustrades are common
- bay windows and/or turrets and patterned masonry chimneys are typical



Craftsman (1910s-1930s)

- low pitched roof with wide overhanging eaves and exposed roof rafters
- decorative brackets or braces commonly added under gables
- full- or partial- width porch with roof supported by tapered square columns
- use of decorative woodwork, masonry, and stone that reflects building material craftsmanship is common



English Vernacular

Revival (1920s-1940s)

- asymmetrical front facade with steeply pitched roofs
- massive chimney, sometimes ornamented with decorative chimney pots
- round arched entryway is common
- brick is the usual exterior material, often with stone or half-timbering accents



Cape Cod (1940s-1960s)

- symmetrical plan with central door
- typically features window dormers
- one to one and one-half stories
- decorative trim, typically with wide wood siding



Commercial Building Types

One Part Commercial Block (1840s-1950s)

- one story
- front facade consists of a store front with a cornice
- storefront contains large display windows and a prominent entrance
- storefront facades range from plain to ornamented



Two Part Commercial Block (1840s-1950s)

- most common commercial facades
- two to four stories in height and divided into two distinct parts — ground level storefront and upper floors
- ground level storefront house public spaces such as a store or restaurant and is separated from the upper floors by a cornice
- upper floors house more private spaces such as apartments or offices, marked by a row of windows



Arcaded Commercial Block (1840s-1950s)

- defining feature is the uninterrupted rows of arched window and door treatments
- two - three stories in height
- ground level storefront house public spaces such as a store or restaurant
- upper floors house more private spaces such as apartments or offices



Community Store (1840s-1950s)

- free-standing building, generally not in a commercial district
- typically features one large room where goods are displayed for sale
- typically features a pitched roof



Commercial Building Styles

Italianate (1845-1910s)

- projecting roof cornice, often with corbeled brick work or decorative brackets
- decorative window hoods
- segmentally arched window openings are common



Folk Victorian (1880s-1930s)

- most common style for simple, functional commercial buildings
- modest detailing
- corbeled brick cornice



Municipal Community Resources



The Stone Mountain Recreation Center, otherwise known as the "Rock Gym," was built by the Works Progress Administration in 1930.

Transportation Related Community Resources



The Stone Mountain City Hall, originally the Georgia Railroad Depot, was built in two phases of construction (circa 1870s & 1914).



Originally built by the Georgia Railroad, the railroad tracks that are still in use along Main Street are responsible for the antebellum growth of Stone Mountain.



The circa 1920 A.R.T. Station was originally the trolley station for Stone Mountain.

Religious Community Resources



The Stone Mountain United Methodist Church, constructed in 1909, is an impressive ashlar granite building.



The St. Paul A.M.E. Church in Shermantown was built circa 1950 and features a central, gabled main room with bell towers flanking the front facade.



The First Baptist Church, built in 1938, is rectangular in plan and features Greek Revival treatments, such as the portico and pedimented entry.



The circa 1930 Bethsaida Baptist Church in Shermantown is similar in design to the St. Paul A.M.E. Church with a central, gabled main room with bell towers flanking the front facade.