



S A V A N N A H H I S T O R I C D I S T R I C T
B O A R D O F R E V I E W

REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Petitioner: Deborah Jones

MPC File No.: 26-002466-COA

Address: 512 East Hall Street

PIN: 20033 10011

Zoning: D-R

Staff Reviewer: Alexander Merced

Date: June 10, 2026

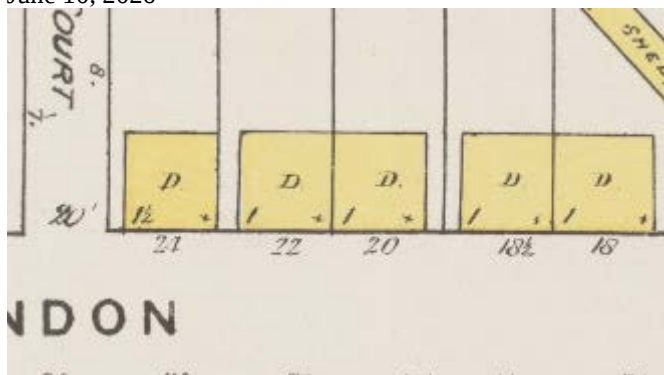
NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant demolished the exterior brick chimney on the west side of the house because it was flagged by Code Compliance as being in danger of falling into the street and onto the neighboring home. The applicant does not believe that she should be made to reconstruct the chimney as it was because she asserts that it was not original to the house and non-historic.

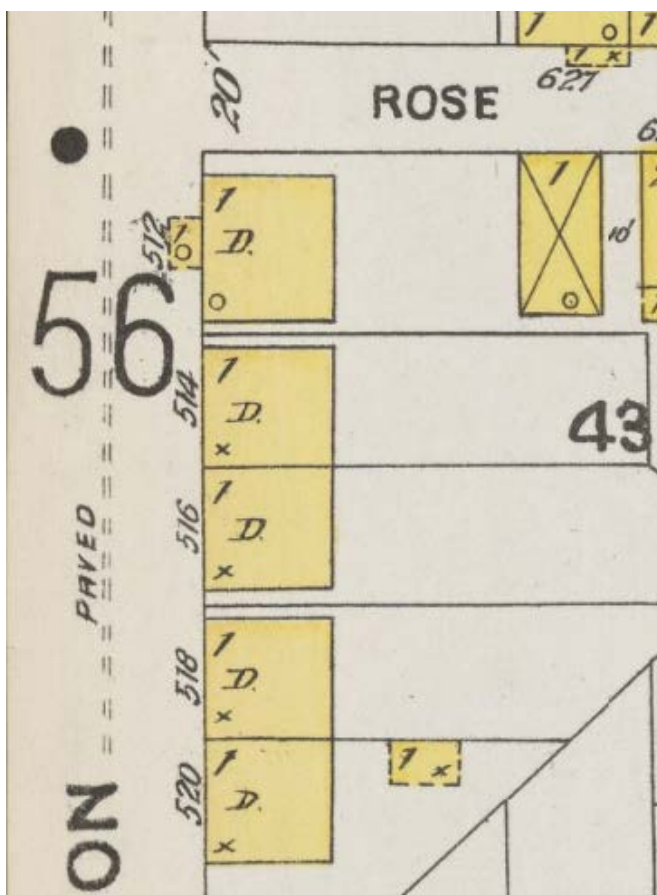
CONTEXT/SURROUNDING AREA:

The building was constructed in 1883 and is a contributing resource within the National Historic Landmark District and the local Savannah Downtown Historic District. It is located within the Beach Institute Character Area and sits on a block with a mixture of contributing and non-contributing structures.

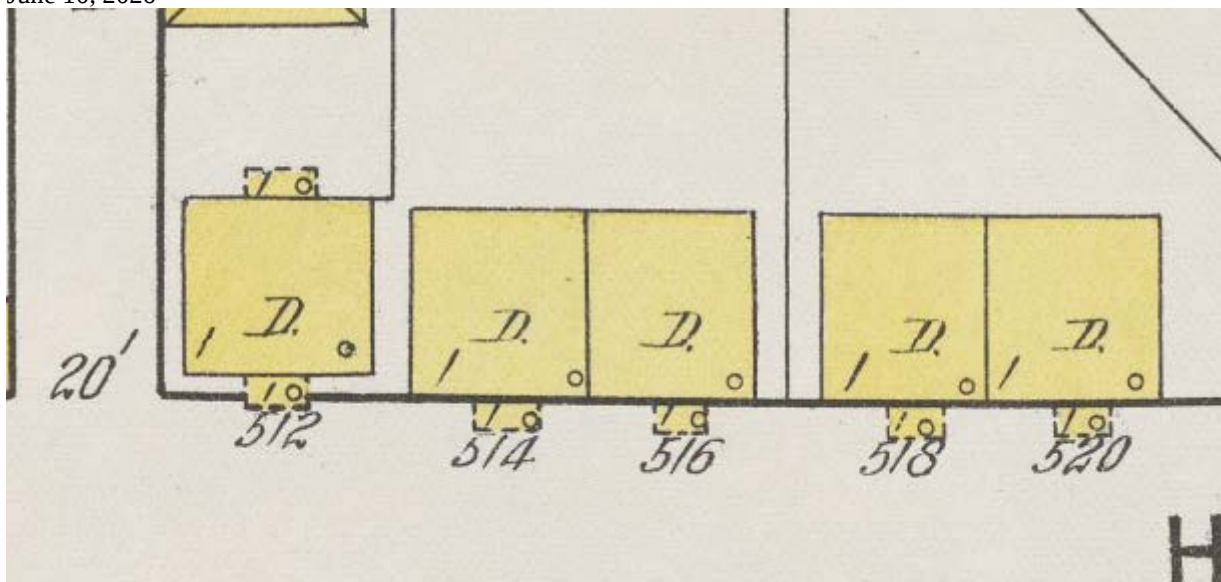
Historic Sanborn Maps show some alterations were made in the years after construction, specifically, a front porch appears in the 1898 map, a rear porch appears in the 1916 map, and the rear porch appears to have been enlarged by the 1955 map. At no point does it specifically show an exterior chimney being added. Additionally, the Cadastral Survey conducted in 1937 shows that there was no exterior chimney at that time. Finally, the Georgia Historic Resources survey, conducted in 2000, notes that the building was renovated and altered in 1960, although it does not provide details on the changes that were made. At some point, the front porch was enlarged and enclosed and the house was covered in a brick veneer, and it is possible that these were the 1960 alterations referenced by the survey, although this is unclear. It is also possible that this is when the chimney was added, but this is also unclear, as the earliest definitive photographic evidence that we have for the existence of the chimney is a 2000 image that was included in the GHR survey. At some point between 2007 and 2012, the porch enclosure and the brick veneer were removed, bringing the house closer to its historic configuration.



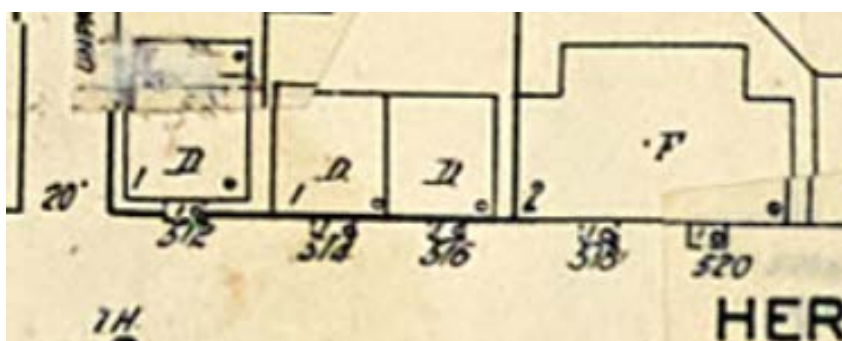
1. The 1888 Sanborn, subject property on the left



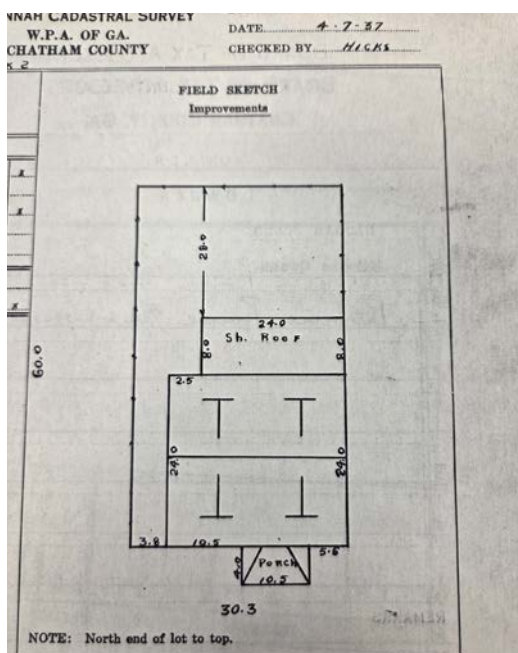
2. The 1898 Sanborn, subject property at the top showing a front porch



3. The 1916 Sanborn, subject property on the left with a front and rear porch



4. The 1955 Sanborn, subject property on the left with the rear porch enlarged



5. 1937 Cadastral Survey showing no chimney



6. Google Street View from 2007 showing the altered porch, color, and brick veneer before being restored to its more historically appropriate form. The brick veneer wrapped around the entire house

FINDINGS:

The following standards from the Sec 7.8 - Savannah Downtown Historic District Ordinance apply:

Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation. Material changes to contributing resources and resources that are eligible for listing as contributing shall be evaluated by use of the current edition of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation as published by the U.S. Department of the Interior. In considering proposals for alterations to contributing resources, the documented original design of the resource may be considered.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards 2– Historic Character. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

The chimney, although seemingly made of old bricks, was not historic to the home, as shown in the Sanborn Maps and the Cadastral Survey. Also, among its neighboring houses, many of which were built around the same time, it was the only one to have this exterior chimney, as all the other homes (including this one) have interior chimneys. It was removed because it was an immediate safety hazard, and it should not need to be rebuilt.



7. Photo showing the unoriginal exterior chimney and the interior chimney, most likely original



8. 514-516 East Hall, adjacent to the east, built in the same year without exterior chimney



9. 505-509 East Hall, across the street, built in 1888 without exterior chimney



10. 515-517 East Hall, across the street, built in 1867 without exterior chimney

Secretary of the Interior's Standards 3– Physical Record. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

The absence of the exterior chimney leads to a truer reading of the history of this home, putting it back would create a false sense of history.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards 4– Historic Changes. *Most properties change over time; those changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*

The house has undergone multiple changes in its lifetime in multiple different stages. Both the front and rear porches were added and expanded at different times respectively, and the exterior has been covered, uncovered, and had its color changed as well. Available evidence shows that this chimney was among these later changes that did not gain historical significance in its own right.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards 5– Distinctive Features. *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.*

As evidenced by the neighboring homes, many of which are contemporary to the subject property, an exterior chimney is not a distinctive feature of this style of home in this neighborhood, and the home showcases more of its original character without it.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards 6– Deteriorated Features. *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*

As noted by Code Compliance and shown in photographs provided by the applicant, the chimney was detaching from the side of the house and was an immediate hazard. Documentary and pictorial evidence shows that this chimney for at least the first 60 years of the home's existence, likely almost the first 80 years of its existence. Therefore, the homeowner should not be mandated to rebuild it.

Savannah Downtown Historic District Design Standards. *The intent of these standards is to ensure appropriate new construction, additions, and alterations within the Savannah Downtown Historic District. They are not intended to promote copies of the architectural designs of the past, but to encourage contemporary designs that protect and complement existing contributing resources. They are further intended to protect the historic integrity of the contributing resources.*

The following design standards shall apply to new construction, additions, alterations to contributing and non-contributing buildings and structures, unless otherwise specified. Though certain building materials are prescribed herein, the Board may approve alternative materials that are not listed as prohibited upon a showing by the applicant that the material or product is visually compatible with historic building materials and has performed satisfactorily in the local climate.

For the purposes of evaluating the visual compatibility and design standards of exterior fenestration, where voids (windows, doors, and storefronts) in the exterior façade are substantially blocked by interior walls or built-in furniture, these may be considered part of the exterior wall if they are built within three feet of the exterior wall. For example, if an

interior wall is built abutting the storefront, that interior wall is impacting the exterior design of the fenestration and may be subject to review by the Historic Board of Review.

Beach Institute Character Area.

A unique historic area within the Savannah National Historic Landmark District, Beach Institute is distinguished by its plan, architecture and historic ethnic diversity containing the greatest concentration of remaining one-story cottages. Originally part of privately owned garden lots, the area developed as a series of small neighborhood villages in the mid-19th century.

The boundaries of the Beach Institute Character Area shall be the centerline of the following streets: Liberty Street on the north; Gwinnett Street on the south; East Broad Street on the east and/Price Street on the west.

Within this part of the Beach Institute Character area, houses of similar styles and ages do not have exterior chimneys, but rather interior chimneys. The exterior chimney on this house was the outlier in the area and wouldn't be considered visually compatible if newly proposed today.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the After-the-Fact chimney demolition at 512 East Hall Street because it was a safety hazard that required immediate demolition. Also, staff recommends that the applicant not be made to rebuild the chimney because it was not historic, had not achieved historic status in and of itself, and is not in keeping with the character of the surrounding area.

MW: CC: APM

Note: This recommendation could change subject to new information provided at the Historic District Board of Review meetings. Final decisions will be made by the Historic District Board of Review at the public hearing based on information provided at the meeting, as well as information submitted for the staff recommendation.