

GEORGE WEBB FARM, HOUSE
State Highway 3/U.S. Highway 19
Sumter
Sumter County
Georgia

HABS GA-37-A
GA-37-A

HABS
GA-37-A

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
100 Alabama St. NW
Atlanta, GA 30303

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

GEORGE WEBB FARM, HOUSE

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Location: State Highway 3/U.S. Highway 19
Sumter, Sumter County, Georgia
USGS 7.5 minute Smithville West, Georgia quadrangle,
Universal Transverse Mercator coordinate:
16.759312.3537695

Date of Development: 1831-1960

Engineer: None

Builder: Unknown

Present Owners: Ernest DeWitt Webb, Jr.
Smithville, Lee County, Georgia

Present Use: Agricultural

Significance: The George Webb House is contributing resource in a National Register district which consists of three historic farmhouses with their associated outbuildings and one non-historic house. The structures are located on approximately eight hundred acres of farmland historically associated with the farmhouses and the Webb family. The nearly level farmland, all recently under cultivation, is bounded by Muckaloochee Creek on the west and the Norfolk Southern railroad tracks on the east. The houses are strung along a mile of U. S. Highway 19 which bisects the land running north/south. The George Webb House is significant architecturally as a good example of Queen Anne style farmhouse.

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Introduction

To the south of Sumter City on both sides of U.S. Highway 19 is the Webb Family Farms. A National Register listed historic district since 1995, the structures associated with the farm will not be affected by the highway project but agricultural fields to the east of U.S. Highway 19 will be impacted. These terraced fields are shown in a 1957 aerial photograph of the area. Prior to the implementation of the project that will widen U.S. Highway 19, these fields were still used for agriculture but the terracing is less visible on more recent photographs.

Background

The history of the Webb Family was documented for the National Register nomination and in a self-published family history available at the Georgia Archives. The following history is a summary using these sources. Shortly after the Treaty of Indian Springs was signed in 1825, which forced the Creek Indians to leave what would later become Sumter County, John Webb and his wife came to the area by covered wagon with the intention of farming. Land was a valuable resource in the southern United States, all the more important as cash crops such as tobacco, then cotton, grew in importance.

John and his wife came from Robeson County, North Carolina via a network of Indian trails that crossed Georgia. During this period, Augusta was the main "gateway" across the Savannah River with major trails branching out across the state. Several trails intersected in the area that would become Americus. It is said that John and his wife camped where the business section of Americus now stands before continuing south. The rich black soil combined with ready market access via the Flint River bordering the county on the east or the Chattahoochee River farther west made Sumter among the state's most prosperous Black Belt counties by the 1840s and 1850s.

John and his wife farmed the land before Sumter County was established in 1831 and before Americus was incorporated as the county seat in 1832. It is said that John, who tenant farmed several areas in the vicinity of Americus, cooked barbeque for the 1827 Land Lottery. The Land Lottery was the system used to subdivide and sell the land acquired from the expulsion of the Native Americans. John Webb did not purchase land at that time and eventually left the area to go farther west as did three of his four children.

During this period, many settlers passed through Georgia; some stayed and many moved on, always seeking more and better land. John Webb's son, John Ronaldson Webb stayed behind and with his bride, Amanda, purchased 125 acres on the eastern bank of Muckaloochee Creek, about 1 mile southwest of Sumter City. The Webb's built a two story log cabin on the land where they raised eleven of their sixteen children to adulthood.

In 1900 John Webb's widow, Amanda Webb divided 900 acres among her seven living sons who built homes along Highway 19 on their respective strips of farmland. The land, farmed as one piece until 1900, was farmed separately by each brother in the ensuing years. In 1995, the Webb family chose to list the farm on the National Register of Historic Places. Most of the district continues to be farmed by members of the Webb family; however, not all of the three farmhouses are occupied and many of the outbuildings have deteriorated in recent years.

On the north edge of the district is the 1901 George Webb House, a Queen Anne style house with a central hallway plan. The house has considerable detailing including a central turret, fish scale shingles and bargeboards, a wrap around porch, bay windows, stained glassed windows and

tall chimneys with corbelled caps. When the property was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1995, a collection of historic wood framed outbuildings including a mule barn, smoke house, wash house, chicken house, a carriage house and a dilapidated tenant cottage were included in the nomination. However, these buildings were no longer extant in 2006. The remaining historic buildings include the house and a small structure currently used as a barn.

