

# **The Madison Historic Preservation Manual**

**A Handbook for Owners and Residents**



Prepared by William Chapman  
of Athens, Georgia for  
The Madison Historic Preservation Commission and  
The City of Madison  
Madison, Georgia

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Aerial View: Madison, c. 1975  
U.S. Commerce Department. Photo courtesy of the Northeast Georgia RDC.



# Preface and Acknowledgments:

Madison was effectively founded on May 11, 1809, when approximately 100 acres at the center of newly established Morgan County were set aside for a county seat. Under the authority of the State and the direction of the elected county officials, the town was initially divided into 48 lots, each measuring 100 by 200 feet, which in turn were sold to potential settlers and investors. The name chosen by the county officers commemorated James Madison, the fourth President of the U.S.; Madison, in fact, began office the same year. Following a similarly patriotic theme, principal streets were eventually named after other presidents: Monroe, Washington, and Jefferson. A fourth street was named after John Hancock, the President of the Second Congress.

This manual represents the end of a long but very gratifying process. I was first selected to serve as a consultant to the newly-established Madison Historic Preservation Commission in April 1988. Field work for the inventory of historic sites was completed in the summer of 1988, the results tabulated and completed on new forms during the "academic" year 1988-89. Rules of procedure, hearings for the first Ordinance, and training/work sessions were held during the same period. Final guidelines were finished in the summer of 1989; a ten-lecture series for owners and residents took place in the fall of 1989. Finally, the illustrated manual was completed over the summer of 1989, and the fall, winter, and spring of 1989-90.

The Madison Historic Preservation Commission members have been major contributors to the manual. Members Chris Lambert (the first Chair), Carroll Hart, Russell Carter, Daisy Bishop, Roy Womack, Lisa Hammett, Wayne Tamplin and later Dorothy Gilmore and Leonard Wallace have all made suggestions and have participated in work sessions from which this manual has emerged. There has been much animated discussion of problems and issues, the outcomes of which have in many ways been incorporated into the manual. Carroll Hart and Lisa Hammett have helped especially in proofing the manuscript and offering much appreciated advice during the production stage. My wife, Betty Ausherman, helped in countless ways, both as an active contributor to the project and as an on-going advisor. She also completed the extensive index to the volume in order to make it more useful than it might have been otherwise. This manual is as much a product of their combined efforts as of the consultant's and they are all to be thanked heartily for their efforts.

Many other people were a great help along the way in the project. Pratt Cassity of the Historic Preservation Section of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources contributed especially in the planning stages, working closely with Commission members. Pratt has given unceasing encouragement and guidance and in many other ways helped see the

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Georgia Regional Development Center have made many helpful suggestions and have helped provide graphics. Clay Lancaster and also the staff of the University of Georgia Library have also helped with graphics and photographs. The Georgia State Archives' "Vanishing Georgia" collection -initiated, incidentally, by Commission member Carroll Hart during her directorship -was a treasure-trove of historic photographs, a number of which have been reprinted here.

In Madison, credit belongs to the Mayor Luke Allgood and the City Council, who first passed the Historic Preservation Ordinance, to the present mayor, Bruce Gilbert, who has continued support for the project, to City Manager Charles Young, Assistant Manager David Nunn, and all of the staff in the City Offices.

Advice was gratefully accepted from Marshall Williams, the City's "unofficial, official" archaeologist; Richard Simpson, who with the Preservation Library and Resource Center, compiled much invaluable information for a future guidebook to the City's architecture; Dr. Josephine Brandon; and Mrs. Adelaide Ponder, editor of *The Madisonian*, who corrected some errors on the history of *The Madisonian*. Marcia Miller kindly allowed the use of the Preservation Library and Resource Center. The Madison-Morgan Cultural Center hosted a lecture series and teacher workshop on the preservation of Madison, which served as an introduction to this material.

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Finally, credit must be given to the residents of the City of Madison, who have generously given both their time and hospitality throughout the project. This manual could never have been completed without their goodwill and support. My thanks to everyone.

William Chapman  
Athens, June 1990



# Introduction:

Madison is a unique Georgia city and one widely recognized for its outstanding historic architecture and its overall aesthetic and environmental qualities. This in part has been an accident of history. Madison developed as an important county town and market center, In the late 19th century it became a regional hub and also something of a resort town. Its building quality has always been high. As a result Madison possesses a number of "textbook" examples of national architectural styles and many good examples of "mainstream" or vernacular architecture. Economic decline after 1920, as a result of the collapse of the cotton industry and subsequent Depression of the 1930s, helped, ironically, to preserve the historic town. Slow post-World War II development, and increasing awareness of the value of historic resources, have helped further in the process of preservation. First listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974 (with further expansion of the listing in 1990), Madison stands as an unequaled reminder of the character and quality of 19th- and early 20th-century life in Georgia,

The city has been faced, recently, with a number of new threats to its longstanding character, These include increased commercial development, especially along the Main Street corridor, changes in land use, and the growing availability of standardized, manufactured building parts (including many so-called "colonial elements") , all of which threaten the integrity of the existing town, In response, the Mayor and City Council in 1987 passed an Ordinance establishing a Historic Preservation Commission. This Commission was charged with identifying historic properties and districts and recommending that they be officially designated by the Mayor and City Council, In 1989, after scheduled public hearings and opportunities for comment by property owners and other interested citizens, the Commission made its first recommendation. The Madison Historic District was subsequently created by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Madison in 1989, Future designations of both individual properties and possible changes or additions to the existing district are anticipated in future years.

Under the terms of the Ordinance, all owners, residents, or business occupants of properties within the Madison Historic District are required to make an application to the Historic Preservation Commission prior to undertaking any major change to their property. Changes considered are: any new buildings or additions to existing buildings; demolition of existing buildings; site changes, such as retaining walls, driveways, and fences; and minor exterior alterations, such as signs. Changes to building interiors or routine maintenance, such as repainting, roofing in a similar material, or repairs, do not require an application, All buildings, whether they are "historic" or "non-historic," are considered if they are part of the historic district. (Consult the map reprinted here or the staff at City Hall, if there is any question about your building.)

This manual is designed to help owners or occupants of buildings within the historic district in making decisions about appropriate changes. It is meant to be as inclusive as possible and touches upon most of the issues facing owners and the Historic Preservation Commission, when considering changes to both historic and non-historic properties within the Historic District. The manual is divided into five chapters, each of which addresses issues and problems in a slightly different way. Chapter One is an overview of Madison's history, providing a general historic context for appreciating historic properties and assessing their relative significance. Chapter Two is a geographical description of the town; it sets out the characteristics that distinguish the town as a whole today, such as street patterns, landscape treatments, street plantings, and even patterns of building types and materials. Chapter Three is directed more specifically at owners. It attempts to introduce owners or occupants to ways they can better understand their own properties, as a basis for later decisions. Chapter Four constitutes the actual "Guidelines." These include guidelines for new construction, guidelines for substantial changes to existing buildings, requirements to be considered for a demolition permit, and specific suggestions for elements such as fences, signs, or other changes. Finally, Chapter Five is a set of recommendations for maintenance and ongoing care. While not addressed specifically by the Ordinance, long-term maintenance is really the key to preservation. This last chapter is offered as a series of suggestions rather than as a set of requirements.

The manual also includes a copy of the Madison Historic Preservation Commission Ordinance, as well as the by-laws of the Commission for the conduct of its meeting and for initiating designations. The list of properties and their designations, as historic, non-historic, (less than 50 years old, but of distinguished character or quality) , intrusions (properties that detract from the character of the historic district) , or as empty lots (undeveloped property) is also appended, as is a copy of the Secretary of Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation, " a document that serves as overall guidance for the Commission's decisions and ties the Commission's choices to national standards. A short bibliography and list of further readings, and an illustrated glossary can also be found at the end.

It is hoped that this manual can serve as a useful aid in helping owners reach their own decisions about their properties. Neither the Ordinance nor the Commission is concerned with "freezing" Madison in time. That the town will continue to grow and change, and that owners or occupants will have their own changing needs and tastes, is strongly recognized. What is offered in this manual is a basic outline for understanding Madison's enduring qualities, and guidelines and suggestions for helping owners and occupants to contribute to the city's overall character .



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