NEWNAN: CITY OF HOMES GETTING MORE OF THE SAME

By W. Winston Skinner

Known for decades for its beautiful homes, Newnan's residential base is growing. Building permits for homes and apartments in 2006 topped 1,000. The 2000 U.S. census showed Newnan with a population of 16,242 — up 30 percent from the previous decade.

The nickname, City of Homes, came about — at least in part — because Sherman did not make his way to Newnan. Newnan was a hospital town during the Civil War. Most of the city's churches and several other large buildings were used as hospitals for wounded and convalescing soldiers. Sheds were erected around the Coweta County Courthouse.

In July 1864, Union troops did make it into Newnan, coming west on Broad Street toward downtown. Rebel troops were napping in railcars and roused themselves to halt the blue suited troops. The battle moved south of town to a place called Brown's Mill. When the war ended the next year, Newnan remained intact. Many of those homes still stand today joined by Victorian, turn-of-the-century and early 1920s homes that fill historic neighborhoods.

Newnan has its sites for tourists. The Newnan-Coweta Historical Society operates the Male Academy Museum and the History Center in the rebuilt and restored Atlanta and West Point Railroad depot. Most of Newnan's historic places, however, have modern day uses as businesses and homes.

The downtown commercial district is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. So are historic areas surrounding downtown — the Cole Town neighborhood to the east, the Greenville-LaGrange neighborhood to the south and the College-Temple neighborhood to the north and west. Platinum Point, north of the downtown area, is on the National Register and features homes primarily built in the automobile era — set further back from the road and with styles from that flourishing time.

The Newnan Cotton Mill and Mill Village District was added to the National Register in 2002. This district includes a large number of houses built for mill workers, as well as the mill itself which has been transformed into an apartment complex. Two neighborhoods that have been home to black Newnan families for decades — Chalk Level and Rocky Hill — have also been recognized for their historical significance.

The old neighborhoods are part of what makes Newnan attractive and unique. Civic leader Willie Boyd moved to Newnan after he and his wife made a stop and saw the downtown while traveling. He was in the military at the time, and his wife suggested they consider retiring to Newnan because it seemed like such a nice place.

Photographs of homes in the College-Temple area were used in advertising SummerGrove, one of the larger developments in the swath of land annexed by Newnan east of the old city limits. The downtown area is flourishing with restaurants and specialty shops mingling with offices and retail businesses that have been around for decades.

Newnan's status as the City of Homes means more than just gracious dwellings and places for those who live in them to shop. Newnan has a long heritage of faith, education and culture.

Newnan's oldest churches were organized in the late 1820s soon after the settlers arrived. The town and the congregations have grown, and those simple meetinghouses are long gone. The oldest standing church building in the city is Newnan Chapel United

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Senoia

Moreland

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Grantville

Roscoe

Welcome to Coweta County, where good folks, good food, and good times come from. Walk the Newnan sidewalks where country music star ***Alan Jackson*** once walked. Explore museums in Moreland that honor Southern humorist ***Lewis Grizzard*** and literary genius ***Erskine Caldwell***. Try Sprayberry's Barbecue, made famous in many of Lewis Grizzard's columns and books. Have a hearty Southern breakfast at the Redneck Gourmet, or all the catfish you can eat at Catfish Hollow. Stroll through Roscoe's Dunaway Gardens, a breathtaking floral rock garden. Take a driving tour of the historic districts in Newnan, Senoia and Grantville. Shop for antiques. Find it all in Coweta County.

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Methodist Church on Robinson Street.

College Temple, which was begun by a Vermont professor named Moses Kellogg, operated for 36 years. Two buildings from the school remain on College Street, and College Temple is said to have been the first college to offer a master of arts degree to women.

A private school for boys, the Male Seminary, was begun by Professor Charles Leavell Moses in the 1880s. The school, built largely with lumber from the old Methodist meetinghouse being dismantled on nearby Wesley Street, closed when the public school system began in 1888. The building was moved and made into a dwelling but was returned to its original location through the efforts of local historian Georgia Shapiro and serves as the Male Academy Museum today.

The Maggie Brown Building on Kellogg Street is an art deco structure built in the 1930s. Over the years, it has been an elementary school, school system offices and a kindergarten. Now used for adult education and general equivalency diploma classes, it is the oldest school building in regular use in the county.

Concerts are held from time-to-time in the majestic sanctuaries of the downtown churches. Art shows are held around the town square, and a mural by painter Ans Steenmeijer adorns the side of the Scott's Bookstore building downtown.

The Charles Wadsworth Auditorium in the New Deal constructed municipal complex has been the site of classical music concerts, student performances and — in 2006 — a delightful production of "Mame."

Paintings are regularly on display at city hall, at the Newnan-Coweta Public Library and in several local restaurants. The Centre for Performing and Visual Arts, operated by the Coweta County School System, includes a 999-seat auditorium, meeting space and galleries for visual arts displays. Noted artist Francoise Gilot has visited the Centre twice, and two pieces of her work are part of the permanent collection.

Newnan continues to be a City of Homes in every sense of that phrase — lovely homes with walkable sidewalks that lead to church services, art, school and shopping. One hundred seventy-nine years after its founding, Newnan continues to be a great place to call home. CL