

Georgia State University

ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University

Selections from the University Library Blog

University Library Publications

3-1-2021

Too Many Walton Buildings: Early GSU History Revisited

Laurel Bowen

Georgia State University, lbowen@gsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/univ_lib_blog



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Bowen, Laurel, "Too Many Walton Buildings: Early GSU History Revisited" (2021). *Selections from the University Library Blog*. 27.

https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/univ_lib_blog/27

This Blog Post is brought to you for free and open access by the University Library Publications at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Selections from the University Library Blog by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gsu.edu.

Too Many Walton Buildings: Early GSU History Revisited

By Laurel Bowen | March 1, 2021

Georgia State University traces its origins to day and evening commerce classes that began on the Georgia Tech campus in 1913. In 1914 some of the evening classes moved to downtown Atlanta, so older students who worked full-time in the business district could more easily attend. These classes eventually became Georgia State. They grew rapidly, admitted [women early](#), and [moved from one downtown location to another](#) to meet the educational needs of so many young people enhancing their careers. Because of the rapid relocations, a renovation that transformed one building, and occupying two different buildings on the same street at different times, a clear understanding of this part of the university's early history has been challenging.

The first move downtown from the Georgia Tech campus in 1914 was to a rented room in the large office building at the corner of Walton Street NW and Cone (1914-1916). This building is still in use [Fig. 1]. Rapidly increasing enrollments resulted in several successive moves to ever larger quarters: Peachtree Arcade at Five Points (occupied 1917-1921), the Murphy Building at the corner of Auburn Ave. and Pryor Street (1921-1926), and 106 Forsyth St. NW (1926-1931).



[Fig. 1] [Walton Building \(Walton and Cone Street, NE\)](#)

The overcrowded and dingy rooms at Forsyth Street led director George Sparks and [Robert R. Johnson](#), an Atlanta business executive, and Evening School supporter, to search for a better building. In spring 1930, they found the Sheltering Arms, a solidly constructed former foundling home located at 223 Walton Street NW [Fig. 2].¹ The location of this Walton Street building was farther away from the downtown Atlanta business district than the first Walton Street building. Still, buying and then renovating a building specifically to meet the Evening School's needs was an opportunity that could not be missed.



[Fig. 2] Old “Sheltering Arms” Home—Remodeled for Tech Evening School

Johnson was an active advocate and a generous donor. Despite challenging circumstances during the Great Depression, he raised funds to buy and then fully renovate the building.² His own contributions were substantial. The “attractive school home for modern business training”³ was dedicated in May 1931.⁴ Johnson personally paid off the mortgage on the building in 1936.

In its early life as the downtown Evening School, Georgia State had three Walton Buildings:

- (1) the Walton Building at the corner of Walton St. NW and Cone Street—the school’s first location in the downtown business district;
- (2) the Sheltering Arms building at 223 Walton St. NW—the first building the school owned;
- (3) the renovated home for modern business training at 223 Walton St. NW [Fig. 3].



[Fig. 3] [Walton Street; \[#223\]](#)

Today, the western edge of Centennial Park has displaced the section of Walton Street NW where the Evening School's renovated home was located.

Footnotes

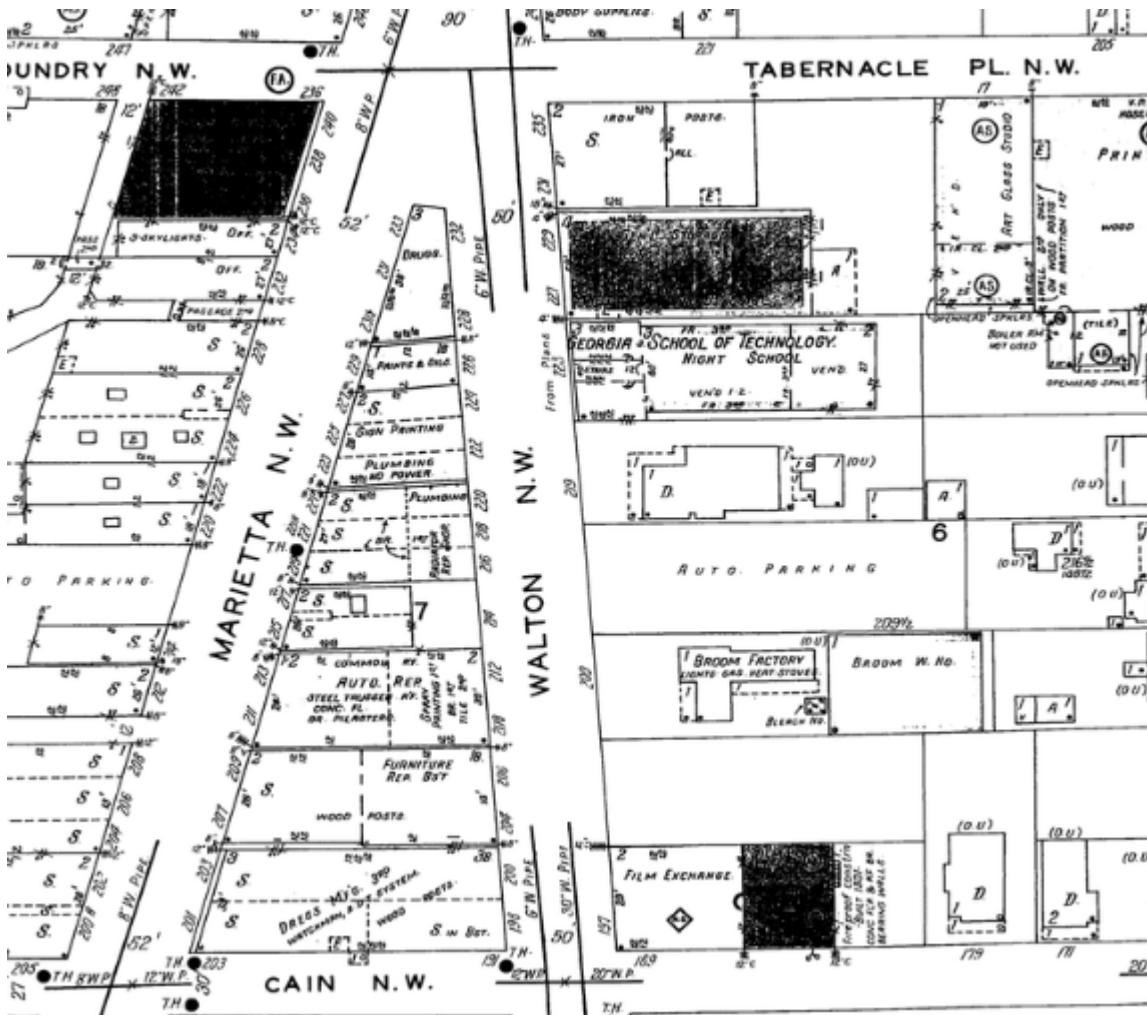
[1] The 1911 Sanborn map for Atlanta shows the "Sheltering Arms (Day Nursery)" located at 161 Walton Street, kitty corner to the Tabernacle Baptist Church. Proquest Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970. Atlanta GA: 1911-1925: Vol. 1, 1911, Sheet 20. By 1931 the "Sheltering Arms Children's Home"

had moved to 214 Baker St. NW (near Luckie Street NW). Proquest Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970. Atlanta GA: 1931-1932, Vol. 1, 1931, Sheet 41.

[2] Reed, *Educating the Urban New South*, pp. 19-22.

[3] *Technite* student newspaper, vol. 1, no. 5 (January 20, 1931), p. 3.

[4] See the Sanborn maps for the “Georgia School of Technology Night School” at 223 Walton Street NW. Proquest Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970. Atlanta GA: 1931-1932, Vol. 1, 1931, Sheet 2 (see below). [Homecoming in 1934](#) was held at the Tabernacle Baptist Church, diagonally across from the Night School.



Archives and Library Sources:

1. Georgia State University Timeline (<https://research.library.gsu.edu/GSUhistory>)
2. Merl Reed. *Educating the Urban New South: Atlanta and the Rise of Georgia State University, 1913-1969*. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2009.
3. Georgia State University Library Digital Collections: Georgia State University Archives, Georgia State University Signal, Lane Brothers Photographs, Tracy O’Neal Photographs.

4. Digital Sanborn Maps

Georgia State University Library, A-Z Databases: <https://research.library.gsu.edu/az.php?q=Digital%20Sanborn%20Maps>

1911 Maps

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/>

[dates=1911&fa=location:fulton+county%7Clocation:georgia](https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/?dates=1911&fa=location:fulton+county%7Clocation:georgia)