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## WWII shipyard neighborhood earns historic status

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By [Mary Carr Mayle](#)

Savannah's Southeastern Shipbuilding Corp. existed for only four years, but during those years it was among the most crucial in U.S. history — it was the city's largest employer.

Located along the Savannah River off what is now President Street Extension, the shipyard was formed in 1941 to build Liberty ships exclusively for the U.S. Navy. It would be one of 18 boatyards around the country cranking out the quickly constructed wartime cargo freighters that are widely credited with turning the tide in the Battle of the Atlantic.

Through the war years, the Savannah shipyard built 88 Liberty ships, employed 46,766 Americans and paid out \$112 million in payroll.

Recruiting thousands of workers to the area, the shipyard had an immediate need for housing adjacent to its operation. In 1941, the company purchased three undeveloped tracts totaling more than 100 acres in the area of President Street Extension and Pennsylvania Avenue, less than half a mile from the shipyard.

By 1942, construction had begun on several neighborhoods within the tracts.

More than 70 years later, the shipyard is gone, as are most of the neighborhoods. Only Pine Gardens, with its 500-plus houses, remains intact, a reminder of Savannah's shipbuilding war effort.

On Nov. 5, Pine Gardens Historic District, roughly bounded by Beech and Capitol streets and Goebel Avenue in Savannah, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places, culminating more than a decade of work by longtime residents.

The Pine Gardens Neighborhood Association sponsored the nomination, with retired engineer Charles Varner and Patricia Lennox Jenkins doing much of the heavy lifting. A consultant helped prepare the nomination materials.



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state level of significance because it is the largest and War II defense industry housing in the state.

After the war, Pine Gardens Annex was developed adjacent to the original subdivision to provide much-needed housing for returning veterans. In addition to the small frame houses, Pine Gardens included a shopping plaza, fire department, churches and a school, all completed by 1954.

The neighborhood is significant for its excellent examples of the American Small House, a type of house that was popular in the 1930s and 1940s in Georgia and that catered to the material shortages of World War II.

Pine Gardens is also important because it represents large-scale mobilization during World War II, which included the construction of military installations and communities that housed civilian

defense workers.

The National Register of Historic Places is our country's official list of historic buildings, structures, sites, objects and districts worthy of preservation. The listing provides formal recognition of a property's architectural, historical, or archaeological significance.