

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Historic Preservation Division

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Demorest Woman's Club Listed in National Register

ATLANTA (February 6, 2009) –The Demorest Woman's Club, located in Demorest, Habersham County, was listed in the National Register on December 30, 2008. The property owner sponsored the nomination and the preservation planner for the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center prepared the nomination materials.

The Demorest Woman's Club was founded in 1934 by a group of eleven women who first met in members' homes. Later that year the club was officially federated and 51 additional members joined. In 1954 the club purchased the Demorest Methodist Church building from its trustees for one dollar, and immediately began renovations to the building. The Men's Civic Club had previously refused to accept the building, because they thought it was too dilapidated, but the women persevered and managed to adapt the building to their needs.

The Demorest Woman's Club is significant in women's history for its associations with the women's club movement of Georgia. According to Georgia: A Woman's Place, A Historic Context, the 1920s saw the beginnings of many clubhouses for women in small towns and cities, whereas previously these groups had not had organizational homes. Women's groups had supported philanthropic causes for many years, but having their own building enabled the clubs to house administrative records, accommodate larger meetings, and serve as a community focal point. As with other women's clubs, the activities of the Demorest Woman's Club were extremely beneficial to the entire community.

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Demorest Woman's Club listed in the National Register, page 2

Today, the Demorest Woman's Club continues to uphold its traditions. A recent letter written by the mayor of Demorest states, "the Woman's Club has made its presence known in many positive ways throughout the last sixty years. This has been accomplished by actively sponsoring community oriented projects, encouraging study, participation in, and the enjoyment of the Arts, and annually participating in charitable endeavors." The clubhouse is readily available throughout the year to host numerous community groups such as the Demorest Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts, the Habersham Community Theatre and Piedmont College. The members of the Demorest Woman's Club firmly believe that their clubhouse is an integral part of the downtown Demorest streetscape and remains an important part of the community's history.

The Demorest Woman's Club is located in downtown Demorest, immediately adjacent to and across from Piedmont College's campus. The wood-frame gable-front building is one story in height in the front and two stories in the rear, due to the extreme slope of the land and the raised roadbed. Constructed in 1902 for the Methodist Episcopal Church, the building was significantly altered after acquisition by the Demorest Woman's Club in 1954, and therefore the significance of the property relates to its later use.

The National Register is the federal government's official list of historic buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts worthy of preservation. According to Richard Cloues, deputy state historic preservation officer, listing in the National Register recognizes a property's significance and ensures that the property will be taken into account in the planning of federally funded or licensed projects. In addition, owners of National Register properties may be eligible for rehabilitation tax incentives.

The Historic Preservation Division (HPD) of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources serves as Georgia's state historic preservation office. Their mission is to promote the preservation and use of historic places for a better Georgia. HPD's programs include archaeology protection and education, environmental review, grants, historic resource surveys, tax incentives, the National Register of Historic Places, community planning and technical assistance. For more information, call 404-656-2840 or visit their Web site at www.gashpo.org.

Photo available from Helen Talley-McRae (helen.talley-mcrae@dnr.state.ga.us). Caption information:

Constructed in 1902 for the Methodist Episcopal Church, the building was significantly altered after acquisition by the Demorest Woman's Club in 1954, and therefore the significance of the property relates to its later use. *(Credit: Photo courtesy GA Department of Natural Resources/Historic Preservation Division.)*