

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Historic Preservation Division

Chris Clark, Commissioner

W. Ray Luce, Division Director and Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
34 Peachtree Street NW, Suite 1600, Atlanta, Georgia 30303
Telephone (404) 656-2840 Fax (404) 651-8739 <http://www.gashpo.org>

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Helen Talley-McRae, 404-651-5268

helen.talley-mcrae@dnr.state.ga.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Rutherford and Martha Ellis House Listed in National Register

ATLANTA (May 20, 2009) –The Rutherford and Martha Ellis House, located at 543 West Wesley Road, NW, Atlanta, Fulton County, was listed in the National Register on May 6, 2009. The property owners sponsored the nomination and a consultant prepared the nomination materials.

When Rutherford and Martha Hodgson Ellis acquired the land for their house in 1938, it was several miles outside of the Atlanta city limits, surrounded by pine forest, in what they referred to as “Loblolly Hill.” Rutherford Ellis was a successful businessman and philanthropist who hired noted Atlanta architect Philip Trammel Shutze to design a house for his family based on a 1770 Colonial cottage in Wiscasset, Maine. The unpretentious home design was a departure for Shutze who was famous for larger neoclassical estates. Ellis was active in the details of the house, such as providing Philippine mahogany for the library and erecting a greenhouse that is no longer extant.

The Ellis house was listed at the state level of significant in the area of architecture as an excellent and intact example of the work of Hentz, Adler, & Shutze. The design was based on a renewed public enthusiasm for colonial precedents that coincided with the 1930s restoration of Colonial Williamsburg. The house represents the work of a master, melded with the desires of a client, who wanted an adaptation of a house from an earlier period. Shutze was an expert at derivative detailing while also creating his own signature.

The property is significant in the area of social history for the contributions of Rutherford Ellis to Atlanta’s commercial and social life through his activities as president of Lipscomb-Ellis Company, founder of Southern General Insurance, chairman of the American Cancer Society,

member of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, and trustee of Trebor Foundation and Egleston Hospital, among others.

The house is a one-story, frame, Georgian-plan cottage with a rear ell and an enclosed side porch. The 1939 design of the house remains remarkably intact. The appearance from the front façade is deceptively small and simple due to the understated Colonial Revival features, but much of the massing is to the rear. The interior retains significant original features such as plaster walls, mahogany shelves and panels, paneled wainscoting and doors, beamed ceilings, and wooden mantels and trim. The large rolling city lot has informal landscaping with mature ornamental trees and shrubs, obscuring the house from the roadway.

The property owner took advantage of the state property tax incentives for rehabilitation of historic properties, and received certification as part of the State Property Tax Abatement program on July 19, 2007.

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.