

# Georgia Department of Natural Resources

## Historic Preservation Division

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### **Lawton Place Listed in National Register**

*1880s north Georgia resort house was once home of baseball legend Ty Cobb*

ATLANTA (February 6, 2009) –The Lawton Place, located in Mount Airy, Habersham County, was listed in the National Register on January 8, 2009. The property owner sponsored the nomination and a consultant prepared the nomination materials.

During Reconstruction in the 1870s, railroad companies began speculating in real estate as a way to raise revenue for the railroads. A consortium of Northern railroad investors who envisioned “a delightful summer resort” established Mount Airy in northeast Georgia along the Atlanta and Richmond Railroad line in 1872. General Alexander Robert Lawton of Savannah was an early investor in Mount Airy. The Railroad Avenue lot where Lawton built his home was one of numerous parcels he purchased there. Following Lawton’s death in 1896, the house passed to a succession of owners. By 1925 it served as rental property. Its most famous tenant was baseball legend Ty Cobb who rented the house in the late 1950s when his own house was under construction. In a letter to a friend in 1957, Cobb wrote, “Have a fine old house here, rented, antiques, etc., to live in until my home completed. Friends and all the people are so fine and helpful to me.”

The Lawton Place is significant in the area of exploration and settlement and entertainment/recreation because it represents the earliest period of development of Mount Airy as a summer resort. Many residents were seasonal residents only, escaping the heat and yellow fever epidemics of cities such as Savannah.

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*Lawton Place listed in the National Register, page 2*

The house is also significant in architecture because it is a variant of the Georgian-plan house type adapted for use in a north Georgia resort community. Georgian-plan houses were built throughout the state from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Lawton Place is a large, two-story, Georgian-plan house that was constructed in 1884-1885 by General Lawton. The wood-frame house is clad in weatherboard and features a two-story portico, supported by four colossal Doric columns, which spans the width of the main façade. The eclectic architectural style of the house reflects its late 19<sup>th</sup>-century date of construction with elements of the Greek Revival style in the portico and door surrounds, Gothic Revival-style louvered attic vents, and Stick-style bargeboard trim in the gable ends. In the 1950s, a two-story addition with bathrooms and dressing rooms was added to the northeast side. The two historic outbuildings associated with the main house are an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Craftsman-style tenant house and a wood privy.

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](http://www.gashpo.org).

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*Photo available from Helen Talley-McRae (helen.talley-mcrae@dnr.state.ga.us). Caption information: 1880s north Georgia resort house was once home of baseball legend Ty Cobb. (Credit: Photo courtesy GA Department of Natural Resources/Historic Preservation Division.)*