

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Historic Preservation Division

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Joseph and Mary Jane League House Listed in National Register

First ranch house in Georgia to be individually listed in the National Register.

ATLANTA (February 23, 2009) –The Joseph and Mary Jane League House, located in Macon, Bibb County, was listed in the National Register on January 9, 2009. The League House is the first ranch house in Georgia to be individually listed in the National Register. The National Register nomination was prepared by a consultant as part of the Historic Preservation Division’s women’s history project for its association with two important women architects. The precedent-setting design of the house was identified through the Division’s ongoing study of mid-20th-century houses in the state. The nomination is enthusiastically supported by the property owners, who are the original owners of the house.

The Joseph and Mary Jane League House is significant in architecture as an early and exceptional example of a Contemporary-style ranch house in Georgia. Its low form, H-shaped footprint, zoned interior plan, natural building materials, and integration of indoor spaces with outdoor landscaping all reflect up-to-date ranch-house design nationally and, along with a small group of similar houses in Atlanta, set precedents for mid-20th-century ranch-house design in Georgia. Ranch houses first appeared in Georgia right after World War II, but Contemporary-style ranch houses did not appear until the early 1950s. This house, built in 1950, was seen as setting a precedent in Macon and Georgia at the time and was featured in several national architectural publications in the early 1950s.

The house is also significant in architecture and women’s history as an important work of Jean League Newton. Newton was among the earliest professionally trained women architects in Georgia, representing the second-generation of female designers in the state. Her mother, Ellamae Ellis League, was a pioneering woman architect in Georgia who had her office in

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Macon. Jean League Newton received her architectural education at Harvard University in the mid-1940s, studying under Walter Gropius and other Modernists, and then returned to work in her mother's firm. She was largely responsible for expanding the corporate portfolio to include Modern architecture in the late 1940s, including the firm's 1948 International-style office building. In 1950 she designed this Contemporary-style ranch house for her brother and his wife who wanted a practical, economical, unpretentious, but up-to-date home for their family. In 1962 and 1974 she designed the additions and alterations to the house, and in 1960 she drew the landscape plan for the yard.

The house is located in the Shirley Hills neighborhood north of downtown Macon. The front section of the house contains the main entry, living room, integral carport, and a narrow, partial-width, recessed front porch. Windows on the front façade are in a high, narrow band across the living room. Four bedrooms are located in the rear section of the house. The connector between the front and back sections of the house contains the dining area, kitchen, bathroom, and utility room. On the interior, the living room, dining area, and foyer are interconnected open spaces; the bedrooms are enclosed. The living room, foyer, and bedrooms feature vaulted ceilings. A large brick fireplace forms one end of the living room. The living room and dining area have floor-to-ceiling window walls opening onto a courtyard. The exterior is sheathed in redwood weatherboards. Landscaping is based on a 1960 landscape plan: the front yard is an open, grassed space with several large trees; the side and rear yards are informally landscaped and incorporate patios, planting beds, and paths along with two small utility sheds. The house is largely unchanged since its construction with the exception of a bedroom added in 1962 and kitchen remodeling in 1974, which were both designed by the original architect.

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.

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Photo available from Helen Talley-McRae (helen.talley-mcrae@dnr.state.ga.us). Caption information: *Built in 1950, the Joseph and Mary Jane League House in Macon is the first ranch house in Georgia to be individually listed in the National Register.* (Credit: Photo courtesy GA Department of Natural Resources/Historic Preservation Division.)