

Donaldson-Bannister House and Cemetery Listed in the National Register

ATLANTA (August 28, 2009) – The Donaldson-Bannister House and Cemetery, located on the corner of Chamblee-Dunwoody and Vermack roads in Dunwoody in DeKalb County, was listed in the National Register on August 9, 2009. The Dunwoody Preservation Trust, Inc. sponsored the nomination and prepared the nomination materials.

William J. Donaldson, a yeoman farmer, built the Plantation Plain-type house circa 1870. During the late 19th century, the house was part of a large farm owned by Donaldson. After Donaldson's death in 1900, his wife, Milly Adams Donaldson, managed the farm until her death in 1931. Four years later, Lois Patillo Bannister purchased the property at an estate sale to be used as a secondary residence. Bannister was an affluent widow, socialite, and entrepreneur. As the nation endured the hardships of the Great Depression, she paid for an extensive architect-designed renovation of the house and property. Bannister sold the property in 1942.

The property is significant in architecture as an excellent example of the thorough application of Colonial Revival-style elements in an early 20th-century residential renovation project in Georgia. The Colonial Revival style was a dominant expression of residential architecture during the first half of the 20th century. The style was viewed by many as an architectural expression of the nation's common heritage of good sense and egalitarian principles. The Colonial Revival style was popular in Georgia for a long period, from the 1890s through the 1940s and beyond. During the 1930s and 1940s, the style was sometimes referred to as "Williamsburg" because of its association with John D. Rockefeller's renovation of Colonial Williamsburg.

The house is a two-story, central hall, Plantation Plain-type building with an 1880s rear ell addition, which underwent significant changes in 1935. Bannister hired the Atlanta architectural firm of Cooper and Cooper to design a series of alterations. Changes to the exterior façade of the original building include the replacement of the one-story, full-length, front porch, with a square-columned portico and the addition of three wall dormers. Examples of the interior alterations include the addition of pedimented door surrounds, paneled cabinets, and elaborate moldings. The house's floor plan was expanded to 11 rooms and included the addition of new family living spaces, bedrooms, closets, and bathrooms. The 2.8-acre property also contains five contributing outbuildings built and/or altered during her ownership: barn, guesthouse, blacksmith shop, commissary, and washhouse.

- more -

The Donaldson-Bannister House and Cemetery is also significant in the area of landscape architecture because this family cemetery is an excellent example of a type of funerary landscape associated with rural agricultural homesteads in Georgia prior to the mid-20th century. The cemetery's grave markers are also good examples of common marker types found in turn-of-the-20th century Georgia. The cemetery's 27 plots contain the remains of three generations of Donaldson family members who died between 1883 and 1931, including the gravesites of William J. and Milly A. Donaldson.

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.

The mission of the Department of Natural Resources is to sustain, enhance, protect and conserve Georgia's natural, historic and cultural resources for present and future generations, while recognizing the importance of promoting the development of commerce and industry that utilize sound environmental practices.

#

Contact: Helen Talley-McRae, 404-651-5268 and helen.talley-mcrae@dnr.state.ga.us