# rimes of DeKalb

# Researching Your House at the DeKalb History Center

The DeKalb History Center (DHC) has many unique resources available when you are trying to find out more about a house in DeKalb County. The DHC can be one important step in the many you will take in your research.

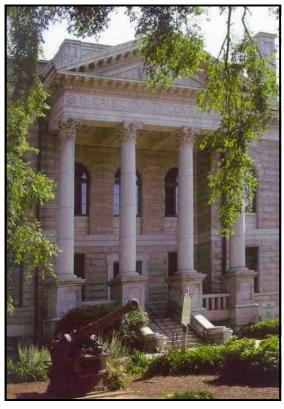
Researching your house will yield many different pieces of information that you will combine to complete a picture of your house and its unique history.

DHC is located in the historic DeKalb County Courthouse in downtown Decatur at 101 E. Court Square, Decatur, GA 30030. We are less than a block from the Decatur Marta station. Call 404-373-1088, extension 23 for additional information.

Information in this pamphlet is current as of October 2008.

To receive this document electronically, email your request to:

archives@dekalbhistory.org



The DeKalb History Center is in the historic DeKalb County Courthouse, which is located at the intersection of Clairemont and E. Ponce de Leon. 101 E. Court Square, Decatur, GA 30030.

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# Tax Assessor's Office

## Where to Begin

Find information to bring to the archives to make your search easier.

# 1. Tax Assessor's Website - Parcel ID Number & Sales History

Begin your research at the DeKalb County Tax Assessor's office or website. Online information includes sales and parcel ID numbers. You can also go to the office with your address and get help in person. The office is open Monday – Friday from 8:30 - 5:00 excluding holidays.

(The Callaway Building at 120 W. Trinity Pl., Room 208, Decatur, GA 30030; 404-371-0841)

#### https://dklbweb.dekalbga.org/TaxAssessor/

Click on the *real estate data* link on the left side of the page to enter your street address. You can get owner information, building statistics, tax and sales histories, some deed book information and the parcel ID for your property. You can print out a map of your property with the lot dimensions.

A parcel ID is made up of several numbers and knowing what they represent may be helpful to you. For example, parcel ID number 12 123 12 123 provides much information.

- The **first** number, 12 in this case, is the land district.
- The **second** number is the land lot. In the 1821 Georgia Land lottery, which covered this area, land lots were surveyed and distributed in lots of about 200 acres.
- The **third** number of your Parcel ID is the block number. Blocks are designated by the Tax Assessor's office and in theory, are a continuous area of land not interrupted by a street. They were created starting with number one and just go from there.
- The **fourth** number of your ID is your lot number.

The tax assessor's information includes a sales history which may have sales dates, deed types and sometimes even the sale prices. You will also find the Deed Book/Page Number for each sale. Online information goes back to the 1970s. Prior to that, you can use Deed Books *located at the "new" DeKalb County Courthouse*.

In some cases a plat number will be recorded. On the Tax Assessor's website, there is a tab to click on for "Property Tax Data" at the bottom of the "Property Overview" screen. On the left under Deed Information, you will see *Plat Book/Page*. If your address has this information, you may find a plat at the DeKalb County Courthouse.

## 2. Tax Assessor's Office - Tax Assessor's Card

You can get a copy of your tax assessor's card at this office by providing the clerk your street address; *they will make a copy of both sides of the card for you*. The front side of the card has stamps used each time taxes were paid on the property and who paid. This is a great resource for names of previous owners. The back side of the card has square footage of the house and a drawing of the footprint that may include additions made to the house. Other information it could include: construction date, building materials, number of bathrooms and more. *Every bit of the information on this card is useful!* 

# The DeKalb County Courthouse

## **How to Get There**

You can continue your research at the DeKalb County Courthouse "Real Estate Record Room." If you enter from the McDonough Street door, go straight back through the walkway to the next (connected) building. Take the elevator down to the ground floor and go though the door marked "Real Estate Division." From there, go straight back through the door marked "Real Estate Record Room."

The Record Room is open Monday – Friday from 8:30 – 5:00 excluding holidays.

(DeKalb County Courthouse, 556 N. McDonough Street, Room G100, Decatur GA 30030).

## 3. Deed Books and Plat Maps – A brief explanation

You will find indexes to the deed books, which are divided by Grantee (buyer) and Grantor (seller). Any single sale of a house will have listings in both indexes. The Grantor Indexes are black and the Grantee Indexes are red. The indexes from 1947 to 2000 are located on top of the counter. Indexes from 2000 to the present are computerized and accessible in this room. The indexes prior to 1947 are located under a counter and deed books are located throughout the room. Once you have the basic layout, everything should be in chronological order. The first index includes deeds from 1822 to 1910, however, deed books A – K are missing due to the courthouse fire and the first deed book available is Volume L which begins in 1846.

Use the lot, block, book and page numbers associated with deeds to make sure you are on the right track. In the history of your house these sets of names can be very helpful. **Start with the most recent sale and work your way backwards though the deeds.** For instance, if you begin with the current owner of a house in the Grantee Index, you can continue though that index by always looking up who <u>bought</u> the property. You do not need to look at every deed, but the earliest ones might have interesting information.

Plat maps show divisions between properties but usually do not show the footprint of the house. You may find that your house is in a subdivision that has a recorded plat number associated with it, and you may be able to trace back the acquisition and plans of the original developer. The DHC has records on many subdivisions, which could be a further source of information, but this is definitely hit or miss!

The DeKalb History Center still accepts donations related to our county. If you have documents or artifacts to contribute, please contact the Archivist or Executive Director to see if we might be the right repository to save your treasurers for future researchers and museum visitors.

Information from: Leslie Borger, Melissa Forgey, Karen Kopanezos, Jill Sweetapple and Ken Thomas.



The DeKalb County Courthouse is located at 556 N. McDonough Street, Decatur GA 30030.

# Continuing Your Research at the

The DHC has many collections, but remember that you must seek assistance in navigating around them, so **please** make an appointment! You can either call the Archivist at DHC at 404-373-1088, extension 23, or e-mail <u>archives@dekalbhistory.org</u> to make an appointment. Our Archives are located in the historic DeKalb County Courthouse in downtown Decatur at 101 E. Court Square, Decatur GA 30030.

The Archives hours are Tuesday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to noon and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. or other times by appointment.

Note: Finding an architect associated to your home can be a difficult task and may not be possible. Many houses built since the 20<sup>th</sup> century were catalogue houses such as the kit homes sold by Sears or other companies like Aladdin. Sterling and Radford.

## 4. City Directories

You can search for names you have gotten from sale records, deeds and tax information in the City Directories held by the DHC. With just one name, you can find addresses, spouses and sometimes even what a person did for a living. You can also look up a street address and find names of people living there.

The DHC has city directories from 1887 to 1990 (with some gaps in the collection); they were usually published every year. DeKalb County had its own directory in 1939. It was only done for that one year, but it has areas not covered in the Atlanta directory.

The Atlanta Public Library also has copies of city directories and the Decatur Library has them on microfilm. Keep in mind that you may not find your house listed; it must have been within city limits to be included.

Note: Atlanta and the metro area renumbered houses in 1892 and 1926.

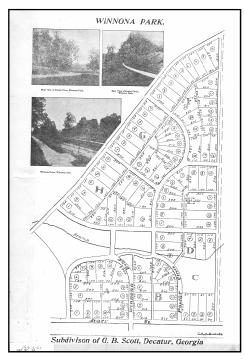
## 5. Map Collection

The DHC has a wonderful map collection where you may be able to find maps of your area before it was developed or even maps made during the Civil War. While it is unlikely you will find a map with your individual house, the DHC Special Collections may have information on your neighborhood or community.

There is a map inventory sheet that the archivist will use to help you navigate the DHC's collection. We have various plat and subdivision maps from different time periods, and two topographic map collections from 1928 which show the locations of some houses in DeKalb County.

# 6. Card Catalog for other resources in the DHC Collection

With the names you have collected from deeds, city directories and tax information, you can also check the card catalog. The card catalog is an internal index for our archives and you never know what you may find; don't forget to try subdivision and neighborhood names.



Plat map for Winnona Park Subdivision

# **DeKalb History Center Archives**

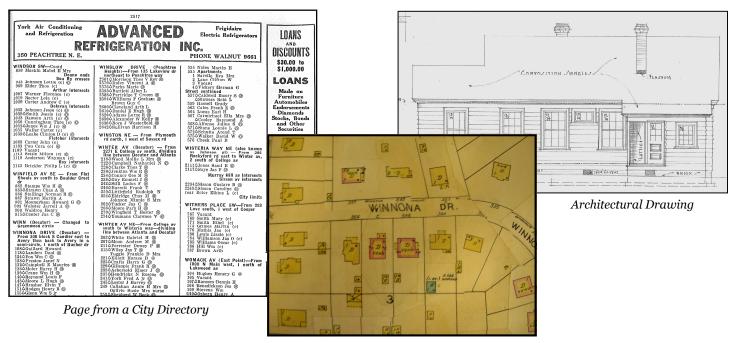
# 7. Special Collections

Using the first two numbers of your parcel ID from the Tax Assessor's office, you can check for resources in the title abstracts in the archives. Law offices in the area donated many files collected while doing legal work for clients; perhaps someone conducted a title exam on your property. All of the paperwork was done by the legal staff and these files are wonderful sources of information. Most of these papers are from the 1910s and 1920s. If you have an older house, you may find quite a bit amongst these donations. (Note: The Atlanta History Center also has title abstracts from various companies.) Names collected in your research may yield even more information. Again, it is hit or miss, as records from an office handling your area may simply not be a part of the DHC collection....yet. We have other great resources, including:

- **Biographical Vertical files** The amount of information in these files is variable
- **Maps** A large variety of DeKalb County maps are available
- Oral History VHS and audio tapes of interviews with DeKalb residents and others
- **Photographs** Including: individuals, military, government, organizations and schools
- **Special Collections** Court records, personal papers, school documents, scrapbooks, post office records and more
- **Subject Vertical files** Clippings, articles and primary materials from diverse places such as churches, clubs, schools and businesses

The DHC has a detailed website with information about our map collections, photographs, special collections and oral histories. Keep in mind that the very latest additions to the collection may not be online yet and you can contact us for additional information. Look under the *Archival Research* section of the website for a partial **listing** of our holdings.

Additional information on the 1821 Georgia land lottery (which included this area) can be found on our website: <a href="http://www.dekalbhistory.org/04">http://www.dekalbhistory.org/04</a> archives/LandLottery/index.asp



Portion of a Sanborn Map

# 8. Additional Information

#### Ancestry.com

http://www.ancestry.com/

This website, which is a paid subscription, is available free at the Decatur Public Library and the Georgia Archives. You may find biographical information on your home owners via the US Census, military and immigration records and other resources.

#### **Atlanta History Center**

130 West Paces Ferry Road Atlanta, GA 30305 404-814-4040

**Email:** reference@atlantahistorycenter.com http://www.atlantahistorycenter.com/

The AHC's Kenan Research Center has an online resource called *Terminus* (one of the original names for the city of Atlanta) that you may find interesting. Included are an architectural database and digital albums.

The Research Center has many archival resources. Useful collections include: the largest collection of architectural plans for the metro area, building permits for properties within the city limits of Atlanta and maps.

## **Atlanta-Fulton Central Public Library**

One Margaret Mitchell Square Atlanta, GA 30303 404-730-1700 extension 4 for reference 404-730-1896 for the Genealogy Room http://www.afplweb.com/cms/

The Atlanta-Fulton Central Public Library has a wealth of Atlanta materials and is well-worth a visit. Do not forget other local public libraries when looking for information.

A library may use Library of Congress classification, or they may use the Dewey Decimal System. When browsing books at the library, books on researching house information will have numbers beginning with **E159**. Dewey numbers in the **900s** are for Geography and History and **907** is for education, research and related topics. Having these numbers with you will get you the materials you need faster.

## **Decatur City Hall**

509 N. McDonough St. Decatur GA 30030

For the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Volume 7; or Warranty Deeds (1884—2002), contact Regina Brewer, Preservation Planner at 678-553-6575.

For Decatur Building permits, (beginning in 1930); or Building Permits Record Book (1921—1927) call the Planning Department at 404-370-4104.

# DeKalb County Public Library (Decatur Library)

Main Decatur Branch 215 Sycamore Street Decatur, Georgia 30030 404-370-3070 http://www.dekalblibrary.org/

The Georgia History Collection is on the third floor.

In the reference area on the second floor, you will find on microfilm or microfiche:

- Atlanta City Directories beginning with 1902
- Atlanta Constitution index from 1925 1954
- Atlanta Journal index from 1944 1979
- Various DeKalb County newspapers beginning in 1885
- Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, for the entire state
- Book indexes for the Atlanta Constitution from 1971 – 1979
- **Book indexes** for the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* from 1982 to the present

## Georgia Department of Revenue

http://www.etax.dor.ga.gov/

This website has information on other Georgia counties with online tax information and links in case you want to venture out of DeKalb County. That link is on the bottom right of the page found here:

http://www.etax.dor.ga.gov/IndTax PropTax.aspx Look for the link Counties with Property Records Online.

# Georgia Historic Preservation Division (SHPO)

Historic Preservation Division Department of Natural Resources 34 Peachtree Street, NW Suite 1600 Atlanta, GA 30303 404-651-5911; Survey and Register Specialist http://www.gashpo.org

**To look at materials in person, you must have an appointment.** Contact HPD's Survey and Register Specialist for more information. The website has lists files available on over 500 architects and 100 subjects. The *How to and What's Available* page gives a good overview of records kept by this office. It is found here:

http://hpd.dnr.state.ga.us/content/displaycontent.asp?
txtDocument=131

# and Web Resources

## Georgia Statewide Deed Index

http://www.gsccca.org/search/

### **Georgia State University**

http://voy-atla.gsu.edu/

#### **Internet Public Library**

http://ipl.org/

The Internet Public Library is a wonderful free resource and has many genealogical research tips. From the main page, choose *Ready Reference* from the left side of the page, and you will get a *Genealogy* link about a third of the way down.

http://ipl.org/div/subject/browse/ref40.00.00/

As for researching your house, from the home page, choose *Pathfinders* from the list on the left side. Under *General Reference* on the right side, choose *Guide to Researching the History of a House*. Here you will find a wonderful set of links compiled by Julie Boleware and Ellen Tetreault. Books, encyclopedias, websites and historical resources are included in this invaluable resource. The link is:

http://ipl.org/div/pf/entry/76687

#### **NAHRGIS**

https://www.itos.uga.edu/nahrgis/

NAHRGIS is an interactive Web-based registry and geographical information system designed to catalog information about the natural, archaeological, and historic resources of Georgia. Historic resources include buildings, structures, historic sites, landscapes and districts.

#### Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/sanborn/

The Sanborn Company began making maps for insurance purposes in the 1860s. There are many available for cities in Georgia. Maps from 1884-1922 are on this site. The Decatur Library has Georgia Sanborn Maps on microfilm. Because they were working documents, some copies of Sanborn Maps were updated by hand with company employees pasting overlays directly into later versions. If using these copies in person, information gathered may be less clear the information found in a "clean" copy.

A good site on Sanborn map history and information on using these maps, including a key to symbols used on the maps, can be found here:

http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/hp/buildings/sanborn\_maps.asp

# Join \* Renew \* Give

Collecting, Preserving and Sharing the History of DeKalb County

All funds received through memberships directly support the preservation of DeKalb County history and are tax-deductible as allowed by law. Your generous contribution to the DeKalb History Center will provide you with a year-long membership that includes our quarterly newsletter to keep you informed on all our activities. We hope that you will join our team by either renewing your membership or joining as a first-time supporter.

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Address		
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Heritage Society—\$2,500 +	Contributor—\$250—\$499	Household—\$50—\$74
Sponsor—\$1,000—\$2,499	Sustainer/Business—\$125—\$249	Individual—\$30—\$49
Benefactor/Corporation—\$500—\$999	Patron—\$75—\$124	Student/Teacher/Senior—\$25
Please mail this form with your con	tribution to: DeKalb History Center, 101 East Co	ourt Square. Decatur GA 30030

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#### DeKalb History Center

Old Courthouse on the Square 101 East Court Square Decatur GA 30030

Phone: 404-373-1088 Fax: 404-373-8287 www.dekalbhistory.org

Keeping DeKalb's History First, since 1947

