

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.

Information in this pamphlet is current as of September 2011.

To receive this document electronically, email archives@dekalbhistory.org or call 404-373-1088, extension 23. You can print a copy from your computer. Visit our website at www.dekalbhistory.org and click on the Newsletter tab and scroll down to Special Publications.



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

<http://web.co.dekalb.ga.us/TaxCommissioner/tc-home.html#>

Move your mouse over the *property tax* link on the left side of the page and click on *view property tax information* 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 might find a plat at the DeKalb County Courthouse on McDonough Street.

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 through 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 prior to 1947 are located under a counter towards the rear of the room. 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. And the 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. Copies are available here for a fee.

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 through the deeds.** For instance, if you begin with the current owner of a house in the Grantee Index, you can continue through that index by always looking up who bought the property. You do not need to look at every deed, but the earliest ones might have interesting information.

Plat books can be found under a counter in the rear of the Real Estate Records room. 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.

The DeKalb History Center 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 treasures.

Information from: Leslie Borger, Erica Duvic, 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 email archives@dekalbhistory.org 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 10:00 a.m. to noon and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. or other times by appointment.

Please be aware that all of the questions you have about your house may not be answered. Finding your home's architect can be a difficult task and may not be possible. Many houses built since the 20th century were catalog houses such as the kit homes sold by Sears or other companies like Aladdin, Sterling and Radford. Or your house may come from the many plan books which were available to builders.

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. We also have Suburban Directories beginning in 1956 which cover parts of DeKalb. The areas covered may vary by year.

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 at that time, to be included. Note: Atlanta and the metro area renumbered houses in 1892 and 1926.

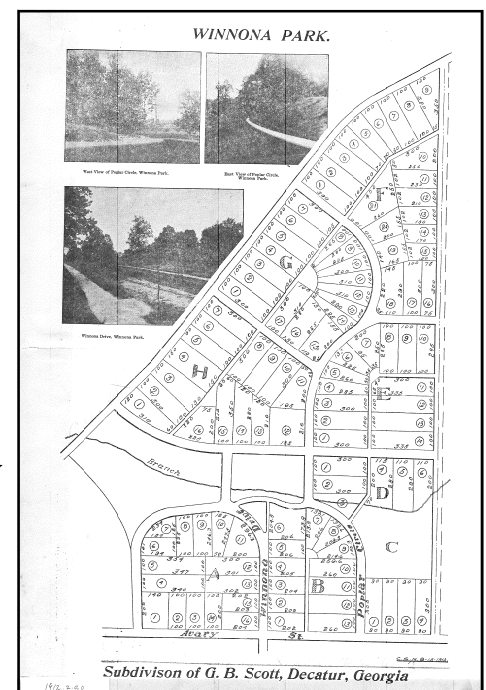
5. Map Collection

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 that the archivist will use to help you navigate our 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. We also have Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and the 1915 Maynard Carter Simmons Map book which shows property owners.

6. 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.



Plat map for Winnona Park Subdivision

8. Additional Information

Ancestry.com

<http://www.ancestry.com/>

This website, which is a paid subscription, is available free here at the DHC and also 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 Historic Newspapers Archive

<http://atlnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/atlnewspapers/search>

The Atlanta Historic Newspapers Archive provides online access to fourteen newspaper titles published in Atlanta from 1847 to 1922. Consisting of over 67,000 newspaper pages, the archive provides historical images that are both full-text searchable and can be browsed by date

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* that may be useful.

The Research Center has many archival resources including the largest collection of architectural plans for the metro area and building permits for properties within the city limits of Atlanta. They also have a large genealogy library.

Atlanta-Fulton Central Public Library

One Margaret Mitchell Square
Atlanta, GA 30303

404-730-1900

Email: referenceline@fultoncountyga.gov

<http://www.afpls.org/home>

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 houses have numbers beginning with **E159**. Dewey numbers in the **900s** include Geography and History. Having these numbers with you will get you the materials you need faster.

The Atlanta Time Machine

<http://atlantatimemachine.com/>

A fun website with then-and-now photos of Atlanta through the decades that includes a small collection of residential photographs sorted by address.

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 the Building Permits Record Book (1921–1927) call the Planning & Sustainability 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.dekalb.public.lib.ga.us/>

The Georgia History Collection is on the third floor.

In the reference area on the second floor, you will find these resources on microfilm or microfiche. You will need to get a lens from the reference desk in order to use the viewer.

- Atlanta City Directories beginning with 1902
- *Atlanta Constitution* index from 1925 - 1954
- *Atlanta Journal* index from 1944 - 1979
- Various DeKalb County newspapers from 1885 on
- Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, for the entire state
- *DeKalb New Era* from 1885–1998

Georgia Department of Revenue

<https://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. Go to individual taxes and then property taxes for available information.

Georgia Historic Preservation Division (SHPO)

Historic Preservation Division
Department of Natural Resources
34 Peachtree Street, NW
Suite 1600

Atlanta, GA 30303

404-651-5911; National Register Specialist

<http://georgiashpo.org/>

To look at materials in person, you must have an appointment. Contact HPDs National Register Specialist for more information. Before you call, click on the National Register & Survey tab at the top and then Research & Documentation for many answers to your questions, including a link for research files available there.

and Web Resources

Georgia Statewide Deed Index

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

Available resources include lien & plat indexes and deeds.

Georgia State University Library

<http://www.library.gsu.edu/>

The Special Collections department has many documents and photos for the Atlanta area.

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 *Resources by Subject* and under reference is a *Genealogy* link.

As for researching your house, type “*Guide to Researching the History of a House*” in the search field. 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. Or find this at the link: <http://www.ipl.org/div/pf/entry/76687>

GNAHRGIS

<https://www.gnahrgis.org/gnahrgis/index.do>

GNAHRGIS is an interactive Web 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.

National Register of Historic Places

<http://www.nps.gov/nr/research/>

If your home is located on the National Register of Historic Places or within a National Register district this Park Service site may provide invaluable information.

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

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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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Please mail this form with your contribution to: DeKalb History Center, 101 East Court 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*

