

**An Historical Analysis
Of
THE ATLANTA PRISON FARM**

November 5, 1999

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House of Honor

Hundreds of beautifully cultivated acres stretching across the gently rolling hills; fat, contented dairy cattle deep in green pastures; silos, model barns and well-kept lawns leading to comfortable, homelike living quarters. These are things that never fail to thrill the Georgian whose ancestors have lived close to the red soil of their state for 200 years. There is just such a scene in DeKalb County, near Panthersville. But you get an added thrill when you learn that it is a United States penal institution! The second thrill comes when you see there are no bars, no armed guards on patrol, no walls or iron doors. This is an affair of honor. Those men scattered over the farm are the prisoners! Under the guiding hand of Warden W. H. Hiatt, nationally known prison authority, this Federal Honor Farm is one of America's finest examples of human rehabilitation. Men sent there from the main penitentiary in Atlanta are carefully selected. Their family background, their past are thoroughly investigated. Then the man himself is psychoanalyzed. It is not a question of "Will you be a good prisoner when you're there," but "will you be a good citizen after you leave?" Presumably one of the motives in founding Georgia was to give inmates of English prisons another chance. It worked well in 1733 and in 1952 the same theory is working well again!

AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ATLANTA PRISON FARM

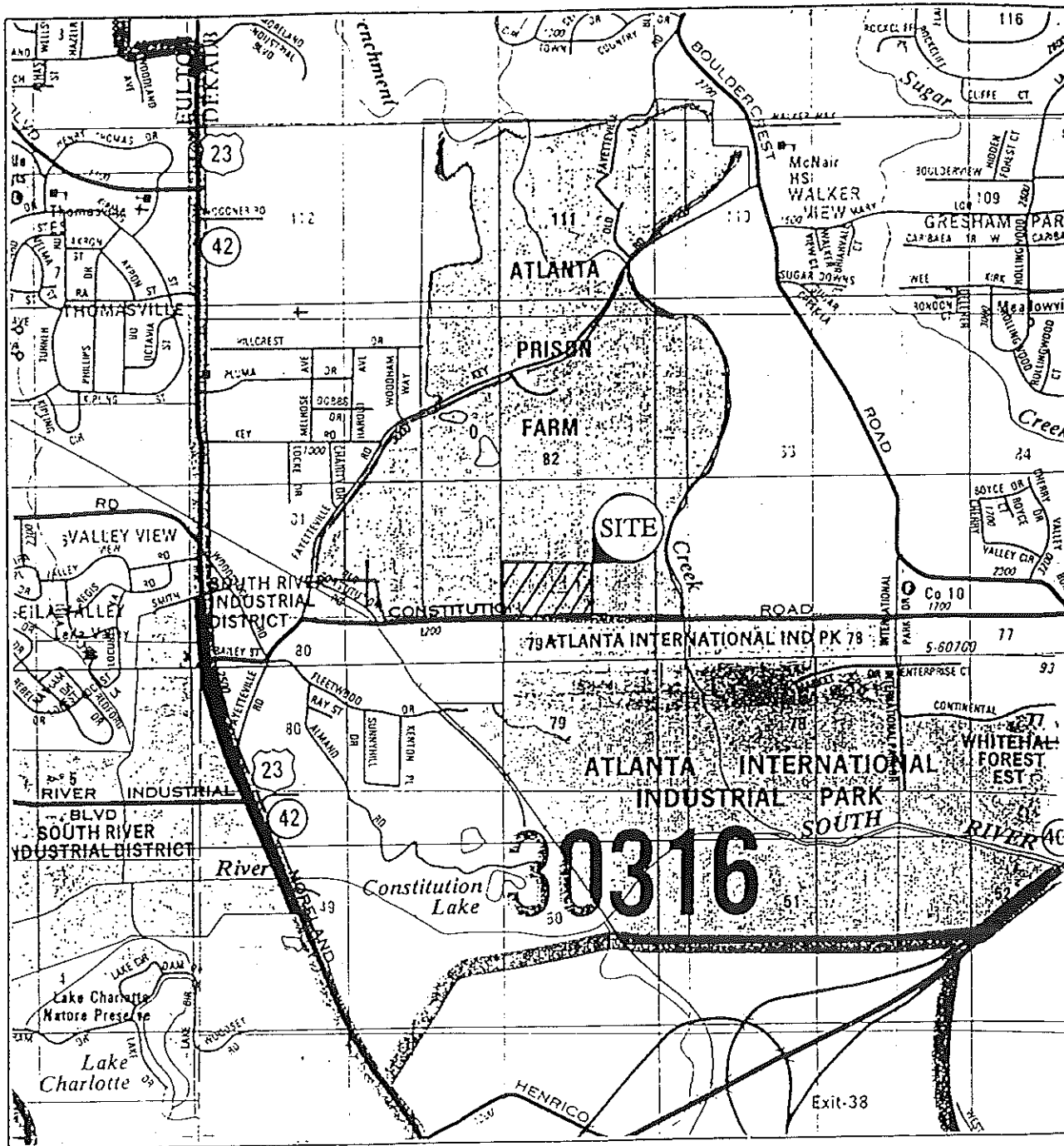
Introduction

There is a prison facility in southeast Dekalb County that has a most fascinating history. It has come to be in its current state through haphazard decisions, or a complete lack of historically sensitive decision making. The Old Atlanta Prison Farm, also known as the Honor Farm, is a virtual ghost town. The old buildings and barns visible from Key Road lay abandoned and dilapidated, enclosed in barbed wire. Although this property feels remote and most likely is unknown to most Atlantans, a look about the place raises many questions concerning its history, its present and its future. How old is it? When it functioned as a prison farm, how did the prisoners live and what did they do from day to day on the farm? Who oversaw them? Why and when did the farm close? Who owns it now? What surrounds the old farm? Why has it been allowed to slip into such a state of disrepair? Who is in charge? Have the decisions regarding the property been conscious, or has there been no planning? Who has future plans for the property and what will it become? Is there a strategic plan on the part of the owner? Will the old prison be saved? What does the community think?

Research has produced many answers to the historic questions, and few to the ones about the prison farm's future. This study will attempt to map answers to the fore posed questions. It will also discuss historic preservation issues, including jail or prison precedents. It will address the roles of key players and the evolution of decisions leading to abandonment and nonuse. It will speculate on future uses for the property.

Before the Prison Farm

Even before its establishment as a prison farm, the property was rich in history. The earliest records of ownership include DeKalb County leader Lochlin Johnson, who was said in the 1820's to own "what was probably the finest plantation in the county." Johnson's plantation was to become the Honor Farm (Garrett). In the midst of the Civil War in 1863, records show that Atlanta's Council proposed buying 150 acres of what is now partially the prison property from Dr. J. B. Badger. The Council passed this resolution and intended to use the tract as a cemetery though never did (Garrett). The land played a key beginning role in a famous Civil War battle, the Battle of Atlanta (Garrett). What became the prison farm was along the route of Hardee's March on July 21, 1864 (historic marker). It has been speculated that the site of the warden's house, on a bluff



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SCALE (FEET)

overlooking the farm, is where used to be the residence of William Cobb (Cullison). Cobb is the man who served as a guide to help lead Hardee's troops through wooded terrain looking for the Federal lines (Garrett). Though Hardee's March ended in disaster for the Confederates, the history of it gives the prison farm further character. In later years, the portion of the farm on Key Road passed back to the private ownership of two men, James Moore, who owned the land north of Key Road, and the namesake, George Key, who owned the southern part (Eow).

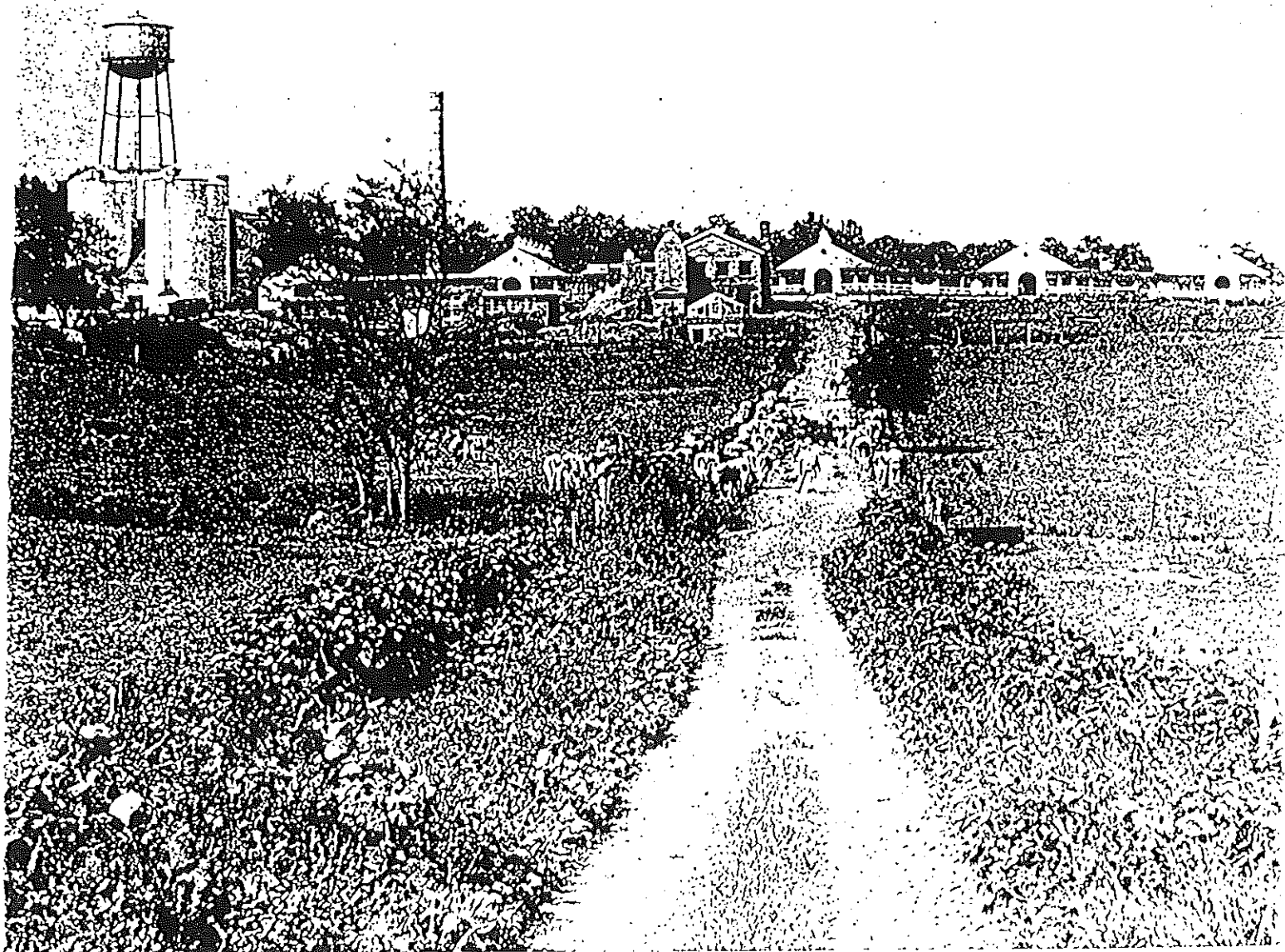
Operation of the Honor Farm

The Honor Farm began as an "experiment" (Randolph). In 1917, the federal government originally bought expansive land in Dekalb County to be used as a prisoner-of-war camp (Boston). It never was put to this use and for \$160,000, in 1918, the Bureau of Prisons and United States Federal Penitentiary in Atlanta took possession of the 1248 acres. The tract, located about eight miles from the main penitentiary, was organized into a farm the next year. Once new buildings were erected and livestock and other farming necessities were bought, the farm would cost the government around \$200,000 in total (Zerbst). In keeping with the history of the land of having been a thriving plantation, a reporter who visited the farm during its first year of operation shared an abounding mental image:

Picture an oak grove, containing perhaps four hundred magnificent trees, shading a bit of top country; at one side small, but comfortable houses, and at the other barns, chicken houses, a clear, bubbling spring; and in every direction neatly furrowed land rolling away to hedges of timber, the naked ground scored here and there by small streams (Randolph).

A man by the name of Pet Fry was the first warden. He transformed the new farm from unkempt property at the time of purchase to that of the account, however genial, described above. It is unclear whether the philosophy at the Honor Farm was that of Fry's originally, yet as the name suggests, the Honor Farm worked by the honor system. There were no guards with firearms or bars or fences to keep prisoners from fleeing (Randolph). A later farm warden pointed out, "We have fences but they are to keep the cattle in" (Suburban Gazette). Instead officials who oversaw the farm were the commander of the camp, or warden, and foremen in the fields. The foremen were agricultural experts, not prison guards. The original staff also included a veterinarian and a physician (Randolph).

The Early Honor Farm (Still Picture from the National Archives)



The prisoners at the Honor Farm were the chosen ones. They were carefully selected from amongst the prisoners at the main penitentiary. Not only were their prison sentences light, usually one year or less, they were not considered "criminals in the large sense of the word" (Randolph). Of the original sixty-nine prisoners on the farm, perhaps sixty were serving sentences for moonshining. Forty-two were white men and twenty-seven were black. The prisoners' life on the farm was a far cry from time in dark jail cells and working on chain gangs (McCurdy). As prisoners they lived "honored" lives, full of fresh air, hard work, abundant food and tobacco, and even free time in the evenings and on the weekends. They remained mentally and physically healthy during their stints on the farm. The penalty for making trouble or attempting escape was to be sent back to the penitentiary. Occasionally, prisoners had to return to the penitentiary, as did four of the original men for fighting. However, the alternative to life on the prison farm served as enough deterrent to keep most of the prisoners in line (Randolph).

The prisoners worked long days from seven in the morning to five in the afternoon. In the beginning they were responsible for constructing new prison buildings, including their own dormitory and kitchen. The two-story, L-shaped building was described as a "pretentious structure" with modern conveniences such as running water and a sewage system (Randolph). It was meant to provide the prisoners with "reasonable comfort and a life under healthy modern farming conveniences" (Zerbst). Aside from building the living quarters, the prisoners worked the land. In the first year of operation they began a successful dairy production using the purchased herd of fifty-eight cows and two bulls. The prisoners planted crops and expected an abundant harvest. Already they were able to supply their own kitchen with increasing amounts of fresh vegetables and milk. Warden Fred G. Zerbst of the main Atlanta Penitentiary reported to the United States Department of Justice in 1920 that "the farm will prove, I am confident, a great success both financially and in character building" (Zerbst).

Over the years the farm became more and more productive. By 1930, the Honor Farm was working to make the most of its acreage. In that year, a crew of men embarked on an extensive dredging project of former marshland, especially that near the section of the South River which flowed through the property. The crew completed the project with technical assistance from the road commissioner for Dekalb County (Department of Justice, 1930). In 1935 there were 150 prisoners working on the farm. They had cultivated 799 units of the acreage and provided vegetables and milk for themselves and for those in the main penitentiary (Department of Justice). As of 1955 the penitentiary system in Atlanta was looking at providing six thousand meals a day. While the grounds at the main penitentiary were used for fruit farming and other

small vegetable gardens, the management of the penitentiary relied heavily on the Honor Farm to provide substantial quantities of nutritional food at low costs. In the report to the Department of Justice that year, farming was mentioned to be "essential to real economy in prison management" (Department of Justice, 1955). The prison farm received a glowing review, describing the extensive farm operations in bulk vegetables, such as corn, potatoes, beans, greens and tomatoes, in addition to dairy and pork. On one part of the farm was maintained a slaughterhouse for processing pork products. Another feature of the farm was a stock feed dehydrator proving a highly productive and economical method of providing stock feed. The successfulness of the farm was seminal for the time:

The Atlanta farms have been in the vanguard of new agricultural methods in the South. Soil conservation and land reclamation have been outstanding. The terraced fields, newly filled and drained lands, the use of Bermuda grass, crimson clover, and kudzu have increased tremendously the fertility and productivity of these formerly eroded farmlands (United States Penitentiary, 1955).

By 1959, the farm produced 880 tons of food worth \$204,000, netting \$115,000 over the cost of operation. It was able to give money back to the government. There was a surplus of peaches that year such that the fruit was canned at the main penitentiary and shipped to other federal prisons (Suburban Gazette). Citizens of Atlanta and Dekalb County also enjoyed the fruits of the prison farm. Mr. Walter P. McCurdy, a retired attorney in Decatur, remembers visiting the farm with his father, who was the District Attorney in Dekalb County in the 1940s and 1950s. He formed a favorable impression of the farm. One could purchase "good and cheap" produce (McCurdy).

Farm production and solid economic results were not the only positive outcomes of the prison farm. As early as 1920 those running the Honor Farm recognized a "philosophy" associating the farming experience with better citizenry. Warden Pet Fry believed that prisoners would leave the farm once they had completed their sentences, taking the modern farming techniques learned and go on to make honest livings. Their spirits and health would not be broken, as they might have serving time in jail cells (Randolph). Thirty-five years later in 1955, prison officials reported the same encouraging results concerning the healthy physical, mental and emotional states of the men, and the modern farming skills they gained (United States Penitentiary, 1955). The process of being chosen to work at the Honor Farm was the beginning of a certain sort of therapy. In 1959, the penitentiary prisoners eligible for duty on the farm were placed on a waiting list and were thoroughly screened by doctors.

The doctors tried to determine whether the selected prisoners were worthy of trust not to run away. Once placed on the farm conditions of trust continued. They were allowed free time as in the early years, and given individual garden plots to cultivate behind the dormitory. They were able to design and build a picnic area with benches and a small bridge used as a visiting area. Harry Weissman, the Warden in 1959, believed in the rehabilitative power of agriculture, saying "everything about farming is wholesome, the living atmosphere, the smell of the earth—and you can see the fruits of your labors from the sweat of the brow" (Suburban Gazette).

The Prison Farm in Transition

The Honor Farm had seen its heyday during the 1950s after which time its history becomes murky. The City of Atlanta acquired the property and, subsequently, the General Services Administration closed the farm in 1965 (Boston). By 1966 the expanse of the old Honor Farm was divided and designated for different uses (Gaasch). The Atlanta Department of Corrections could provide no information. However, part of the tract seems to have continued to be used as the Atlanta City Prison Farm. According to a 1968 newspaper article there was a sit-in staged by farm prisoners. Reportedly four hundred inmates began a strike and refused to work until chronic alcoholics were removed from the farm. Their complaint was not about the prison facilities, but about the methods used to accuse and convict those who suffered from alcoholism (Goodwin). This illustrates a probable breach in spirit and trust pervading during the City of Atlanta management of the farm. The old Honor Farm never housed more than one hundred fifty prisoners. Perhaps four hundred inmates were too many.

It may be assumed that the deterioration of the existing structures of the old Honor Farm, those situated on Key Road in Land Lot 82 of Dekalb County, happened during the 1970s, 1980s, and continued until present in 1999. There have been a couple media references to the prison farm in this decade. One article from July 1998 relates to a part of the former Honor Farm divided and now owned by the school district. Cedar Grove Middle School was completed on the property in time for the 1999 school year. Next to the school there is an old prison farm building now used by the Dekalb County Extension Service and the Department of Natural Resources (Boston). It uses the old barn as an agriculture cooperative office. Extension agents have converted the barn into a resource for conducting environmental education and University of Georgia projects (Gaasch). Relating again to Land Lot 82, in December of 1994, after community resistance to build a juvenile boot camp on Bakers Ferry Road, City of Atlanta officials offered land on the old Honor Farm site to

the Georgia Department of Children and Youth Services (DCYS). In 1995 the DCYS began the plans for building a new facility that would house youth offenders awaiting trial in Superior Court (Silk). Significantly, it was during this project that the issue of historic designation came alight for the old Honor Farm.

Historic Eligibility

The National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470) of 1966 states in Section 2 that:

It shall be the policy of the Federal Government, in cooperation with other nations and in partnership with the States, local governments, Indian tribes, and private organization and individuals to--

(1) use measures, including financial and technical assistance, to foster conditions under which our modern society and our prehistoric and historic resources can exist in productive harmony and fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations;

(2) provide leadership in the preservation of the prehistoric and historic resources of the United States and of the international community of nations and in the administration of the national preservation program in partnership with States, Indian tribes, Native Hawaiians, and local governments;

(3) administer federally owned, administered, or controlled prehistoric and historic resources in a spirit of stewardship for the inspiration and benefit of present and future generations;

(4) contribute to the preservation of nonfederally owned prehistoric and historic resources and give maximum encouragement to organization and individuals undertaking preservation by private means;

(5) encourage the public and private preservation and utilization of all usable elements of the Nation's historic build environment; and

(6) assist State and local governments, Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations and the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States to expand and accelerate their historic preservation programs and activities.

The Act lay the groundwork nationwide for conservation of settings that have historic value. The State of Georgia developed its own Code (§12-3-50) complementary to national stipulations relating to what is eligible for and how to designate or register historic places. In the case of the old

Honor Farm, is there a way in which "our modern society and our historic resources can exist in productive harmony and fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations?" Is the old Honor Farm site on Key Road worthy of being preserved, perhaps as an "usable element" from Atlanta's history? Dekalb Extension Service has established at least one of the old prison farm buildings in a commendable use, one that contributes to the community through education and agricultural development.

For an October 1998 newspaper article, the headline read: "Old Houses Not the Only Topic that Interests Preservationists." The writer had attended the annual conference of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Savannah, Georgia. She found that "plenty of folks are still interested in whether the paint color of a house is true to its architectural period, but many others are concerned about revitalizing intown communities, turning old mills into modern businesses, fighting suburban sprawl" (Fox). Why not revitalize a prison farm with its quaint old barns and buildings? There is a strong precedent for listing jails and prisons as historic. In Georgia alone, there are examples of historically registered county jails in Ben Hill, Berrier, Brooks, Turner and other counties. There are historically registered county jails in the mountains of northeast Georgia (National Register of Historic Places). The Atlanta Stockade of 1896 was designated on the Historic Register in 1989. Authority over the Stockade shifted several times in closing its function as a prison. The Board of Education owned and used the facility from 1922 to 1983 when it donated the Stockade to a local ministry. At that time, the planned use of the building was for apartments and a community center (Unknown source). In recent news of October 1999, in Washington D. C., "the Lorton Correctional Complex, a facility that has housed hundreds of thousands of District men and women since 1910, is becoming a ghost town." The General Services Administration who owns the 3,000 acre-site promptly recommended that 552 acres including the buildings become historically designated and preserved. Although the rural property is likely prime for development, the official historic designation would impede anyone from destroying the old buildings. There is one particular nearby resident and former employee who has grand ideas for how to reuse the buildings. She said "This could be used as a college campus. Think George Mason University" (Wheeler). The woman who cares so much about preserving Lorton believes "it has a soul" (Wheeler). In the early days and for forty years onward, the old Honor Farm retained a spirit of trust. Should this important cultural history be demolished?

In 1995 the DCYS began its new facility project on the site of the old Honor Farm on Key Road. In compliance with the Georgia Environmental Policy Act (GEPA), the Department hired the consulting

firm ATEC Associates, Inc. to complete an environmental assessment of the building site. The initial ATEC report acknowledged a concern for potential "adverse impact to historical resources" as outlined by GEPA regulations (ATEC). The consulting group contacted the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division (HPD) to verify the status of the old Honor Farm. In fact, the farm was not listed in the National Register of Historic Places, but "should be considered eligible for listing in the National Register" (HPD). Given this status report, ATEC sought guidance from HPD regarding how to minimize historical impacts of the DCYS project. Environmental Review planners for HPD became involved. These planners, as part of the HPD, had reviewed the ATEC report and determined that a more thorough study was necessary. The additional information needed was concrete identification of the historical significance of the buildings and structures, the site plan relating the proximity of the old existing structures to the proposed construction, and an assessment of potential visual obstruction of the old farm by a new facility. Reviewing these results, the conclusion drawn by HPD was *"in our opinion, the 1925 Atlanta City Prison Farm should be considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places"* (HPD).

HPD also found in its review that the DCYS facility would have no adverse affects to the Atlanta Prison Farm as long as a couple recommendations were followed. It recommended that the new facility not be situated on top of the knoll at the site, that it would minimize visual impact to the prison farm by locating beneath the knoll and limiting its height to one or two stories. The second recommendation was to plant trees to visually screen the new facility (HPD).

There are concrete criteria outlined in the National Historic Preservation Act for placing a site on the Register of Historic Places. In this case, the Historic Preservation Division planners, along with the consulting group, played key initial roles by identifying the Honor Farm as historic and as eligible for the Register of Historic Places. Since this activity ceased in 1996, there have been no moves made to continue the process. For the time being, the process appears to be at odds with the wish of the current owner of the property, the City of Atlanta. As long as an owner of an "historic" property refuses to list it on the Register, the property may not be listed. However, when the property has been determined eligible for the Register, the owner should respect the eligibility status (as exemplified by ATEC's process) and not adversely affect or alter the property for at which time in the future it may become officially registered (Cullison).

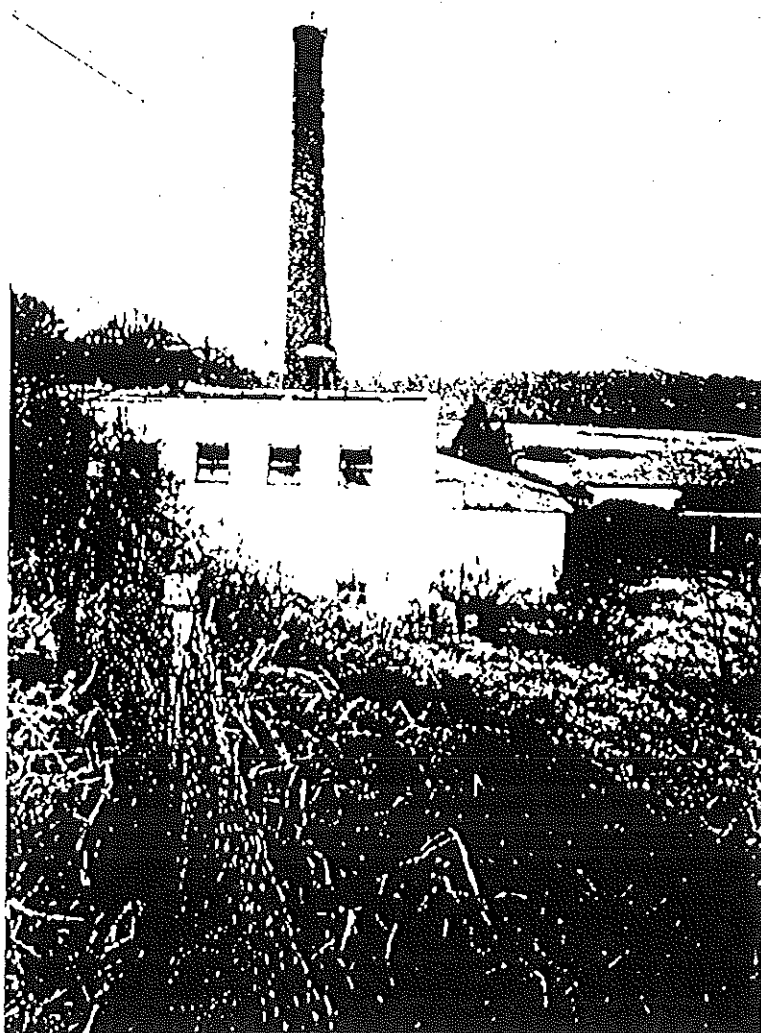
The Atlanta Prison Farm's Current State

A tour of the old prison farm property is quite revealing. Access from Key Road is superficially denied by barbed wire fencing with gates unlocked. There are no signs posted prohibiting trespassing. The structures date back to different periods. In most cases, the oldest looking barns and buildings remain solidly built and have interesting features. There are remnants from prison work activities still in tact. The newer ranch-style houses sit unlocked and in mint condition. In every case, vagrants have frequented the structures leaving behind piles of dirty belongings. One old building, the remains now grown-over by weeds, was badly damaged by a fire set by a squatter several years ago (Swope). There have been reports of other crimes happening on the property. It is not well patrolled by police due to jurisdictional confusion between Dekalb County and the City of Atlanta (Cullison).

The old prison is littered not just by deserted personal items. The structures and grounds have become a place to dump by the City itself. Such dumped items should not be considered in storage because they are poorly protected from the elements and from rodents. There are old prison records, criminology books, boxes of old reading room books, miscellaneous merchandise and appliances. Most notably, in one of the prison fields, are the partial remains of the original marble façade of Atlanta's Carnegie Library. The Carnegie dates back to 1902 and was demolished in 1977 to build the current Atlanta/Fulton County Public Library. At demolition, the façade was dismantled and taken to the Atlanta Prison Farm to be stowed in a field. A large portion of the façade was recovered in preparation for the Olympics and used to build the Carnegie Library Pavilion in Hardy Ivy Park at Peachtree and Baker Streets. Still the remainder of the artifacts abides in the field exposed to weather, and apparently discovered by someone. There are fairly fresh tire tracks leading over land to the base of the site. The remains are highly vulnerable to vandalism or theft. David Cullison, the Historic Preservation Planner in Dekalb County, made contact with the Atlanta History Center in July of 1999 to discuss the protection and preservation of these marble artifacts.

The Department of Corrections and the Solid Waste Division of Public Works share direct authority over today's prison farm. The Solid Waste Division is a key authority because according to James Swope, a Manager in the Solid Waste Division, City officials made the decision several years ago to use the land for "solid waste purposes." With the nearby Entrenchment Creek Sewage Plant, and a landfill on the other

Farm Buildings in Decline (GEPA Review Conducted in 1996)



end of Key Road, the City wished to continue such uses. Planning in this direction, however, ceased due to conflict with the Senate Bill 32 of 1996 or 1997 (Swope). The City's particular interest in opening yet a second landfill at the site was determined illegal by the bill whose purpose included defining how many landfills could fall within a certain radius of one another. The existing and full landfill is in its final stages of being closed by the Solid Waste Division. It has nearly completed closure construction. In addition, the Solid Waste Division has "taken possession" of the prison farm site to extract topsoil for covering the landfill (Swope). Might this action cause adverse affects to a site declared eligible for a place on the National Historic Registry? Is the activity of Atlanta's Public Works undermining the National Historic Preservation Act?

From the perspective of Swope, the answer is indeed not. According to him, the old structures of the prison farm are condemned, gutted, and have completed the steps necessary for preparation for demolition. Some demolition has already happened. The rest of the buildings are designated for eventual demolition (Swope). Swope has apparently not heard of or has not responded to the recommendation coming from the State Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division.

Have other parties been involved in decision-making for the old farm property that might have fostered a lessening of the gap between perspectives of City officials and Public Works, and HPD? In the public sector, besides recent interventions by Dekalb County Historic Preservation Planner, David Cullison, there has been no other involvement. Although the City of Atlanta owns the property, the Atlanta Bureau of Planning has no legislative authority to control land use or zoning outside the City limits. Given once again the jurisdictional question and the condition of having a Strong-Mayor system of City government, decisions concerning land use on the old prison farm have fallen exclusively to Elected officials. No city planning input was ever sought (Heath).

There have been others to express community interest about the Atlanta City Prison Farm. Along with preservationists, environmentalists are committed to seeing the property preserved and used sustainably. Scott Peterson is an Atlantan whose attempts to protect the South River led to his interest in preserving the old prison farm. He has explored the property numerous times and taken tours with other interested parties, including representatives of PATH and Trees Atlanta (Cullison). In contrast, residents of Constitution, the nearby residential neighborhood to the old prison farm, have remained quiet in regards to current activity on the property. For instance, a resident, when polled in 1994 about his reaction to placing the new DCYS facility on the old prison farm, replied

"I don't care what they do, to tell you the truth. It doesn't bother me" (Braddock).

Speculations for the Future

The property was a thriving plantation, a Civil War battlefield, a productive and rehabilitative prison farm and is now a local government holding. In recent years the old farm has even been used as a movie set (Swope). Furthermore, the City of Atlanta has maximized its capacity or legal right to use the land for sanitation purposes. Now the old Honor Farm sits idle and the question is what will happen next?

Although the plans for the property have not been made public, one city planner predicts that the City will eventually attempt to recover invested capital and sell the land (Heath). Given the flurry of the residential development in south Dekalb County this speculation seems quite reasonable. However, James Swope shed some light in saying that the City would extract the highest value from the property by keeping it and using it for its own purposes (Swope). Perhaps this theory is why the old farm is not yet in the hands of developers. The pattern of formulating ideas for use on the property is every four to six months a different group approaches the City Bureau of Administrative Services wishing to claim the old prison farm for varying uses (Swope). Being so over the years, discussion has taken place considering the use of the property for different purposes. For instance, the idea to place a new landfill as infill where the old prison farm facilities lay was deserted for the legal reason discussed. A second idea has been to make the environmentally rich and beautiful area into a city park. Although there seems little grounds for the City of Atlanta to place a park outside of the City limit, the concept is not inconceivable. A third and strong idea has been to use the old farm property for schools. The proposal becomes more complex when taken into consideration the nearby landfill. The Solid Waste Division recommends that at least a 300 feet buffer be maintained between waste facilities and structures of other uses. Particularly with schools, the City wants to avoid potential environmental hazard issues. For that reason Swope recommends not placing schools in close proximity to the landfill, but considering the location for industrial or open-air activities.

The practical ideas raised by the Atlanta City planner and the division of Public Works do not explicitly account for the preservation of the old prison farm structures. From another point of view, the involved citizen, Scott Peterson, would like to see the old farm buildings and barns restored into a community center that might include a crafts market and a restaurant. He envisions some upscale residential development on the bluffs overlooking the landscape. He would like to maintain trails in a

park in the center of the property. In future planning and decision-making would the City consider the visions of its citizenry? Would this local government "encourage the public and private preservation and utilization of all usable elements of the Nation's historic build environment?" (National Historic Preservation Act).

Conclusions

In this document, I have attempted to analyze the evolution of the Atlanta Prison Farm history and draw a conclusion about its historic worth and validity as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. For some time our society has found itself at a crime and prison juncture wherein a former institution which accomplished much more than housing prisoners should be remembered and respected. Techniques used then could be replicated successfully in penal systems today. There are many proponents of the prison farm system (McCurdy).

I agree with the determination of the HPD, that the old Honor Farm should be preserved and protected on the National Registry, not only for the character of the old structures, but for the cultural symbol they represent. It is apparent that those in charge of planning and decisions regarding the farm have displayed open disregard for the value of historic places. In doing so, they have violated the National Historic Preservation Act and Georgia Code concerning historic preservation. The City of Atlanta clearly wishes to use the prison farmland purely to maximize economic or practical functions. I do not believe that the buildings I saw on the site are condemnable in condition and should be demolished.

It would be fruitless to focus for long on what was done or not done during the past three decades to send the prison farm into a downward spiral of decline. Obtaining detailed and factual information about why decisions were made is challenging in itself. More importantly, if historic preservation is to happen to save what remains of the prison farm, the moment for action is now, for all the old structures have yet to be demolished. An actual prison farm system could not possibly be restored on its old site. Creative alternate uses must be developed. Responsible planners, preservationists, and community members could save this historic site with the proper involvement. The key is to reach the City officials, the City Council, who are the final decision-makers and convince them that there is a vision for the Old Honor Farm having more to do than with sanitation purposes. If more Atlantans became aware of this valuable, environmentally rich and historic place, they could influence City officials. Finally, some brave person or group must pick up the historic registry process where it was left several years ago and preserve the Honor Farm for good.

In my vision I see a thick plaque near the entrance to the old living quarter built by the hands of hardworking moonshiners, restored as a market or a park museum. It would list the typical "articles of diet" enjoyed by the prisoners in 1920:

1. *Sweet milk, plenty of it.*
2. *Beef hash, mountain and a valley of it.*
3. *Island of corn bread in*
4. *A sea of gravey.*
5. *Lightbread adlib*
6. *Much butter.*
7. *A green hillside of greens and*
8. *Shortribs cut long.*
9. *Apple pie, inch and a half thick and sliced by appetite measure.*
10. *Bread pudding if you like it.*
11. *Toothpicks if you use 'em.*
12. *Spring water.*
13. *Hour for rest and diversion.*
14. *What could be sweeter?*
(Randolph)

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