

DeKalb History Center

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DeKalb History Center

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"Shady Lawn;" Finding a Missing House

By Marissa Howard, Programs & Membership Coordinator

The location and story of "Shady Lawn," a home in East Lake, remained a mystery for decades. One could easily view this postcard and move along; it's just another house in East Lake lost to time. Most of it is obscured by trees, but one can identify a few features. The home's first floor is made of stone, possibly granite. There is a bay window on the front - or is it a tower? The roof doesn't appear to be hipped but rather side-gabled. The upper floor has a different texture and looks like shingles.

This appears to be a Shingle Style home; a rare style in Georgia. Shingle Style, which began in the northeast, is often associated with seaside locations. Often called a "cottage with shingles," this style

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would have fit in well with the architecture found in East Lake where a majority of the homes were built between 1870 and 1900.

This postcard is part of the Joe Lee Collection, in the archives of the DeKalb History Center. Joe Lee, III, was a historian, author, and collector of historic postcards and other ephemera. In a newspaper article from 1983, he discussed his massive collection and his quest to identify many of the images.

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*Photo by Dean Hesse/Decaturish/
supportmylocalnews.com*

200 Years of DeKalb County

The DeKalb History Center is commemorating more than 200 years of DeKalb with an exhibit honoring some of the people, places, and events that have contributed to the wide-ranging history of the county.

Starting out as the ancestral homeland to Indigenous Peoples such as the Muscogee (Creek) and Cherokee Nations, DeKalb County was officially established by settlers of European descent on December 9, 1822, shortly after the Land Lottery of 1821. This rural

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"Shady Lawn;" Finding a

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One postcard remained a mystery, “Shady Lawn.” Not wanting to pass up a good history mystery, I dug around and found the answer. The first clue was printed on the back of the postcard: “‘Shady Lawn’ is the receiving home...of the Georgia Children’s Home Society...it is in East Lake Junction, near Atlanta.”

I have been researching other homes in the East Lake area and many have quaint nicknames. The problem I encountered was that Shady Lawn is not only a generic moniker but also a descriptor. Typing “Shady Lawn” into a newspaper search will turn up hundreds of hits for the phrase shady lawn.

Instead, I searched “Georgia Children’s Home Society.” The Georgia Children’s Home Society was an organization, founded in 1911 that was dedicated to finding new residences for children without homes. In 1916, the organization needed “receiving homes” to temporarily house children until they could find a permanent home.

In May 1919, the Society purchased Shady Lawn. “A real home, with a big yard, large shade trees, and a barn for a cow-only there is no cow.” The newspaper printed an appeal which showed a small boy asking for someone to donate a cow so the home would have “an abundant milk supply.”

The home officially opened in July of 1919, with plenty of room for the children. Four months later, on December 10, 1919, at 6:00 pm, a fire erupted in the home. The furniture and property were destroyed, but thankfully all 20 children safely escaped the blaze.

All of the older children were downstairs at dinner when the fire began. The caretaker, Mrs. Euge, was in the nursery and heard falling coals from above the ceiling of the second floor. She said, “The reason that I didn’t discover the fire before I did

was the children were so happily laughing and romping that it took an exceptional noise to attract attention.”

It is unclear what caused the fire and how bad it was. However, one December article said that the Society hoped to begin rebuilding in January. After that, I couldn’t find any more mention of Shady Lawn. During this same time, the Georgia Children’s Home Society purchased a second and much larger mansion, Ormewood Court, near Grant Park. The mansion carried a monthly mortgage of \$12,000. It appeared that the Georgia Children’s Home Society put all of their efforts toward this one home rather than rebuilding in East Lake.

I thought this was the end of Shady Lawn. It had burned - presumably to the ground - in 1919. But I just couldn’t let it go, I had to know exactly where it had been located. I researched “East Lake Junction” and found it was the intersection of the South Decatur Trolley Car line and the East Lake Line.

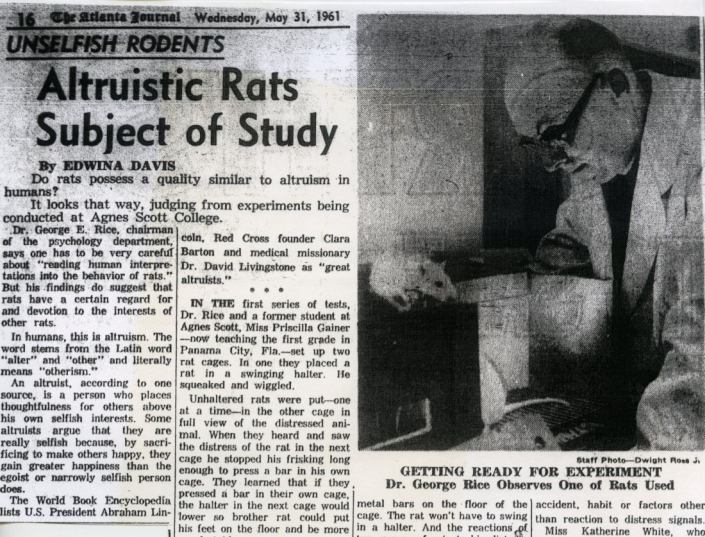
Today, this is the intersection of Oakview Road, East Lake Terrace, Lakeview Drive, and Cottage Grove Avenue in Kirkwood.

Is this the end of the search? After all, Shady Lawn burned in 1919. I was still curious about its historic location - persistent determination urged me on. My next step was to check our collection of city directories. Were there any homes listed in the directory in 1918 or 1919? Unfortunately, no. The location in question was in the City of East Lake. Until 1928, East Lake was an independent city, not yet incorporated into Atlanta, and not represented in those City Directories.

Then I consulted our Sanborn Map. Sanborn Maps were created for fire insurance purposes and show buildings and their construction materials. The Sanborn Map Books we have in our collection are from 1924, however, they were updated in subsequent years. Often, even if a building has been demolished, you can still see evidence of it under the updates. The updates to these maps were done by Sanborn Map employees who created a print

The Edwina Bell Davis Collection

Edwina Bell Davis was a graduate of Agnes Scott University. She later became a science writer/reporter for *The Atlanta Journal* in the 1950s and 1960s. She covered wide-ranging topics, including polio vaccines, astronomy, children’s issues, meteorology, and much more. She also served as Chief of Publications Activities, Center for Environmental Health and Injury Control, Centers for Disease Control, for 20 years. Her collection includes scrapbooks of her news articles, as well as photo albums and her book about Greensboro, Georgia. ✨



In Memoriam

Kenneth Biggerstaff
Betty Lynn (Ready) Crane
Rex Vaughan

Join * Renew * Give

We hope you enjoyed the spring 2022 issue of Times of DeKalb. Please consider making a financial contribution through joining, rejoining, or a one time donation. Your generous contribution to the DeKalb History Center will provide you with a year-long membership that includes our quarterly journal 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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or call 404-373-1088 ext. 1003. Visit our website www.dekalbhistory.org to pay online.

Upcoming Events

<p>Leila Ross Wilburn and the MAK Historic District Walking Tour</p> <p>On this tour, we will focus on the MAK district, Leila Ross Wilburn's designs and what makes them unique. We will also discuss Wilburn as a female architect, what that meant and how it influenced her design choices. Ticket required.</p> <p>SEPT 20 6:00—7:30 PM</p> <p>SEPT 21 6:00—7:30 PM (Last tour date of the year)</p>	<p>Decatur Architecture Walking Tour</p> <p>Take a tour and explore the dynamic floor plans, house types, and architectural styles of some of Decatur's historic gems and hidden treasures spanning 1830 to 1965. Ticket required.</p> <p>SEPT 27 6:00—7:30 PM</p> <p>(Last tour date of the year)</p>
<p>Lunch & Learn: Frank Hamilton School</p> <p>Bring your lunch and listen to a presentation and performance by Frank Hamilton and Mick Kinney.</p> <p>Free to attend!</p> <p>OCT 25 12:00—1:00 PM</p>	<p>A Spooky Soiree, circa 1922</p> <p>Its Halloween at the DeKalb History Center, and we are celebrating by throwing a Spooky Soiree. What ghosts, haunts, and mysteries might emerge when we travel back to 1922? Ticket required.</p> <p>OCT 26 5:30—8:00 pm</p>

For more information on these events and how to attend, please visit dekalbhistory.org or scan here:



New in the Archives

The Elizabeth Wilson Collection

Elizabeth Wilson was the first African American to serve on the Decatur City Commission. She later became the first African American mayor of the city. She also founded the Oakhurst Community Center (previously Community Center of South Decatur) and served as Executive Director. Her collection includes 14 scrapbooks, which are chock-full of accolades and memorabilia related to her time in DeKalb County, including photos, letters, news articles, speeches, and much more.

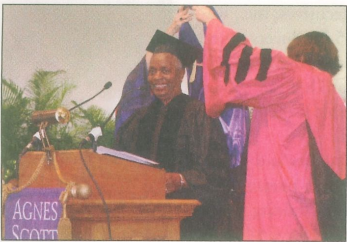
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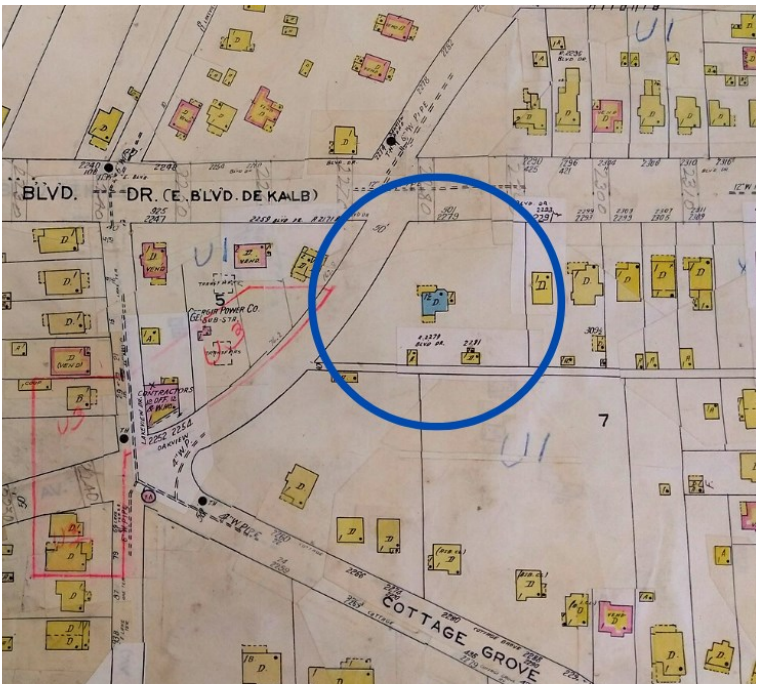
Agnes Scott Awards Honorary Degree to Elizabeth Wilson

Agnes Scott College awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree to Decatur Mayor Emerita Elizabeth Wilson at the 119th Commencement in May. Elizabeth Wilson was the first African American to serve on the Decatur City Commission when she was elected in 1983. In 1993, she became Decatur's first African American mayor, and held that position until she retired in 1999.

A civil rights activist, community health center advocate, neighborhood leader, public servant, mother, grandmother, and friend, Wilson is known as a quiet, dedicated trailblazer who forever changed Decatur with her gentle but firm determination to create a better community for all citizens.



Missing House continued



Sanborn Map, ca. 1924. East Lake Junction. Shady Lawn is circled in blue. The map shows the outline of the house, with the prominent bay window.

with new information and then cut and pasted what were usually small pieces of paper onto the existing map.

Since this specialized map shows different construction materials, the buildings are highlighted in different colors. A wood frame house is yellow while brick will be pink. But do you see another color building with a “D” for dwelling? Blue is for stone. As in a stone house.

Remember the postcard? I immediately went to Google Maps.

Here it was at 2279 Hosea Williams Drive (formerly Boulevard). And from the front, you can see the unmistakable stone bay window. I couldn't believe it. Shady Lawn survived and was rebuilt, but no longer has shingles on the second story. The discovery of this property and location is one of historian's luck. ✦



The front of the house is obscured by trees, but from the side you can see the unmistakable bay window, stone, and triple window with curved transom shown in the postcard.

To view the full article, please visit <https://dekalbhistory.org/dekalb-history-center-blog/>

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county eventually industrialized and became the largest dairy producer in the state and the world's largest producer of granite poultry grit. After World War II, business - and our population – boomed, as innovation and growth changed DeKalb and its residents. Advancements in transportation were seen with PDK Airport, Buford Highway, and MARTA, and passionate minds such as Scott Candler, Sr., Manuel Maloof, and Narvie Jordan Harris helped to modernize and diversify the county into the one we know and love today.

The exhibit opened on August 25, 2022 with a reception and birthday bash in honor of the county's bicentennial. The event was a huge success with over 150 people in attendance. Our special guest, DeKalb County CEO, **Michael Thurmond**, shared welcoming remarks before the opening of the 1997 Time Capsule. A raffle was held to determine who would help open the time capsule. **David C. Payne**, Associate Vice President of Planning and Engagement from Emory University was the lucky winner! The evening concluded with birthday cake and take-home Bicentennial bags for guests with DHC goodies and generous gifts from **Decide DeKalb**. Many thanks to **Claudia Stucke** and the many volunteers who helped to make this exhibit and event a reality!

200 Years of DeKalb is now open to visitors Monday through Friday, 10 AM to 4 PM, and Saturdays 10 AM to 2 PM. Free admission and no appointment necessary. The exhibit will be open for a year and a half. For more information, please visit dekalbhistory.org/exhibits.



Photo by Dean Hesse/Decaturish/
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200 Years of DeKalb County continued



Items representing the early history of DeKalb County. Photo by Martin Blomqvist.



CEO Michael Thurmond giving his opening remarks. Photo by Dean Hesse/Decaturish/
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The opening of the 1997 Time Capsule. (L-R Melissa Carlson, DHC Executive Director, Jennifer Blomqvist, Archivist, and David C. Payne, Raffle Winner). Photo by Dean Hesse/Decaturish/
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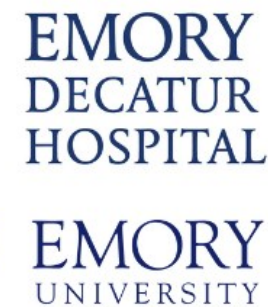
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