

**Kirk Road Landmark**Milton Candler  
Kirk Road

# Candlers' Civil War Era Homestead

## Giving Way To New Subdivision

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A big, old rambling farmhouse—long a landmark on Kirk Road in South Decatur, was recently demolished to make way for a new development of 18 single family homes, to be named appropriately enough Candler Oaks.

This historic old house was the post civil war home of U.S. Senator Milton Candler, built on the foundation stones of his original farmhouse that was burned in the Battle of Atlanta.

The story of that event reads like a chapter out of *Gone With The Wind*. Mr. Candler was away at war when his young wife, Eliza (aged 25), with their four small children (aged seven months to six years) left by carriage on the night of the evacuation of Atlanta in September of 1864.

The oldest of the children, Charles Murphey Candler, Sr. wrote of his mother's flight many years later in 1922.

"Household goods and supplies had been loaded for days on wagons in anticipation of the fall of Atlanta," he reported. "With her children in the carriage at the head of a refugee train composed of slaves, horses, cattle and hogs on foot, she hastily started somewhere, anywhere towards the south, hoping to get beyond the reach of Federal raiders. The second day a squad of cavalry came on the little caravan, destroyed every wagon and piece of furniture, killed the cattle and hogs and carried away captive the slaves and horses. My mother and her children, nurse and driver escaped only because they had gone ahead several miles and were not followed. They finally reached Dawson, where a refugee camp had been established."

MILTON Candler had bought the 250-acre farm a few miles from Decatur Square when he married Eliza Murphey in 1857.

He was the older brother of three other distinguished DeKalb County Candler: Asa Griggs, of Coca-Cola fame, Bishop Warren, a founder and first president of Emory University and John S., a Georgia Supreme Court Justice.

Eliza was the only child of another prominent early Decatur family. Her father, Charles Murphey, served as a representative and senator in both the Georgia Legislature and the U.S. Congress. Elected as a DeKalb delegate to



### Mimosa Trees Lined Entrance

An avenue of mimosa trees lined the drive to the old Candler home and gave its name to this Decatur street.

The Milledgeville convention to vote on secession, he is quoted as saying that he prayed he would never live to see the day that Georgia seceded from the Union. His prayer was answered as he died the day the convention convened.

Their original farm extended down what is now Candler Street to the vicinity of Hancock Street, with an avenue of Mimosa Trees lining the long drive to the house. This accounts for the present Mimosa Drive in that area. At the

afternoon visitor. He often rode his horse over from his Kirkwood home to sit on the porch and discuss farming and politics with her father. When Mr. Candler was elected to the U.S. Congress in 1877, men of Decatur held a torch-light parade from the town square to the farm — some on foot and some on horseback — with a long line of flickering lights.

After 31 years on the farm, with all of the children gone except for two little girls, the Candlers moved in 1899 to a smaller home on Candler Street near Agnes Scott College where Mrs. Clarke still lives and where her mother lived until the age of 96.

MRS. CLARKE recorded some of her mother's childhood recollections of the farm. "The dairy was out by the kitchen door, where the butter, milk and meats brought from the smokehouse were kept in cool, below-ground depths. Down the steep wooded hill east of the house and across Big Shoal Creek were the servants' cabins, and under a huge oak the spring was located, where the clothes were washed. There was a sheep lot back of Chestnut Hill, and two vineyards. The wine cellar, under the big kitchen wing, held homemade wines made chiefly for cooking. The parlor with lace Nottingham curtains and a big square piano faced east with a bay window. Back of it was the sitting room where every night Milton Candler had family prayers and read the Bible by the light of a kerosene lamp.

When Gene Pink, who is developing Candler Oaks on 4.1 acres of the old farm went in, most of the surrounding area described was under a blanket of kudzu with only cleared areas between the giant old oak and pecan trees testifying that once it was an active self-supporting farm. The house, in a sad state of disrepair, had under gone many changes.

"We'll save as many of the huge old trees as we can," he said. "The houses built on the site will be traditional Decatur and Avondale type homes that are built to look old so they will not become dated. There will be a single cul-de-sac circular street with all of the homes facing it."

site 12 children were born to the couple. Only six reached adulthood.

Decatur historian Caroline McKinney Clarke, a granddaughter of the couple, heard many stories of the farm from her mother, Claude Candler McKinney, who spent her early childhood there and always referred to the farm as "Our Home" after moving into downtown Decatur.

She told that Col. John B. Gordon, war hero and twice governor of Georgia, was a frequent Sunday