

DeKalb History Center

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Decatur GA 30030

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# Times of DeKalb

Summer  
2024

Family Cemeteries, Inherited Responsibilities

By Claudia Stucke, DHC Volunteer

Every time a relative or family friend died, my mother took me to the deceased’s visitation, funeral, and the interment that followed. She was one of nine children, and my father was one of twelve; and since the twenty-five-year difference in their ages put one side of the family a full generation ahead of the other, my visits to church graveyards and family cemeteries were many and among my earliest childhood memories. They were always the same: acres of green space with rows of granite or marble tombstones of varying sizes--mowed, well-kept, sometimes by church volunteers or employees, but most often kept up by family. Graves of loved ones interred in a church graveyard were easily tended on Sundays after church; but all received special attention on birthdays, anniversaries, or holidays, along with seasonal flowers or a little U.S. flag. Sometimes a cemetery-tending would

follow the annual church homecoming celebration--a special church service, a welcome to former pastors and former members, and the communal potluck picnic “dinner on the grounds.” I never heard anyone complain about or question their own duty to the departed. Every now and then an adult would comment about the weeds growing near Grandpa’s or Aunt So-and-So’s grave and how somebody

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First National Bank clerks, ca. 1967.

First National Bank of  
Atlanta, Decatur Branch

By Melissa Carlson, Executive Director

The First National Bank of Atlanta, Decatur branch, built its second Decatur location in 1951. That two-story building is home to Little Shop of Stories and previously housed a Starbucks. First National outgrew that space in just 14 years and began construction of a new new building, at the bottom of West Ponce de Leon, in 1964. Only three “skyscrapers” existed in downtown Decatur at this time (although tall retirement towers were also being built on the outskirts of downtown). Once built, it was the tallest building in DeKalb –

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Photo by Jay Bradley Terrell.

## Family Cemeteries continued

ought to do something, and then “somebody” would load a lawn mower into a pickup truck or car trunk and take care of it. And it was no more trouble to groom the nearby gravesite of a relative if need be. It’s just what they did. But younger generations have grown up and moved away, and church congregations have diminished or disappeared altogether, leaving these once-sacred duties to . . . whom?

The church of my early childhood, Stamps Chapel Baptist, was built on land donated by J. L. Stamps in 1904; but the Parker Family Cemetery, whose boundaries abut the church grounds, predates the church, with some gravestones dating back to the late 1800s. Like many other churches in DeKalb County, Stamps Chapel has changed ownership and congregations several times since its establishment. Although many—if not most—of the people buried there appear to have been members of Stamps Chapel, the various plots were deeded to individuals and families; and their descendants have—perhaps unknowingly—become the owners of the burial grounds.

One positive—and quite unexpected—example of responsibility came from a resident of another state, who expressed concern about this cemetery, where some of her relatives are buried. When visiting DeKalb County, she saw the condition of the cemetery and called to ask the History Center if it might be in danger of being sold to a developer. Even though she was reassured that burial grounds are



Photo by Jay Bradley Terrell.

protected under Georgia law, she personally made a trip to the History Center, joined, and contacted a landscape worker to clean up her family’s portion of the cemetery. We are inspired by and grateful for her example. Several other relatives and I have visited the cemetery from time to time to determine what it needs and what is within our financial and physical means to do so. As we get older and less able to do heavy manual labor, we look to younger generations to assist. This has become increasingly difficult, as so many folks have moved away from the area, and, as noted above, most may be oblivious to any connection to these generations of relatives or any responsibility for their final resting place. Ideally, we would connect to more local relatives, assess conditions, distribute tasks, collect funds if needed, and generally share collective responsibility. But however we may feel about a sense of duty to those who came before us, we must also acknowledge the cemetery’s impact on the community. Recent visits to the cemetery have revealed a variety of conditions, from well-kept to neglected and overgrown. Fortunately the street frontage area is reasonably well-maintained—a particularly good thing for the adjacent church, whose congregation must see this sight at least weekly, and for the surrounding community, whose residents have to live only yards away from it, well-kept or weedy. ✦



Photo by Jay Bradley Terrell.

Read the full article by visiting <https://dekalbhistory.org/dekalb-history-center-blog/> or by scanning the QR code:



### In Memoriam

Julie Childs  
Scarlet G. Lanier (Grizzard)  
Bonnie M. Mitchell-Lunceford  
Donald Terry Morrison  
Richard Houston Sams

### Relive Past Programs on YouTube

If there’s a past program you wish you could have attended, check out our YouTube channel! We record nearly all of our programs and post them for free. Subscribe and click the notification bell so you can be alerted when we post new videos.

Visit [youtube.com/@DeKalbHistoryCenter](https://youtube.com/@DeKalbHistoryCenter) to discover hours of free DeKalb history content.



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We hope you enjoyed the summer 2024 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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## First National Bank of Atlanta continued



First National Bank building completed by 1967.

at ten stories – and it was made of steel and concrete with white brick cladding. Completed by 1967, the building boasted five drive-in banking windows, 325 free parking spots, four high speed elevators, and a freight elevator.

While the bank had marquee labeling on the building, this project was actually built and owned by the Pattillo Construction Company – a well-known Decatur family business. The bank owned the land which was leased to Pattillo, and after construction the first two floors were leased back to the bank.

The New Formalism architectural style was popular from 1955 – 1975 and showcased classically inspired modern design. It was a reactionary style to extremely modern styles like Brutalism. The classical elements and influences manifest as references to columns, colonnades, arches, and other traditional architectural elements. This building does not have columns, but the dark voids created by the slim windows suggest a negative space between white columns of bricks. There is symmetry and order and often the building will be set on a pedestal type base – here, the colonnade around the entire building can also be read as a pedestal base. Tall high style versions may also have a decorative element at the top or a projecting roof that help to define the top of the building. Sometimes the style is

purely evocative of Greek or Roman temples that have a full-height peristyle portico, or a columned porch, around the entire building.



One of DeKalb's best examples of New Formalism, the building was designed by the architectural firm of Locatelli, Inc.

Another hallmark of New Formalism was to tie the building in with its landscaping. First National Bank's grounds included three large white brick planters that coordinated with the building, mature Italian cypress trees, shrubbery and a lush lawn. The goals of urban planning often change – while this deep set back with integrated landscaping was desired in the 1950s thru 1970s, in later decades, city planners encouraged developers to bring buildings back up to the edge of the sidewalk. The original front yard of this Decatur skyscraper was eliminated in 2014 for the construction of a new residential and retail building. This infill construction, which erased the carefully planned landscaped space, would not have been recommended by historic preservationists. Nor is it good practice to paint unpainted bricks or other masonry. One reason is that it creates a maintenance issue where there probably wasn't one before. You can see that the blue paint that was added about eight years ago has faded and needs to be repainted.

The black and white photos we have shared with you are part of a donated collection that dates to 1967. It was not unusual in that time period to hire a professional photographer to fully document the completion of a monumental structure in what was still a small town. ✦

## New Exhibit: Lipstick & Fire



*Lipstick & Fire* is a celebration of women – from DeKalb County and beyond. This exhibit highlights some individuals and moments whose contributions advanced womankind and society as a whole. Utilizing immense courage and determination, these women forged their own paths, leaving trails for future generations to follow. Sponsorships are still available - contact Melissa at [carlson@dekalbhistory.org](mailto:carlson@dekalbhistory.org).

This exhibit will be up for at least 18 months.

### Member and VIP Opening Reception

Thursday, October 3

5:30—7:30 pm

**Lipstick & Fire opens to the general public on October 4, 2024.**

Thank you sponsors!



**Catherine Mullins**

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# Upcoming Programs and DHC Happenings




**August 2**

**DeKalb Traveler—SCAD Museum of Fashion and Film**

11:00 am—12:00 pm

Join fellow members for a tour of the exhibition, *Entering Modernity: 1920s Fashion from the Parodi Costume Collection*, at the SCAD Museum of Fashion and Film. This tour is only open to members of the DeKalb History Center.

**Free** for Members (Patron and above) / **\$5** for Members (Senior/Individual/Household)




**August 6**

**DeKalb Traveler—Emory Pitts**

11:00 am—12:00 pm

Enjoy a tour of the Pitts Theology Library at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University. This tour is only open to members of the DeKalb History Center.

**Free** for Members (Patron and above) / **\$5** for Members (Senior/Individual/Household)



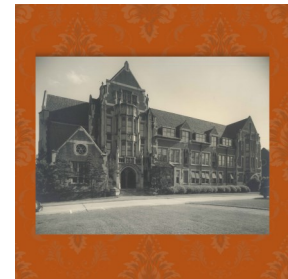
**August 15, September 24 (w/ APC), September 25**

**Decatur Architecture Walking Tour**

8/15, 7:00 pm  
9/24, 6:00 pm  
9/25, 6:00 pm

Join us as we explore the architecture and history of East Ponce de Leon Avenue.

**\$5** for Members / **\$12.50** for Non-members




**August 20**

**Hops at the History Center: William A. Edwards, Architect with Robert M. Craig, PART I**

6:30—7:30 pm

This lecture will focus on the early years (before 1915) of prolific school architect William A. Edwards’ career.

**Free**



**September 17**

**Hops at the History Center: William A. Edwards, Architect with Robert M. Craig, PART II**

6:30—7:30 pm

This lecture will focus on the later years of prolific school architect William A. Edwards’ career and when he began working with William J. Sayward

**Free**



**August 24**

**Disco Sneaker Ball and Silent Auction**

7:00—10:00 pm

Get your groove on and join us for our annual fundraising event! This year’s Disco Sneaker Ball themed party includes a silent auction fundraiser, great food from preferred caterers, open bar, disco themed dancing, and fun interactive games. 1970s disco attire is optional but dance fever is encouraged!

We will be holding a Best Sneaker contest as well as a Best Dressed contest. Sneakers can be your most stylish, or customized to complement your outfit, so bring your fashion A-game if you wish to participate.

**\$35** for Members / **\$45** for Non-members

Scan *here* to purchase tickets.





**September 24, September 25**

**Doraville Archives Showcase**

9/24 10 am—6:30 pm  
9/25 10 am—4 pm

Join us for an archives showcase highlighting collections from Doraville.

**Free**

## DHC Happenings

DHC staff attended the DeKalb County Fire Rescue Department's History Day in May. We were able to meet and interview firefighters for our Oral History series (stay tuned to our website for those interviews), view artifacts and photos, and ride in a fire truck!

DHC staff also attended the demolition of North DeKalb Mall in June, looking forward to the future, while relishing the past. ✦

