

PHQ 363847

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED NOV 9 1976  
DATE ENTERED MAR 25 1977NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## NAME

HISTORIC

\* \* \* The William P. Nicolson House

AND/OR COMMON

## LOCATION

STREET &amp; NUMBER 821 Piedmont Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

5th - Andrew Young

STATE

Georgia

CODE

13

COUNTY

Fulton

CODE

121

## CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

## OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Carolyn Nicolson

STREET &amp; NUMBER 821 Piedmont Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

VICINITY OF

STATE

Georgia

## LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Fulton County Court House

STREET &amp; NUMBER Pryor Street

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia

## REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Survey of Historic Structures, Sites and Districts: Category I  
Atlanta Urban Design Commission

DATE November, 1973

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Atlanta Urban Design Commission

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Nicolson House is a late nineteenth century eclectic residence designed by Atlanta architect Walter T. Downing for Dr. William P. Nicolson in 1892. The house is a compact two story, suburban home, sited on a restricted lot with moderate front and rear yards in the "Mid-Town" neighborhood, on Piedmont Avenue, in Atlanta. The surrounding Mid-Town neighborhood context is composed of fine, large houses in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century eclectic "styles," carefully landscaped yards and tree lined streets.

The present economic, real estate and zoning environment has had a negative impact along Piedmont and Juniper Streets, which are major one way traffic arteries, serving the Central Business District of Atlanta. Preservation efforts, through the Mid-Town Civic Association and the Atlanta Urban Design Commission are currently addressing these planning conflicts.

The growth of the Mid-Town neighborhood is historically linked to the subdivision of the Richard Peters property, comprised of two land lots (405 acres) into smaller suburban lots in the late 1880's and the introduction of electric railway service to the area in 1893 by the Consolidated Street Railway Company, only a few years after the area was opened for development. The Nicolson house was the third house to be built in this rather secluded wooded country setting, far from downtown Atlanta. The depression of 1893 significantly slowed further development in the Mid-Town area until just before the turn of the century, when the area continued to grow as an early fashionable suburban neighborhood on Atlanta's northside.

In relation to the houses built along Piedmont Avenue, the Nicolson House is from the street moderate in size and visual appearance. The consideration of comparative scale, however, is not important to the description of the house. The distinctive architectural forms and applied decoration are the qualities that make the Nicolson House unique to its surroundings.

The architectural style of the Nicolson House is truly "eclectic," in philosophy and stylistic origins. The massing of the house and the architectural motifs employed by Downing collectively express the design's stylistic origins as being derived from eighteenth century English and American sources. The eclectic approach to the composition of the Nicolson House, from these various architectural sources, is free and very individualistic, in the character of many other residences by Walter T. Downing and other architects in the 1890's.

The visual complexity of the eclectic exterior design results from the application of a decorated, two story, rounded bay

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projection and columned, flat roofed, porch to the front of a two level block house with medium pitched hip roof. This same architectural formula, with variations, was used by Downing in the main facade composition and details of the residences published in Downings book of 1897, including the houses for Mr. F. E. Block, Mr. E. S. Gay, A. L. Davis and Judge Samuel Lumpkin (all now demolished). The addition of mass elements and voids to the basic house form was used by Downing in the Nicolson House and others to express an assymetrical composition characteristic of the early residential eclectic styles of the 1890's. Downing applied to this asymmetrical mass architectural decorative details to accent and complement the placement of window openings and doorways. The architect freely used eclectic variations of the classical and neo-classical orders and design details in columns, pilasters, dormers, window surrounds, friezes and medallions. These details are composed of swags, garlands, torches and shell motifs, all in moderate to shallow Adamesque relief. The shell motif, so popular with Downing, permeates the applied carved decoration from the shell pattern in the freely designed Ionic capitals supporting the front porch to the large shell which, as the major visual concentration to the house, adorns the main facade projecting bay.

The use of materials on the exterior further expresses the architect's emphasis on varied architectural composition. The main body of the house is clad in clapboard siding, with plain corner pilasters, with moulded caps, and a plain frieze at the second story floor level. In contrast the lower portion of the projecting bay is sheathed in a board and batten siding with a tongue and groove vertical siding on the upper level providing a smooth, plainer surface for the shell, swag and torch details and the ornate frieze, which determine the architectural character of the house.

The window shapes and their placement are a consequence of the asymmetrical exterior form and the complex interior plan. The variety of window types and designs used by Downing, in the Nicolson House include, curved glass sidelights in the projecting bay on the first and second level with operating sashes, a large beveled plate glass window in the sitting room, bay windows with window seats, window/door combinations in the dining room, and a large beveled oval glass light in the front door as well as clear leaded glass sidelights in the entrance vestibule flanking the doorways.

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The refined and detailed exterior design elements of the Nicolson House are composed to emphasize the importance of the visual and physical approach and entrance into the house. This concentration on initial visual interest is continued beyond the spacious vestibule into the central hall of the house, through a second door with beveled oval glass decorated by a carved wooden border of fruit and flowers. The careful detailing of the mantel, overmantel, settee, stair and stained glass panels in the hall are a credit to Downing's talent as a residential architect. The mantel and overmantel are a complex mixture of eighteenth century English details and motifs, including a delicate ribbon/bow design framed by paired fluted pilasters with Corinthian capitals. The center of the overmantel has a circular beveled glass mirror and the narrow mantel is supported at its center by a shell bracket. Multi-colored square glazed tiles, in a Greek Fret work design, surround the fire place.

The "U" shaped stair with its large lower landing, used for a sitting area with the built in settee in much the same manner as the residential work of H. H. Richardson, is accented by two stylistically distinctive carved newel posts, one topped by an Adamesque urn and the other an individual eclectic expression of a rounded, foliated post. The entire stair composition is framed within a shallow elliptical archway that spans the stair opening. The powerful visual attraction of the stair is further heightened by five stained glass panels (3 over 2) with the top three set in a Palladian window fashion at the second floor level. This indirectly backlighted stained glass area serves as a backdrop to the stair and is immediately visible upon entering the house.

The central hall is spaciouly designed to be a major circulation and visual link to the public rooms on the first floor. It's large size is characteristic of the openness of the first floor plan, which emphasized social entertaining. All major first floor rooms (sitting, dining room and parlor) are connected by large single and double recessed sliding paneled doors opening directly onto the central hall. This allows unobstructed views into all rooms from the hall and vice versa and also enhances ventilation, during the hot months, throughout the house. When the house needed to be compartmentalized for heating purposes, these doors could be closed.

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The sitting room is directly off the hall to the front of the house and overlooks the walkway and entrance to the house, through a large beveled plate glass window with a transom light above and curved glass side sash windows. The interior of the rooms should be noted for its "in antis" columns, which accent the area of the projecting bay and its distinctive mantel and overmantel decoration. The column capitals are in an eclectic composite order and the overmantel decoration is framed in a vertical panel in the Adamesque manner, featuring the shell motif found elsewhere in the house and a group of musical instruments set in a swag design. Also important to the mantel and fireplace are the varying colored brown glazed tiles which provide a textured pattern surrounding the fire place. This room, which faces west, also has a northern exposure and the largest glass area for a room its scale in the Nicolson House. The northern bay window of large pane glass (1/1) and side lights form a window seat.

The parlor room, on the southwest corner, still remains partially unfurnished in detail, mantel, and trim, from what was originally envisioned by the architect, due to the depression of 1893. The major design aspect of this room is a small convex semi-circular projection, from the southwest corner of the room, which has shallow niches designed to hold statuary. The parlor is large, with a centrally located fire place on the south wall and opens directly by sliding doors to the central hall and the dining room.

The dining room has a shallow semi-octagonal projection that opens up the south wall of that room to two garden window-doors and three leaded glass light panels, placed horizontally over the large sideboard. A corner fireplace in the dining room has a mirrored overmantel, framed by Doric pilasters, and topped by a decorated frieze which, as a composition, serves as the major architectural element. The original gas chandelier, made of brass and silver (now electrified), is still in place. The walls in the dining room and hall have a wooden paneled wainscoat. (The furniture for this room including the sideboard, dining table and eight chairs were all designed by the architect and are thought to have been executed in Atlanta.)

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Other important aspects of the Nicolson House plan include a very small and secluded den off of the sitting room on the northern side of the house to be used as an office by Dr. Nicolson. Also the presence of two servants stairs is somewhat unusual. One is an interior enclosed stair and the other a straight exterior back porch stair.

The kitchen wing, although slightly altered, demonstrates the emphasis the architect placed on food preparation, service and the domestic functioning of such a fashionable suburban house.

The large front porch, once a center of neighborhood social interaction in the summer months, is now seldom used for that purpose.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Decorative Arts	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES      1891-92      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      Walter T. Downing

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Nicolson House is significant to the people of the City of Atlanta and to the region for four primary and interrelated reasons: (1) W. T. Downing, a respected and important Atlanta architect was the designer of numerous residential, commercial and public buildings in Atlanta. Downing was chosen by the coordinating architectural firm of Bradford Gilbert to design the Fine Arts Building at the Cotton State Exposition of 1895 in Piedmont Park. The Nicolson House is only one of five residences designed by Downing known to still exist in Atlanta and the only one surviving that represents a distinctive stylistic formula used by him in the commissions of the early to mid-1890's. (2) The house, as it exists today, faithfully represents an individualism of architectural character of the late nineteenth century eclectic period, before eclectic "styles" became formalized and academic. The house has remained in the ownership of the Nicolson family and has been kept in original form with few alterations. All the design elements and decorations of the house are still intact. (3) The house is important to Atlanta because of the associative values connected with the life of Dr. William Perrin Nicolson who was considered a prominent surgeon, Dean and teacher at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, in Atlanta, and President of the Georgia Medical Association. The house represents the prestigious position held by Dr. Nicolson in Atlanta society. The doctor gave the architect a free reign in the design of the house, citing as a parallel the necessity that a doctor must approach a patient, examine thoroughly, and prescribe for that patient a method of treatment, based on objectivity and professional judgment, knowing exactly the needs of the patient and how to reach that goal. (4) Finally, the house is an initial part of the present Mid-Town neighborhood, which was important in the early 1890's in establishing a movement to the fashionable suburbs on the north side of Atlanta. The development of this area in connection with Piedmont Park played an important role in housing patterns in Atlanta by influencing new northern growth into areas such as Ansley Park suburb after the turn of the century. Before that period the acceptable neighborhood for Atlanta society had developed along street car rail lines in southwest and east Atlanta

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

W. T. Downing, Domestic Architecture (Atlanta, 1897).  
 Helen Powell, "Walter Thomas Downing (1865-1918): A Catalogue of His Work and Clients," unpublished seminar paper, Emory University, 1971.  
 F. K. Boland, "Makers of Atlanta Medicine," Fulton County Medical Society Bulletin, M.D., Nicolson file, Atlanta Historical Society.  
 Randolph C. Marks, Interview with Nicolson family, March, 1976.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>16</u>	<u>742530</u>	<u>3740</u> <sup>280</sup> <del><u>300</u></del>	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Randolph C. Marks, Research Assistant, Atlanta Urban Design Commission  
Elizabeth A. Lyon, Consultant, Historic Preservation Section

ORGANIZATION Dept. of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Section DATE March, 1976

STREET & NUMBER 270 Washington Street, S.W., Room 703-C TELEPHONE (404) 656-2840

CITY OR TOWN Atlanta STATE Georgia

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL  STATE  LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE *David M. Sherman* DATE 10-28-76

TITLE Chief, Historic Preservation Section

**FOR NPS USE ONLY**

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

CHIEF *Leopoldo A. ...* DATE 3/20/77

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: *Donna ...* DATE 3/22/77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



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and along Peachtree Street just north of the central business district. The Nicolson House is one of the most important landmarks of the Mid-Town community. This is a neighborhood presently undergoing both change and renovation. In this context of homes dating from the 1890's into the early twentieth century, the house offers diversity in style, excellent use of materials and craftsmanship.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Major Bibliographical  
References ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

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Randolph C. Marks, personal inspection, March, 1976.  
Consultation, Elizabeth A. Lyon, Chairman, Atlanta Urban Design  
Commission Advisory Committee on Historic Structures, Sites  
and Districts, March, 1976.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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received  
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

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SUPPLEMENTAL NATIONAL REGISTER INFORMATION

William P. Nicolson House

821 Piedmont Avenue

Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia

Property and Outbuildings

The William P. Nicolson House stands on a long, narrow lot at the corner of Piedmont Avenue and East 6th Street in Atlanta. Like other lots in the Midtown area, this lot is informally landscaped with lawn, trees, and shrubbery. Sidewalks and curbs border the lot along its Piedmont Avenue and East 6th Street frontages. These landscape features are characteristic of those found in the Midtown area and reflect prevailing turn-of-the-century tastes in landscaping.

To the rear of the Nicolson lot stands a small two-story wood-framed building. This building is contemporary with the main house. Historically the ground floor of this building was used to garage carriages and then automobiles, while the second floor contained servant's quarters. Most of the houses in the Midtown area were accompanied by carriage/auto houses or servant's quarters, and in a number of instances the two functions were combined, as here. These auxiliary buildings are important architectural components of this residential development and are valuable reflections of the social arrangements of the time.

Verbal Boundary Description/Justification

The nominated property associated with the Nicolson House, its outbuilding and its landscaping consists of the intact historic city lot, 60' x 195', at the southeast corner of the intersection of Piedmont Avenue and East 6th Street. This property is outlined by a heavy black line on the attached sketch map.

Prepared by:

Richard Cloues  
National Register Coordinator  
Historic Preservation Section  
Department of Natural Resources  
270 Washington St. S. W.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334  
June 30, 1983

SHPO Certification

*Elizabeth A. Lyon* 7/6/83  
Elizabeth A. Lyon, Chief  
Historic Preservation Section  
State Historic Preservation Officer

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The William P. Nicolson House, Atlanta, Fulton County  
Photographs by: Randolph C. Marks  
Date: March, 1976  
Negatives filed at: Department of Natural Resources



1. 3/4 view of front facade, photographer facing northeast.
2. Front facade, photographer facing east.
3. Detail of the front facade.
4. Interior entrance hall.
5. Interior, dining room.
6. Interior, north parlor.

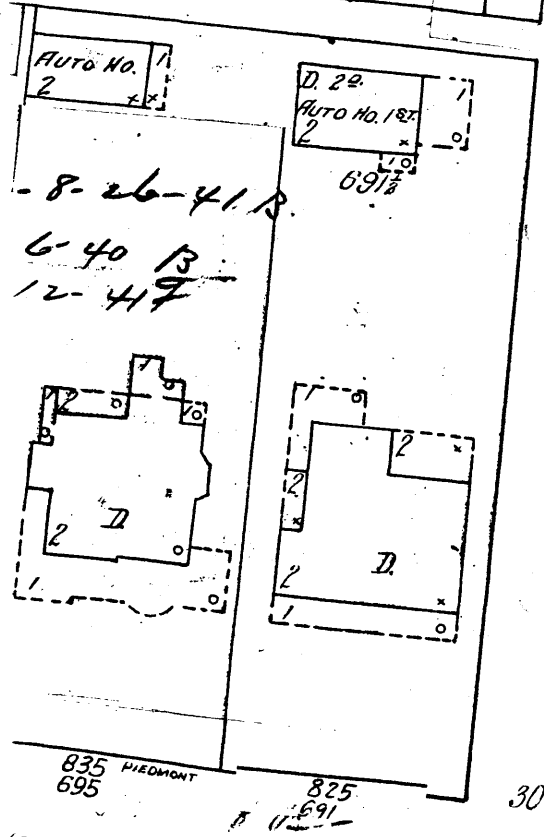
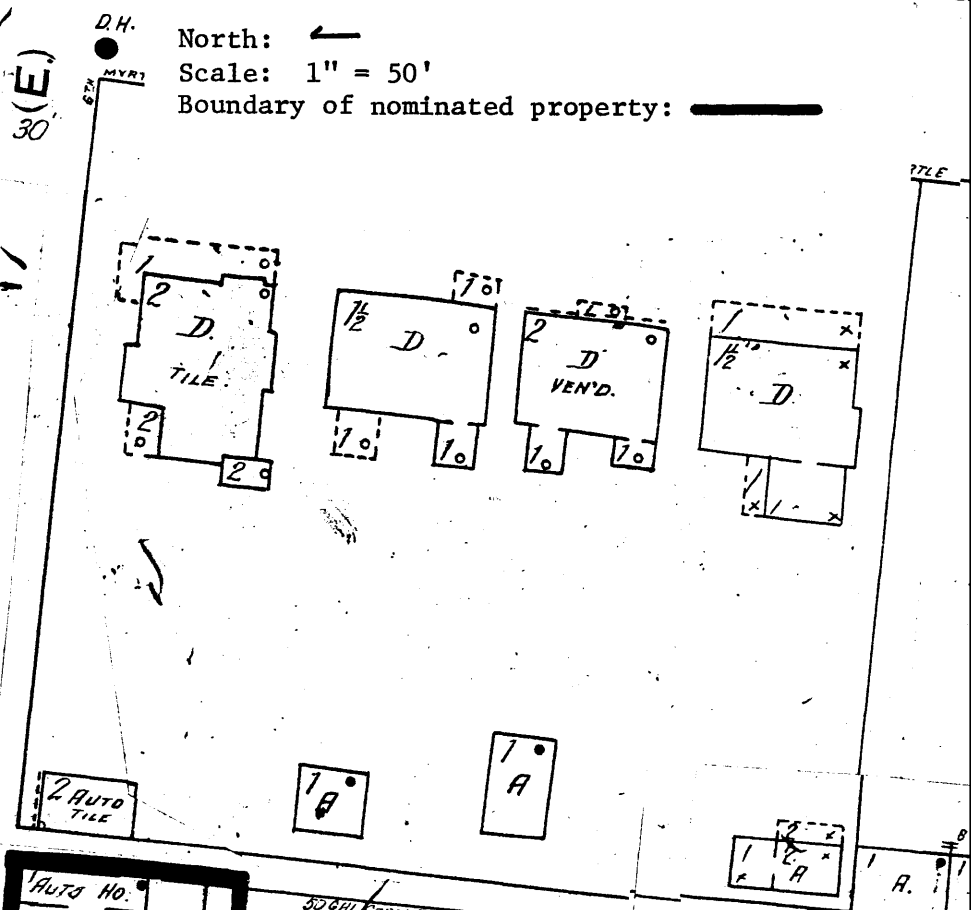
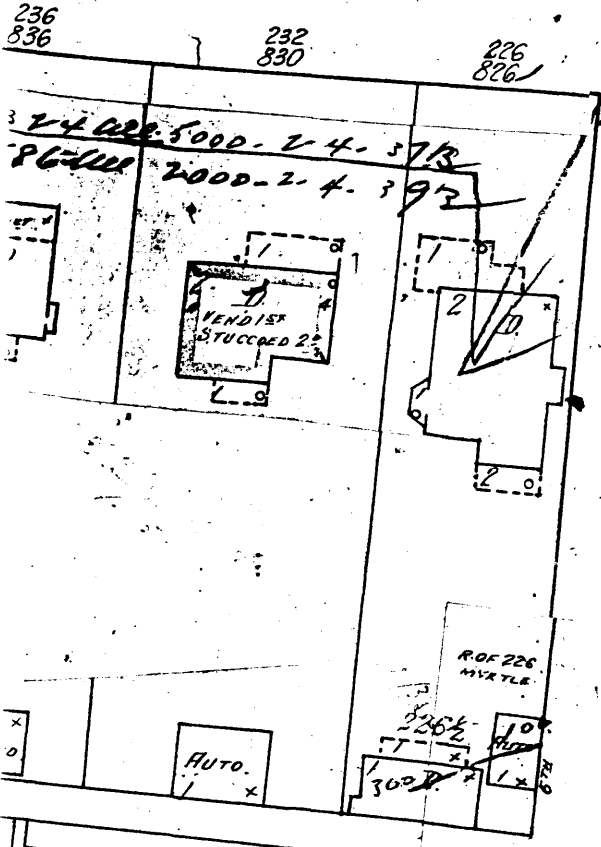
233  
231 229  
MYRTLE 825 227

# MYRTLE

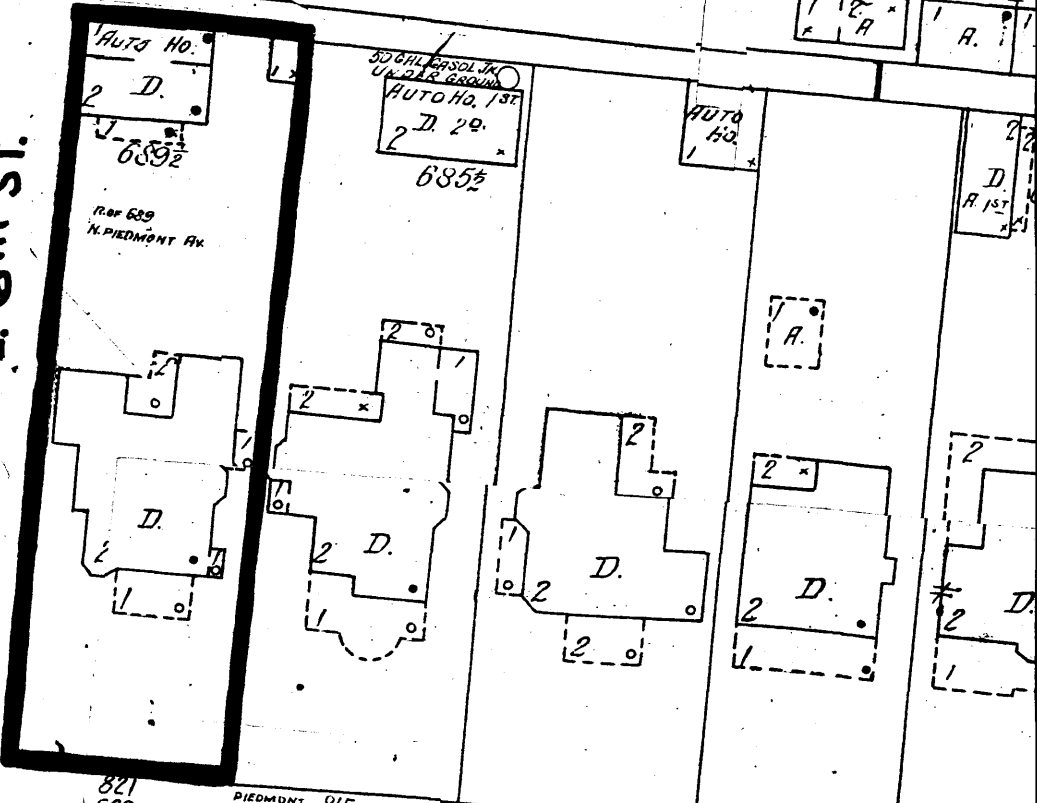
William P. Nicolson House  
Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia

## PROPERTY/SKETCH MAP

North:   
Scale: 1" = 50'  
Boundary of nominated property: 



E. 6TH ST.



N. PIEDMONT

6" W. PIPE 36" W.P. AV.

N.E.

D.H.

D.H.

835 PIEDMONT 695

825 691

821 689

PIEDMONT 815 685

811 683

805 PIEDMONT 679

199 671