

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in "Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms" (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name O'Flaherty, John, House  
other names/site number The Rock House

**2. Location**

street & number 1000 Oconee Road  
city, town Buckhead (N/A) vicinity of  
county Morgan code GA 211  
state Georgia code GA zip code 30625

(N/A) not for publication

**3. Classification**

**Ownership of Property:**

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-federal

**Category of Property**

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property:**

	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>
buildings	2	1
sites	1	0
structures	1	0
objects	0	0
total	4	1

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. ( ) See continuation sheet.

Elizabeth A. Lyon  
Signature of certifying official

7/23/91  
Date

Elizabeth A. Lyon  
State Historic Preservation Officer,  
Georgia Department of Natural Resources

In my opinion, the property ( ) meets ( ) does not meet the National Register criteria. ( ) See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency or bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

Entered in the  
National Register

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

Andrew Byrum

8/29/91

( ) determined eligible for the National Register

( ) determined not eligible for the National Register

( ) removed from the National Register

( ) other, explain:

( ) see continuation sheet

f  
Signature, Keeper of the National Register      Date

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## 6. Function or Use

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### Historic Functions:

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

### Current Functions:

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

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## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification:

OTHER: Georgian Cottage

### Materials:

foundation	stone
walls	stone
roof	asphalt shingles
other	N/A

### Description of present and historic physical appearance:

The John O'Flaherty House is located along the CSX railroad in the small, railroad-generated town of Buckhead, just northeast of the business district, and approximately eight miles from the county seat of Madison.

The house is an example of the "Georgian Cottage" type of historic house dating from the late nineteenth century. It has square massing, and includes 1 1/2 stories and a basement.

The basement level is made of rough cut, coursed rubble, stuccoed and scored. Above the basement level construction consists of cut granite blocks finished as rock-faced ashlar. Quoins are placed at all four corners above the basement level. Granite blocks 2" x 14" x 14" are joined with beveled mortar joints. There are granite lintels and sills on the windows. The windows consist of 4-over-4 lights with double sash panes. There are large, centrally placed dormers over the front and rear entrances. The dormers are faced with chiseled wooden shingles separated by a bank of coursed shingles. There are centrally placed windows in each dormer with one-over-one lights. The roof is made of composition material. There are also flat skylights of clear glass with laminated wire net. The original exterior window shutters are hung on heavy cast-iron hinges. The front entrance is outlined with a simple Georgian pediment made from thin granite slabs, while trabeated door surrounds are located at the front and rear entrances. Granite thresholds are also located at both entrances.

The house is built on the central hall plan with two rooms on either side of the hall and an open stairs to the attic. The house is sited so that the central hall is squarely aligned on a north-south axis with the front facing due south.

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National Park Service

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Interior surfaces are sheathed in three-inch beaded floor-to-ceiling tongue-and-groove boards. The floors are made of tongue-and-groove pine boards. Curly pine is the chief decorative item, being used on walls, ceilings, and mantels. Original doors with original brass hardware survive as do the original mantels with beveled glass mirrors in the overmantels. The hearth stones are single granite blocks with beveled edges. There are two granite chimneys.

The housing for a dumb waiter remains in the basement and its shaft can be followed from the basement to the attic through a corner of the kitchen.

The front of the house is level with the ground which slopes sharply downward at the rear. The first level or basement is built into the downslope. There are four large oak trees positioned on each side of the house. The house is built on the edge of a deep natural ravine. Prominent landscape features include a massive rock retaining wall on the left front side, and a smaller wall at the right rear of the structure. A formal garden may have occupied a granite curb enclosure on the right side of the house.

There are two outbuildings. The privy is located to the left rear of the house but it does not appear to be contemporary with the house. The stone fireplace in the front yard was also probably built at a later time than the original house.

An old railroad well (now filled in) is said to be located in the front yard.

The house is adjacent to a mature hardwood forest. There is a high railroad bed immediately in front of the house, although the wooden steps leading up to it have been destroyed.

Changes to the house include the removal of a hall wall; the enclosure of a porch off the back of the original house which was then made into a den and bedroom; and the attic which was made into two bedrooms about 1975. A deck has been added to the rear of the house.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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**Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:**

nationally     statewide     locally

**Applicable National Register Criteria:**

A     B     C     D

**Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):**     N/A

A     B     C     D     E     F     G

**Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):**

ARCHITECTURE  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance:**

1896-1898

**Significant Dates:**

1896-1898

**Significant Person(s):**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation:**

N/A

**Architect(s)/Builder(s):**

Unknown

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**Significance of property, justification of criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above:**

**Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)**

The John O'Flaherty House is significant in architecture primarily because of its unusual construction materials. The house is constructed of granite, a building material rarely used for residential construction in Georgia, except in areas near rock outcrops and quarries. (The vast majority of Georgia's historic houses, more than 90 percent, are built of wood, with most of the rest being built of brick.) Moreover, the way the granite was handled in building this house--rock-faced rectangular blocks, projecting quoins, sills, and lintels--exemplifies the craftsmanship of stonemasonry in Georgia. The interior of the house is sheathed in curly pine boards, a rare form of pine lumber which features a distinctive gnarled or "curly" grain pattern. Curly pine is most often seen in relatively limited decorative applications--paneling in a hallway, wainscoting, or fireplace mantels--and hardly ever as the principal interior finishing material. The house is also significant as a relatively intact example of the hip-roofed "Georgian Cottage" historic house type in Georgia, featuring square massing and a central hall plan with two rooms on either side.

The property is significant in landscape architecture because it is a good example of small-town late-19th-century "New South" residential landscaping, one of nine major forms of historic residential landscaping in Georgia, popular during the latter decades of the 19th century when the house was built. Its chief characteristics, represented by this property, include deliberately informal or picturesque overall layout or arrangement of the yard, the use of large trees, shrubbery, lawn, and ground cover as the principal plant materials, and the incorporation of a variety of structural elements like retaining walls and planting beds, along with the absence of fencing. A special feature of this property is the use of granite in the landscaping (retaining walls, planting beds) as well as the house. The landscaping is in stark contrast to the open lands and wooded areas nearby.

**National Register Criteria**

The John O'Flaherty House meets National Register Criterion C because it possesses "high artistic value" in its construction as a rural, rock or stone dwelling house. While its exterior consists of rock, a very unusual building material in Georgia, its interior is equally unique with the heavy use of curly pine as a decorative wall

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feature for most of the rooms in the house. The house reflects the original owner, John O'Flaherty's, desire to have a house somewhat different than those of his contemporaries. The house also is significant in its siting between a railroad and a ravine. The landscaping, contained and outlined in many areas by rock retaining walls, shows how it was adapted to this unusual setting, one that many people would have chosen to ignore. The combination of the house and its landscaped setting create a romantic, picturesque environment on the outskirts of this small town. While this type of house and setting might be commonplace in Great Britain or Ireland, or even parts of the northern United States, it is very unusual for Georgia.

**Criteria Considerations (if applicable)**

N/A

**Period of significance (justification, if applicable)**

The period of significance is the construction period of the house, and landscaped yard, 1896-1898.

**Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if applicable)**

The main house, its surviving outbuildings, its rock retaining wall(s) and its landscaping are all considered contributing elements to this property and are so enumerated. The only noncontributing outbuilding is the privy.

**Developmental history/historic context (if applicable)**

The John O'Flaherty House is located in the small town of Buckhead, in Morgan County, Georgia. Morgan County, created in 1807, was a cotton-belt county directly along the major migration path of early Georgia frontier planter/farmers.

Buckhead became an important town when the Georgia Railroad was organized in 1833. This railroad, one of Georgia's first two which began construction in the 1830s, had as its goal a railroad from Augusta to a spot which later became Terminus/Atlanta. As the railroad was built, it eventually came to Morgan County and thus Buckhead was one of the first Georgia towns to be created along the rail line. The town existed well before 1849. Buckhead was between Atlanta and

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Augusta and a hotel, bank, drugstore, schools, and churches eventually thrived in it. Farming was the principal industry.

In 1864, Federal troops under General Geary (Sherman's 20th Infantry Corps) drove a small detachment of Confederate Soldiers out of Buckhead, destroyed the water tank, all railroad buildings, and a large supply of cord wood. Following the railroad, they went by the future site of this house, destroying the railroad to Swords or Blue Springs, on the plantation of Colonel Lee Jordan.

After the war, the railroad was rebuilt and by 1895, John O'Flaherty came to Buckhead from Augusta, Georgia. He bought a five acre tract of land in 1897. His business stationery for 1896 indicated that "John O'Flaherty [was a] dealer in general merchandise, dry goods, boots, shoes, hats and caps, groceries, wines, liquors, tobacco, cigars and plantation supplies. Hotel and barber shop in connection." This operation was on Railroad Avenue, opposite the depot. Later, in the 1900 census and in Young's 1909-1910 Directory of Georgia, he is listed as a barber. Despite these facts, oral history/tradition says he built the Rock House to be used as a tavern by railroad men and travelers. His wife, the former Emma McWhorter (whom he met and married in Buckhead in 1902), was a charter member of the Buckhead Baptist Church. Soon after their marriage and apparently due to it he abandoned some of his earlier commercial interests, including his tavern.

Several people remember that the granite stones used in the house were brought from Stone Mountain on the train and rolled down the hill until enough were accumulated to build the house.

The Rock House is the third oldest surviving house in Buckhead and the oldest occupied one. Bruce Davis, an uncle of the present owner, said before his death, that his mother, who had ten children, refused to climb the steep narrow stairs from the basement kitchen and moved the kitchen to the first or main floor. An aunt of the present owner, Mrs. Dorothy Davis Bell, remembers being at the Rock House when wooden steps led to the railroad tracks and conductors and engineers would hand children bananas and oranges.

The house can best be understood by looking briefly at the various owners of the property from its completion in 1898:

1898-1910 John O'Flaherty

John O'Flaherty (1857-1910) was born in Georgia, to Irish-born parents, according to the census and was living in the Orphans' Asylum in Augusta in the 1870 Census as an eleven year old youth. His sister, Katie, married in Augusta in 1868 to William A. Hannah, a railroad



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worker. In the 1880 Census, the Hannahs were living in nearby Rutledge, Georgia, also in Morgan County. By 1892, they had moved to Buckhead and her brother soon followed in 1895. How he made his way from the orphans' home to Buckhead in a 25-year span, has not been determined. The parents of John and Katie had apparently come to Georgia from New York, where Katie was born in the early 1850s. Tradition says that the Hannahs built a hotel in Buckhead. After O'Flaherty came to visit the Hannahs, he stayed and built a barbershop, a store, and the Rock House which was said to be allegedly used as a tavern. He also had a pet crow that sat on his shoulder. The crow would ride the train, as it came by, to Madison and then fly home to Buckhead. O'Flaherty also had a pet pig that weighed 700 to 800 pounds.

1911-1914 J. D., E. R. Lambert and J. T. Williford

After the death of Mr. O'Flaherty (1910), even though his widow survived him for a number of years, the property was sold to J. D. and E. R. Lambert and J. T. Williford to be an investment. J. D. Lambert attended Piedmont College and the University of Georgia Law School. J. T. Williford was a lawyer in Madison. The house was probably rented out during their ownership. E. R. Lambert died in 1930 at the age of 47.

1914-1919 W. H., C. J., T. H. and Willie E. Wheat

The Rock House and land was bought as a working farm. The family of C. J. Wheat lived in the house until Mrs. Wheat became disgusted with the basement kitchen and steep stairs. Arlin Wheat, who supplied this information, was born in the Rock House. A 1900 news story indicated that the Wheat family had occupied the house that early. They obviously were renting the property years before they purchased it and long before Mr. O'Flaherty died.

1919-1928 A. F. Slaton

Mr. Arlin Wheat has heard the story many times of Mr. A. F. Slaton driving a pair of mules from Winder to pay his father \$5,000.00 cash (the deed book says \$4,000.00). Mr. Slaton spent the night in a broom sage field and returned home the following day. Mrs. Dorothy Bell remembers that Mr. Slaton had a peach orchard with early peaches and that he sold sacks of peaches to people on the train. She thinks he went broke because of the boll weevil which arrived in the area by the early 1920s. He died on June 14, 1927, leaving \$3285 in debts. The O'Flaherty property, plus several other lots, sold at public outcry for \$2200.00.

1928-1941 George W. and Charles M. Davis

Mr. George W. Davis owned and operated a store in Buckhead. His brother, Charles was in the apple business in Seattle, Washington.

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Charles contracted tuberculosis and was advised to move south. He came to Buckhead. Family tradition holds that he had previously rented the Rock House from John O'Flaherty in earlier years. Mrs. Dorothy Bell remembers living in the Rock House as a child. She thinks that her father, Charles Davis, removed the hall wall. He slept on the open back porch because of his tuberculosis. By this time, the kitchen has been moved to the main floor and the steps boarded up. Mrs. Bell's father built the well up from ground level to porch level.

1941-1943 Mrs. M. J. Hampton (nee Davis)

Mrs. Hampton bought the house and only two acres. The rest of the property was sold separately. Mrs. Hampton lived in Murphy, North Carolina. She was a sister to C. M. and G. W. Davis. Her husband was killed when a train ran over his legs. She moved to Buckhead with her daughter, Eloise. The indoor bathroom was added at that time and there were still wooden steps that led to the railroad.

1943-1963 Thelma and Broadus Davis

Thelma and Broadus Davis moved to Buckhead in 1939. He was a brother of Charles and George Davis, and Mrs. M. J. Hampton. Laura Belle, wife of Charles, had died. Thelma and Broadus moved to be with Charles. After several years, they bought the Rock House from his sister, Mrs. M. J. Hampton, who went to Florida to live with her daughter, Polly. When Broadus died in 1962, he left the house to his wife, Thelma. When she died, she left it to Kennon B. Davis, father of the present owner. He died in 1967 and left the house to his widow, Virginia J. Davis. The present owner and her husband, Herbert H. Howell, rented the house from her mother, Mrs. Virginia J. Davis. When Mr. Howell died in 1975, Gail Davis Howell bought the house and remains owner today.

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## 9. Major Bibliographic References

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Howell, Mrs. Gail Davis. "O'Flaherty House." Historic Property Information Form, August 10, 1989. On file at the Historic Preservation Section, Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia. There was additional information provided by Ms. Howell and William G. Moffatt, Regional Preservation Planner. Additional research: 1870 Census for Richmond County, Georgia; and Richmond County, Georgia, Marriage Records.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): (X) N/A

- ( ) preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ( ) previously listed in the National Register
- ( ) previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ( ) designated a National Historic Landmark
- ( ) recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ( ) recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- (X) State historic preservation office
- ( ) Other State Agency
- ( ) Federal agency
- ( ) Local government
- ( ) University
- ( ) Other, Specify Repository:

Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property** 2 acres.

**UTM References**

A) Zone 17 Easting 280940 Northing 3716660

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property is the two acre tract featured on the enclosed survey plat dated 2-1-89.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated property is all that the current owner owns at this location and is all that remains associated with the house.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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**name/title** Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., Historian.  
**organization** Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**street & number** 205 Butler Street, S.E., Suite 1462  
**city or town** Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30334  
**telephone** 404-656-2840 **date** July 17, 1991

(HPS form version 11-02-90)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Photographs

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**Name of Property:** O'Flaherty, John, House  
**City or Vicinity:** Buckhead  
**County:** Morgan  
**State:** Georgia  
**Photographer:** James R. Lockhart  
**Negative Filed:** Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**Date Photographed:** January, 1991

**Description of Photograph(s):**

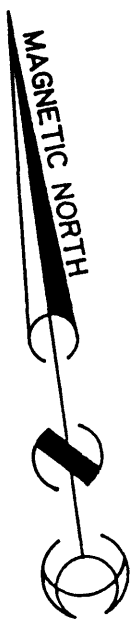
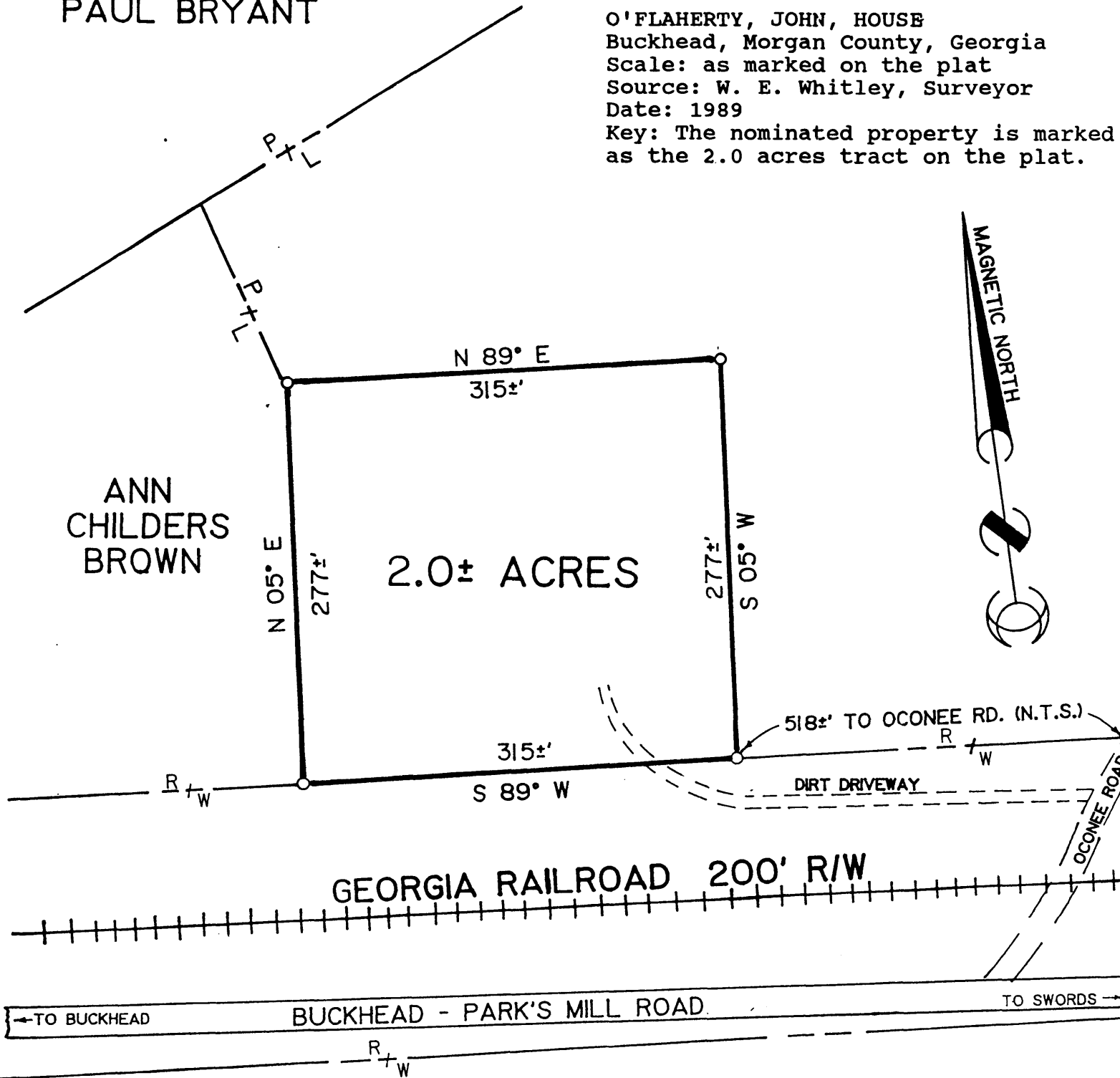
- 1 of 14: Front facade. Photographer facing northeast.
- 2 of 14: Front facade. Photographer facing north.
- 3 of 14: West facade. Photographer facing east.
- 4 of 14: North facade. Photographer facing southwest.
- 5 of 14: East facade. Photographer facing southwest.
- 6 of 14: East facade and front. Photographer facing west.
- 7 of 14: Front facade. Photographer facing northwest.
- 8 of 14: Basement entrance. Photographer facing south.
- 9 of 14: Basement, steps leading to present kitchen; and dumbwaiter. Photographer facing west.
- 10 of 14: Basement, detail of wall and dumbwaiter. Photographer facing northwest.
- 11 of 14: First floor, dining room. Photographer facing southeast.
- 12 of 14: First floor, bedroom looking toward living room. Photographer facing northeast.
- 13 of 14: First floor, living room. Photographer facing northeast.
- 14 of 14: First floor, stairs from kitchen to attic. Photographer facing south.

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PLAT MAP

PAUL BRYANT

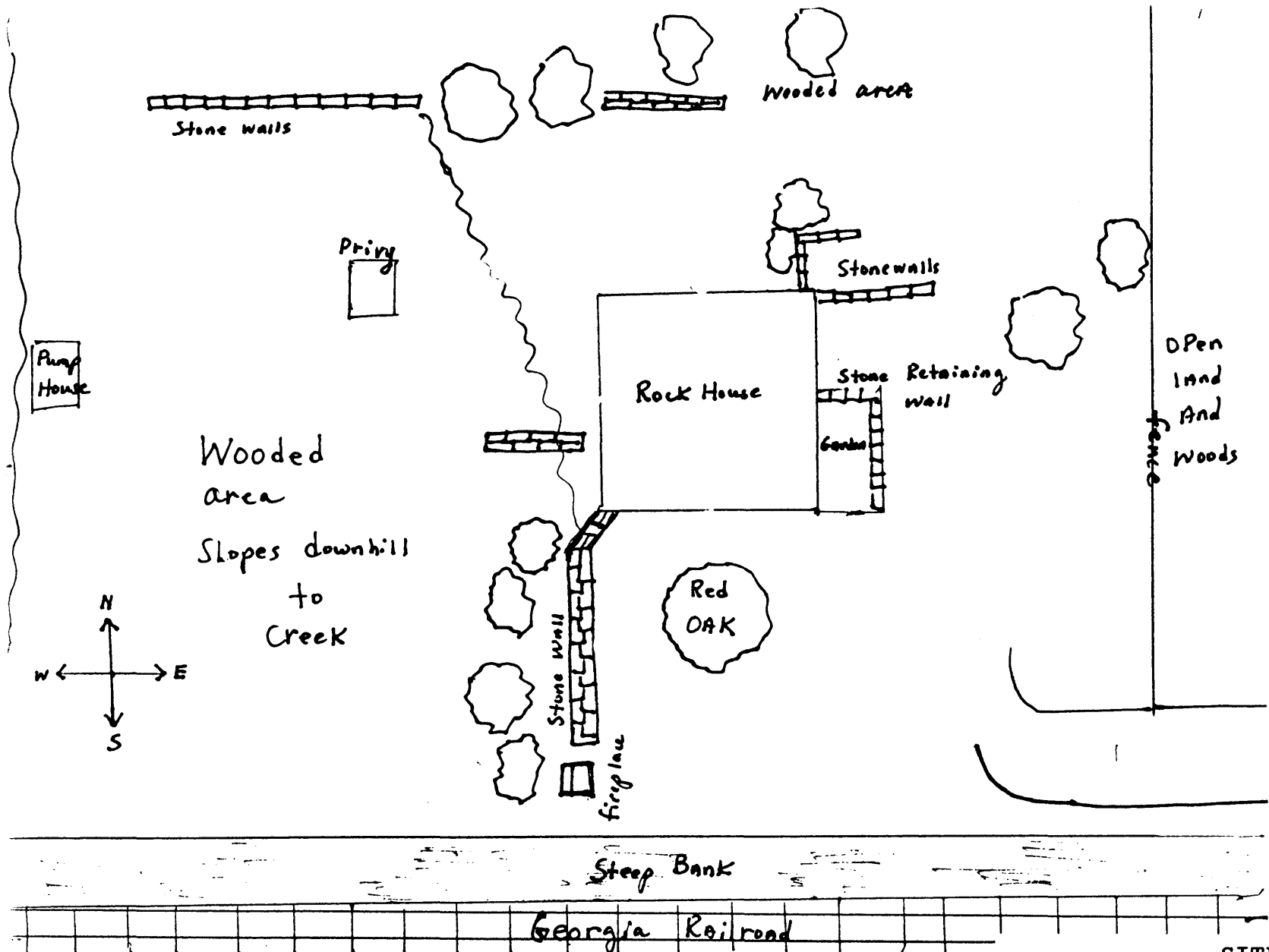
O'FLAHERTY, JOHN, HOUSE  
 Buckhead, Morgan County, Georgia  
 Scale: as marked on the plat  
 Source: W. E. Whitley, Surveyor  
 Date: 1989  
 Key: The nominated property is marked  
 as the 2.0 acres tract on the plat.



NOTE: THIS IS NOT A SURVEY PLAT,  
 IT IS A DRAWING MADE FROM  
 MRS. GAIL D. HOWELL'S  
 WARRANTY DEED

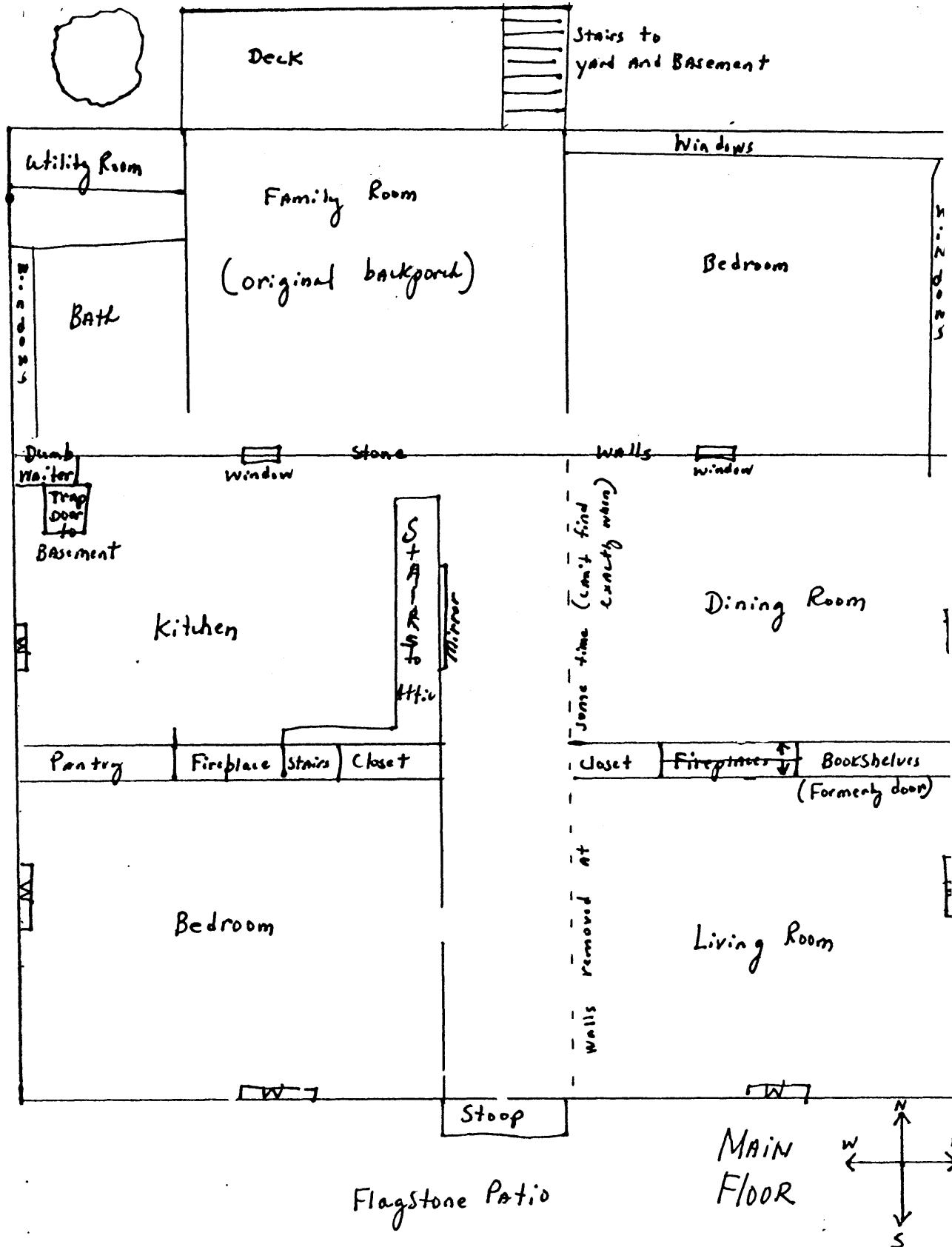
PROPERTY OF  
 MRS. GAIL D. HOWELL  
 4th. DISTRICT, GMD 279 (BUCKHEAD)  
 TOWN OF BUCKHEAD - MORGAN COUNTY, GEORGIA

DRAWN BY: W. E. WHITLEY	DATE: 2-1-89	REVISIONS:	NUMBER:
TRACED BY:	SCALE: 1" = 100'		
APPROVED:			



SITE PLAN

O'FLAHERTY, JOHN, HOUSE  
 Buckhead, Morgan County, Georgia  
 Scale: not to scale  
 Source: drawn by the owner  
 Date: 1989  
 Key: The main house, outbuildings, and major landscape features are marked directly on the plan.



FLOOR PLAN

O'FLAHERTY, JOHN, HOUSE  
 Buckhead, Morgan County, Georgia  
 Scale: not to scale.  
 Source: Drawn by the owners.  
 Date: 1989  
 Key: First floor. The current room usage is marked directly on the plan.