

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



774

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
other names/site number N/A

### 2. Location

street & number Ponce de Leon Court  not for publication  
city or town Decatur  vicinity  
state Georgia code GA county DeKalb code 089 zip code 30030

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility 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  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Richard Crass 9.7.11  
Signature of certifying official/Title: Dr. David C. Crass/Historic Preservation Division Director/Deputy SHPO Date

Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Per Edson W. Beall 11.2.11  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

**Category of Property**  
 (Check only one box.)

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

**Number of Resources within Property**  
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
28	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
28	0	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

**Current Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS:  
Colonial Revival  
LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Bungalow/Craftsman

**Materials**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: BRICK  
 walls: BRICK  
WOOD: Weatherboard  
 roof: ASPHALT  
 other: BRICK (chimneys)

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### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### Summary Paragraph

Ponce de Leon Court, located a few blocks east of the downtown Decatur courthouse square, is a short residential street containing 26 lots terminating in a cul-de-sac. The original development plan included this cul-de-sac as a way to direct traffic around a circular planter. Lots are deep and narrow, except for the developer's property at the end of the street, which contains a large two-story house built in 1921 by John and Margaret Womack. This house was converted into apartments in 1958. Most lots have modest single-family homes dating from the 1920s, but there are also a few duplexes and three small apartment buildings in the district. The street maintains a unified character through similar setbacks, subtropical vegetation, sidewalks with planter strips on both sides, and houses that are generally the same scale. A few surviving palm trees and bamboo also distinguish this street from others in the area. House types include bungalows and side-gabled cottages. Stylistic influences are primarily Craftsman and Colonial Revival. Some houses have enclosed front porches, but overall the district has a high degree of integrity. The district also includes three buildings at the beginning of the street, facing East Ponce de Leon Avenue, a major east-west street through Decatur. One is a 1922 two-story brick apartment building with classical features typical of many built in the greater Atlanta metropolitan area at that time.

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### Narrative Description

*Note: Amanda Pellerin wrote most of the following section in July 2009 as part of the "Historic District Information Form" for the Ponce de Leon Court Historic District (on file at the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division). Georgia Historic Preservation Division staff edited the description for inclusion in this nomination.*

The city of Decatur displays the terrain characteristics of the Piedmont geographic region with rolling hills and ridgelines. Ponce de Leon Court is a small residential street that runs downgrade from the ridge of a major traffic artery (East Ponce de Leon Avenue) towards the terminus of a cul-de-sac. The lower elevation at the end of the street creates a shelter from wind and extreme frosts, which is one theory for the ability of some mature palm trees to survive in the district.

The Ponce de Leon Court Historic District is located just outside of the commercial area of downtown Decatur (shown in background of photograph 11). To the west, three blocks away, is the historic (1918) courthouse, which marks the center of town and is surrounded by historic commercial buildings and a newer courthouse. Decatur went through major transitions in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century to incorporate more contemporary buildings and attract new business. Low to mid-rise office buildings and condominium towers, as well as retail shopping centers, were realized as part of this redevelopment strategy and new land use plan. The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) also built a heavy rail station next to the courthouse square in the 1970s.

To the east of Ponce de Leon Court, the area is predominately residential. The Glenwood Elementary School, established in 1913, lies to the immediate east. There are nearby pocket neighborhoods that display similar characteristics distinctive to early automobile neighborhoods of the 1920s. Ponce de Leon Court stands out among similar neighborhoods for the remarkable number of intact historic buildings in such a concentrated area. The subtropical flora mixed with native vegetation also distinguishes this street from the adjacent residential areas. To the north of Ponce de Leon Court, the large National Register-listed Decatur cemetery borders the property, providing a development buffer on this edge.



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Ponce de Leon Court is a single, 750-foot-long street extending north from East Ponce de Leon Avenue. The district is comprised entirely of houses in similar styles with distinct individual details on each residence. Single-family dwellings and duplexes make up the majority of the district, but it also includes three multi-family buildings. The houses and apartment buildings are generally placed close to the street giving shallow front-yard setbacks and large backyards. The side-yards are narrow but uniform along the street.

The original layout of the area (once also known as Palm Court or the M. H. Womack Property Subdivision) consisted of 27 narrow, deep lots facing Ponce de Leon Court and an additional 12 shallower lots facing Barry Street (present-day Commerce Drive). All 39 lots were planned in rectilinear shapes. This configuration of the lots within the district has largely been preserved with the exception of three properties (136, 140, and 144) on the west side of Ponce de Leon Court that appropriated the shallow lots facing Commerce Drive, and the irregular lot lines at the apex of the cul-de-sac. The separate lots facing Commerce have not been developed, and are not in the district. The cul-de-sac was a defining feature of the original development plan. It centers on a circular planter that flows auto traffic around it (photographs 1, 2, and 14). On both sides of the street a concrete sidewalk with a planter strip separates the auto traffic and pedestrian walk paths (photograph 8).

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

The district's landscape of bamboo and small palm trees distinguishes Ponce de Leon Court from other neighborhoods in Decatur. The palm trees were planted by John L. Womack, contract builder, proprietor of the Fulton Lime and Cement Company, and developer of the houses along Ponce de Leon Court. Womack constructed the house at 205 Ponce de Leon Court in 1921 as his own residence. He turned his front yard into a semi-tropical oasis inspired by the foliage and banana groves he saw while traveling in southern coastal cities like Mobile, Miami and Charleston. The planter in the cul-de-sac originally boasted a banana grove that produced fruit because of Womack's diligence to cultivating the plants including storing the root balls in his basement every winter. Today, the cul-de-sac planter has a Chinese fir tree that still refers to the tropical intent of the landscape (photograph 15). The palm trees that grow in the front yards of houses surrounding the cul-de-sac are thought to be the northern-most growing specimens and have been studied by professional botanists to understand their hardiness (photograph 13).

Mixed into the tropical vegetation are native plants that become more predominant towards the intersection of the street with East Ponce de Leon Avenue (photograph 22). Streetscapes include sidewalks lined with flowering crape myrtle trees. As the street descends into the cul-de-sac there is a brief interlude of woods and bamboo that separates the Womack subdivision from the Decatur Cemetery.

The street was made for a combination of auto and pedestrian traffic, as seen in the width of the street, easily maneuvered cul-de-sac turn-around, and generously allotted sidewalks. Decatur once had a network of streetcar tracks, one of which ran along East Ponce de Leon Avenue with the intersection of Ponce de Leon Court being one of the last stops (photograph 9). As in most urban areas, the streetcars were abandoned with the increased popularity of the automobile and bus as primary methods for transportation.

### SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSES AND DUPLEXES

One-story single-family dwellings and a couple of duplexes make up the majority of the district. The most common house type is the bungalow, followed by the side-gabled cottage. In this neighborhood, almost all have brick exterior walls and foundations and chimneys. Porches are usually placed off-center on the front or to the side. Detached garages are fairly common and tend to be to the rear of the property. Architectural details on the houses include elements of Craftsman or Colonial Revival styles, or a combination of eclectic stylistic qualities. Below is the list of addresses with their date of construction and a brief description of their architectural types and styles, as categorized in the 1991 context *Georgia's Living Places: Historic Houses in Their Landscaped Settings*.

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416 East Ponce de Leon Avenue (photograph 12, left)

Built in 1925, this brick bungalow has minimal architectural details. The large brick porch is connected to a porte-cochere.

420/424 East Ponce de Leon Avenue (photograph 12, right)

Built in 1925, the duplex has wood siding and Craftsman architectural elements. A side addition has extended the original floor plan.

116 Ponce de Leon Court

Built in 1926, the single-family brick residence is a good example of a bungalow house type with Craftsman architectural detailing.

117 Ponce de Leon Court

Built in 1926, this brick house (painted white) appears to be an unusual bungalow (possibly with an altered front porch) with architectural elements of both the English Vernacular Revival and Craftsman styles.

120 Ponce de Leon Court (photograph 7, left)

Built in 1926, the single-family house is a good example of a bungalow house type with Craftsman architectural detailing. It features a pale brick exterior and large front-gabled porch.

121 Ponce de Leon Court

Built in 1926, the single-family residence is a red brick bungalow with Craftsman architectural detailing. The façade is almost a mirror image of 120 Ponce de Leon Court.

124 Ponce de Leon Court (photograph 7, center)

Built in 1925, the single-family red-brick house has Colonial Revival elements, especially around the front entrance. A side porch has been enclosed.

125 Ponce de Leon Court

Built in 1926, the red-brick single-family residence is a Craftsman bungalow.

128 Ponce de Leon Court (photograph 5, left)

Built in 1925, the pale-brick single-family residence is a bungalow with Craftsman and English Vernacular Revival detailing.

129 Ponce de Leon Court

Built in 1926, the single-family house is a Craftsman bungalow.

132 Ponce de Leon Court (photograph 5, right)

Built in 1925, the single-family residence is a side-gabled bungalow with Craftsman details.

133 Ponce de Leon Court

Built in 1926, the single-family house is a side-gabled cottage displaying Colonial Revival architectural elements, especially around the front entrance.

136 Ponce de Leon Court (photograph 6, left)

Built in 1925, the red-brick single-family residence features a small Colonial Revival portico.

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137 Ponce de Leon Court

Built in 1926, the red-brick single-family bungalow has no distinctive architectural style.

140 Ponce de Leon Court (photographs 4, right, and 20, left)

Built in 1925, the red-brick single-family house features a small Colonial Revival portico, a side screened porch, and sidelights by the front door and windows.

141 Ponce de Leon Court (photograph 19)

Built in 1926, the red-brick single-family residence is a good example of a side-gabled Craftsman bungalow.

144 Ponce de Leon Court

Built in 1926, this single-family house has both brick and wood siding, and Craftsman elements.

145 Ponce de Leon Court

Built in 1926, the single-family red-brick residence is a bungalow house type with Craftsman architectural detailing.

148 Ponce de Leon Court (photograph 13 and photograph 3, right)

Built in 1923, the single-family side-gabled dwelling has an integral side porch and Craftsman elements.

149 Ponce de Leon Court (photograph 21)

Built in 1926, the single-family red-brick house is a bungalow with Craftsman architectural detailing.

152 Ponce de Leon Court (photograph 1, left of tree)

Built in 1926, the single-family red-brick residence is a good example of a Craftsman bungalow.

153 Ponce de Leon Court

Built in 1926, this red-brick single-family house has a central integrated porch and minimal Craftsman details.

155-157 Ponce de Leon Court

Built in 1940, this one-story brick duplex displays no formal academic style.

156 Ponce de Leon Court (photograph 1, right)

Built in 1926, this pale-brick single-family residence exhibits an eclectic combination of architectural details.

160-164 Ponce de Leon Court

Built in 1926, this brick duplex has minimal architectural details.

## MULTI-FAMILY DWELLINGS

There are three multi-family dwellings in the district, all two-stories in height. The following is a brief description of each.

430 East Ponce de Leon Avenue (photograph 10)

Built in 1922, this two-story brick apartment building with basement and attic is typical of many Atlanta-area apartments constructed between 1910 and World War II. It is defined by several classical elements, such as a symmetrical façade, two-story porches, and stone quoins on the corners. It has a simple roof entablature, a front entry with a fanlight window over the doors, and fluted columns.

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105/107/109 Ponce de Leon Court (photograph 18)

Built in 1925, the building was originally a large house later modified to accommodate three apartments. The architectural characteristics include classical elements, a large front porch, and one-story side wings. It has weatherboard siding and a side-gabled main roof.

205 Ponce de Leon Court (photograph 16)

Built in 1921, this was the two-story house of John L. Womack and is the oldest building in the district. The house was converted into apartments in 1958, with a side addition completed that same year. The design incorporates Neo-Classical Revival elements in the large porch, fluted columns, and symmetrical fenestration. The main door and two windows on each side have arched openings.



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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

**Period of Significance**

1921-1940

**Significant Dates**

1921- first tract developed by John and Margaret Womack

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

John L. Womack (builder)

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance begins with the date of construction of the first houses on Ponce de Leon Court (1921), and ends with the date of the last house built in the district (1940).



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**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Ponce de Leon Court Historic District is significant at the local level under Criteria A and C because it is a good and intact example of a small Decatur residential neighborhood that was primarily associated with one local developer. Ponce de Leon Court is a single street that was developed in the 1920s by John L. Womack (1887-1956). His wife's name (Margaret H. Womack) is listed on the subdivision plat, reportedly to insulate family assets from his various business ventures. The Womacks purchased the first tract in 1921, where they built their house at the end of the street. Subsequent tracts were purchased in 1922 and 1924. Subdivision plats for the street date from 1924, 1925, and 1926. John Womack was a small business owner, builder, developer, salesman, and amateur horticulturalist. Also known as "J.L.," Womack owned the Fulton Lime and Cement Company in Atlanta, one of several businesses he managed. The district is significant in the area of community planning and development as a planned automobile subdivision with a unique and distinguishable landscape. It is set apart from surrounding commercial development by its location on a small cul-de-sac. A few of the tropical or subtropical plant species favored by the developer are still apparent. The district is significant in the area of architecture for its good collection of residential types and styles, as identified in *Georgia's Living Places: Historic Houses in Their Landscaped Settings*, a statewide context. It includes representative examples of houses from the 1920s common in similar neighborhoods. Most of the residences are modest one-story bungalows and cottages built for the middle class. Architects are not known, and several may have been built by contractors using stock plans.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Ponce de Leon Court Historic District is significant in the area of architecture for its intact collection of historic residential types and styles, as identified in *Georgia's Living Places: Historic Houses in Their Landscaped Settings*, a statewide context. Included are good examples of early- to mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century house types and styles common in similar neighborhoods. Side-gabled cottages and bungalows are the predominant types. Most were built within a very short time frame from 1925 to 1926. The major stylistic influences are Colonial Revival and Craftsman. Brick is the most common exterior material, along with a couple of examples of wood siding. Many of the houses were historically modest dwellings, although several have had small additions or enclosed porches. One-story wood frame construction was typical. The only two-story dwellings are the former developer's house (now apartments) and two apartment buildings. While the architects are not known, developer J.L. Womack had a major role in the construction along the street. The houses in the district illustrate how popular styles and types of the period were used for smaller homes. Among the earliest houses are Craftsman bungalows dating to the 1920s. Some bungalows in the district exhibit only a few of the typical Craftsman features, or some have both Craftsman and classically inspired details. Colonial Revival details were very popular in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These are represented throughout the district on various house types, including side-gabled cottages from the 1920s. The architecture of the street does maintain a certain continuity of scale and siting that reflects its initial creation by a single developer.

The district is also significant in the area of community planning and development as a planned subdivision that reflects the city of Decatur's residential growth in the years before the Great Depression. The streetcar lines through Decatur were giving way to automobiles as the primary mode of transportation. This middle-class development was associated with a single developer, John L. Womack, who designed it in the 1920s for

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easy access to downtown Decatur. Provisions were also made for aesthetic concerns such as landscaping, sidewalks, and a cul-de-sac terminus with a planter in the middle. The development also contained a mixture of native and subtropical vegetation (including small palm trees) that gave it a distinctive appearance that it still retains.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

*Note: Amanda Pellerin wrote most of the following section in July 2009 as part of the "Historic District Information Form" for the Ponce de Leon Court Historic District (on file at the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division). Georgia Historic Preservation Division staff edited the developmental history for inclusion in this nomination.*

**PRE-SUBDIVISION HISTORY (1823-1920)**

The city of Decatur was established in 1823. When the Western and Atlantic Railroad came to the region looking to locate the terminus point of the line, Decatur reportedly rejected the railroad's offer. Marthasville, six miles west of Decatur, was renamed Atlanta in 1843 and became an important railroad hub. Decatur grew along with Atlanta. A map of Decatur from 1864 shows the street layout and some of the housing around the city during the time of the Civil War. Broad and Green streets (later named Ponce de Leon Avenue) are visible on the map as well as Barry Street (now Commerce Drive). Barry Street marked the edge of the city limits until the 1910s and development beyond this demarcation was more rural in character. The present day area of Ponce de Leon Court was pasture land in 1864 with two buildings or structures facing Broad Street and two facing Barry. A map of the area from 1879 shows more specifically the development in Decatur. Generally, there was not much construction within the center of town over the 15 years between the maps, but along the fringes of the city limits the pasture land began to be divided into large lots. Along Barry Street, and beyond it on Broad, more housing developed.

By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Decatur continued to see growth and prosperity, with population increases partly due to businessmen commuting to nearby Atlanta and the establishment of educational institutions such as Agnes Scott Female Seminary. Prior to 1891, the Georgia Railroad was the only connection between Atlanta and Decatur besides horse-drawn buggy. In the spring of 1891, the Metropolitan Street Railroad Company extended a street railway service (initially non-electric) that ran from Pryor Street in Atlanta through Reynoldstown terminating in Decatur by the Agnes Scott campus. This line was known as the South Decatur Trolley. A few years later, the Atlanta City Street Railway Company secured a franchise to build a line from Atlanta to Decatur. It started in downtown Atlanta and circled the Decatur courthouse square. This electric streetcar line was listed on some maps as the Main Decatur Line and would serve the Ponce de Leon Court area until around 1948.

In 1900 the city of Decatur annexed additional land including the parcels of land that would become the Womack subdivision (Ponce de Leon Court). A 1901 city map displays the additional development and density within the newly expanded city limits. The land east of Barry Street and north of Broad Street where the district now lies is divided into two large tracts of land owned by E.S. Lathrop and Glen Esdale. The route of the two streetcar lines in Decatur are also visible on the map, showing how the Main Decatur Line runs past the Esdale and Lathrop properties. The 1915 DeKalb County Atlas provides another snapshot of the district. Land Lot Number 246 in the 15<sup>th</sup> tax district contains the area that would become Ponce de Leon Court. Again, the land is subdivided but into three distinct parcels owned by J.W. Pearce, Frank Lathrop and a Miss Laura Lathrop. The map also clearly denotes the streetcar track that runs along Ponce de Leon Avenue. The next

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ten years of development would change the large lots into an early auto subdivision that is the subject of this nomination.

### WOMACK SUBDIVISION DEVELOPMENT (1921-1930)

As the automobile took over as the primary mode of transportation, the nature of housing began to change. Among the neighborhoods developed in Decatur according to the new layout of residential settings were Ponce de Leon Terrace, Ponce de Leon Heights, Chelsea Heights, Clairemont Park and Ponce de Leon Court. By the mid-1920s East Lake Drive, Ponce de Leon Avenue, and Howard Street constituted the three main automobile routes in Decatur .

In 1921 John (J.L.) and Margaret Womack purchased a tract of land bisected by a pig trail and built a large house in front of which he planted tropical plants. This two-story home with Neo-Classical Revival architectural details became the anchor of the Womack Subdivision developed a few years later. J.L. Womack experimented with growing banana plants, having employees dig up the root balls of the plant every winter and storing them in the basement of the house at 205 Ponce de Leon Court. The unique landscaping of this house would help differentiate the neighborhood from others around the city. Because of this immediately recognizable characteristic, the neighborhood was originally known as Palm Court.

The Womacks bought an additional parcel of land from J.W. Pearce in May of 1922 for \$1,200. In March of 1924, the Womacks acquired three more parcels from Pearce for a total cost of \$3,500. The plats of the subdivision date from 1924, 1925, and 1926. While the developer is listed as M.H. Womack on the plat maps, this person was J.L. Womack's wife, Margaret (Maggie) H. Womack. According to the family's oral history, the properties purchased by J.L. were routinely put into different family members' names to insulate his real estate from financial crisis.

According to family records, J.L. Womack personally oversaw the development of the street. Information is not conclusive as to whether individual properties were developed and sold to home buyers or whether there was simultaneous construction of most houses along the entire street. The *DeKalb New Era* credits J.L. with the construction of Ponce de Leon Court and the houses along the street. The local newspaper describes J.L. as a "public spirited citizen of whom Decatur may well feel pride. He is developing Ponce de Leon Court, having completed more than a half dozen modern dwellings and having several others under way" (*The DeKalb New Era*, July 22, 1926). J.L. may have used his contacts through his cement and lime company to hire contract workers to construct the houses. His grandson relates that he worked with an architect to design other buildings around the city and state, but the architect's name has been lost. The houses on Ponce de Leon Court are not believed to be a product of designs taken from published plan books, but an expression of popular house style trends adapted by J.L. and potentially his architect.

In the DeKalb real estate records office, deeds recorded in 1927 show the purchase of several of the properties within the district from individual property owners. In 1930 a notation was written on top of these deeds requiring that any future payment towards the mortgage of these properties should go to the Equitable Trust Bank. This suggests that the Womacks lost property to foreclosure during the Great Depression years.

The Sanborn Fire Insurance maps dating from 1924 and updated to 1941 show Ponce de Leon Court (developed sometime between 1921 and 1924) lined with single-story dwellings placed with uniform, shallow setbacks of 10 to 15 feet in narrow, deep lots. Compared with other neighborhoods in Decatur, houses on Ponce de Leon Court were much closer together. This is validated by nearby neighborhoods visible on the



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same sheet of the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps. Despite notable differences, the neighborhood contained the standardizing features brought by the automobile age including private driveways for each house and detached auto garages located behind the main house. Even the apartment buildings on Ponce de Leon Court and East Ponce de Leon Avenue show garage outbuildings for renters. Mixed density housing has been a characteristic of this part of Decatur since its inception.

#### MID-20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY (1930-1960s)

Following the Great Depression and World War II, quality affordable housing was in high demand and short supply. Ponce de Leon Court filled a vital need for families seeking comfortable dwelling spaces at a reasonable price. The houses within the neighborhood were highly coveted for their location and stability. According to the oral account of John Womack III, the demographics of the home owners in the neighborhood were white, middle-class professionals: doctors, teachers, dentists, salesmen, nurses, business owners, and lawyers. The age group ranged from children to young professionals to retirees and widows. The proximity of the school made the neighborhood attractive to families and provided the Womack grandchildren with playmates. Young professionals could enjoy the quiet atmosphere of the street without compromising the closeness and convenience of in-town living including public transportation, which by the 1950s meant buses. John Womack III describes the neighborhood during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century with typical images of Americana complete with popsicle stands run by neighborhood children and block parties with barbeque. The only major changes to the street came in the form of subdividing single family houses at 420 East Ponce de Leon Avenue and 105/107/109 and 205 Ponce de Leon Court into apartment units.

#### JOHN L. WOMACK (1887- 1956)

John L. Womack grew up on a farm in Newnan, Georgia, the eldest son. His grandson, John Womack III, relates that J.L. completed his education up to the fourth grade. At the age of 16 Womack's leg was amputated following an accident at a construction site where a building fell on and crushed his right leg. Womack was an astute and ambitious businessman. He owned dime stores in Kirkwood and Little Five Points in Atlanta. His experience with sewer, flue lining, and fire bricks brought him to pursue distribution connections with the Stevens, Inc. companies, the largest supplier in Atlanta and the surrounding area for clay and masonry products. Using this distribution line, J.L. ran a very successful business through the Fulton Lime and Cement at 521-531 Edgewood Avenue in Atlanta. The proceeds of this business more than likely funded the land acquisition and development venture on Ponce de Leon Court. John Womack III estimates that in 1929 his grandfather lost over one million dollars in property. Womack maintained friendships with city officials in Atlanta and Decatur. He designed and constructed several buildings in both cities.

J.L. Womack married Margret Holtzclaw. According to their grandson, they lived for a time within Joel Hurt's Inman Park subdivision in a Victorian house along Edgewood Avenue in Atlanta. The couple moved to Ponce de Leon Court and built the two-story house at 205 Ponce de Leon Court in 1921. J.L. particularly made an impact on the growth of Decatur during the 1920s. *The DeKalb New Era* recognized his development of Ponce de Leon Court and general "upbuilding of Decatur" through construction and business leadership. Womack enjoyed traveling for pleasure and visiting Southern cities. Through his travels to Mobile, Natchez, Charleston, Miami, Savannah and other coastal towns, Womack developed an interest in tropical flora. He brought back banana plants and coconuts to cultivate around his property.



Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
Name of Property

DeKalb County, Georgia  
County and State

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

"Around Town." *The DeKalb (GA) New Era*, June 3, 1926.

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Decatur, Georgia: City of Decatur, September 1992.

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Harris, Johathan. "Ponce de Leon's pocket of palms." *The Atlanta (GA) Journal-Constitution*, February 23, 199?, pp. J1-J5 (from City of Decatur preservation files).

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R.C.W.R. "Decaturgrams." *The DeKalb (GA) New Era*, July 22, 1926.

"Stagecoach to T-Trolley." *The DeKalb (GA) New Era*, November 18, 1948.

Stapler, W.S. "Fulton Lime and Cement Celebrates 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary." *The Atlanta (GA) Constitution*, October 21, 1924, p. 10.

Webber, Joel and Marie-Claire, and Frank and Jennifer Burdette. "Ponce de Leon Court Historic District." *Decatur Historic District Nomination Form* (for local designation). On file at the Decatur Department of Economic and Community Development, Decatur, Georgia.

Womack, John III. Interview by Amanda Pellerin. Decatur, Georgia. July 21, 2009.

Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
Name of Property

DeKalb County, Georgia  
County and State

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Approximately 5 acres.

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>16</u>	<u>750820</u>	<u>3740800</u>	4	<u>16</u>	<u>750840</u>	<u>3740575</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>16</u>	<u>750900</u>	<u>3740835</u>	5	<u>16</u>	<u>750800</u>	<u>3740700</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
3	<u>16</u>	<u>750925</u>	<u>3740575</u>	6	<u>16</u>	<u>750800</u>	<u>3740740</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The National Register boundary is indicated with a heavy black line, drawn to scale, on the attached National Register map.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries include the residential lots developed beginning in the 1920s by John L. Womack on Ponce de Leon Court, plus the contiguous residential properties at 416, 420, and 430 East Ponce de Leon Avenue, which were developed at the same time as the Womack houses. Development outside these boundaries includes a school, a church, and commercial properties not directly associated with this small neighborhood, plus two nearby houses on East Ponce de Leon Avenue that would not contribute to the district due to extensive alterations.

Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
Name of Property

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County and State

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Denise P. Messick, historian  
organization Historic Preservation Division, GA Dept. of Natural Resources date August 2011  
street & number 254 Washington Street, Ground Level telephone (404) 656-2840  
city or town Atlanta state GA zip code 30334  
e-mail Denise.Messick@dnr.state.ga.us

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### Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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### Photographs:

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Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Ponce de Leon Court Historic District

City or Vicinity: Decatur

County: DeKalb State: Georgia

Photographer: Charlie Miller, Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources

Date Photographed: April 2010

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

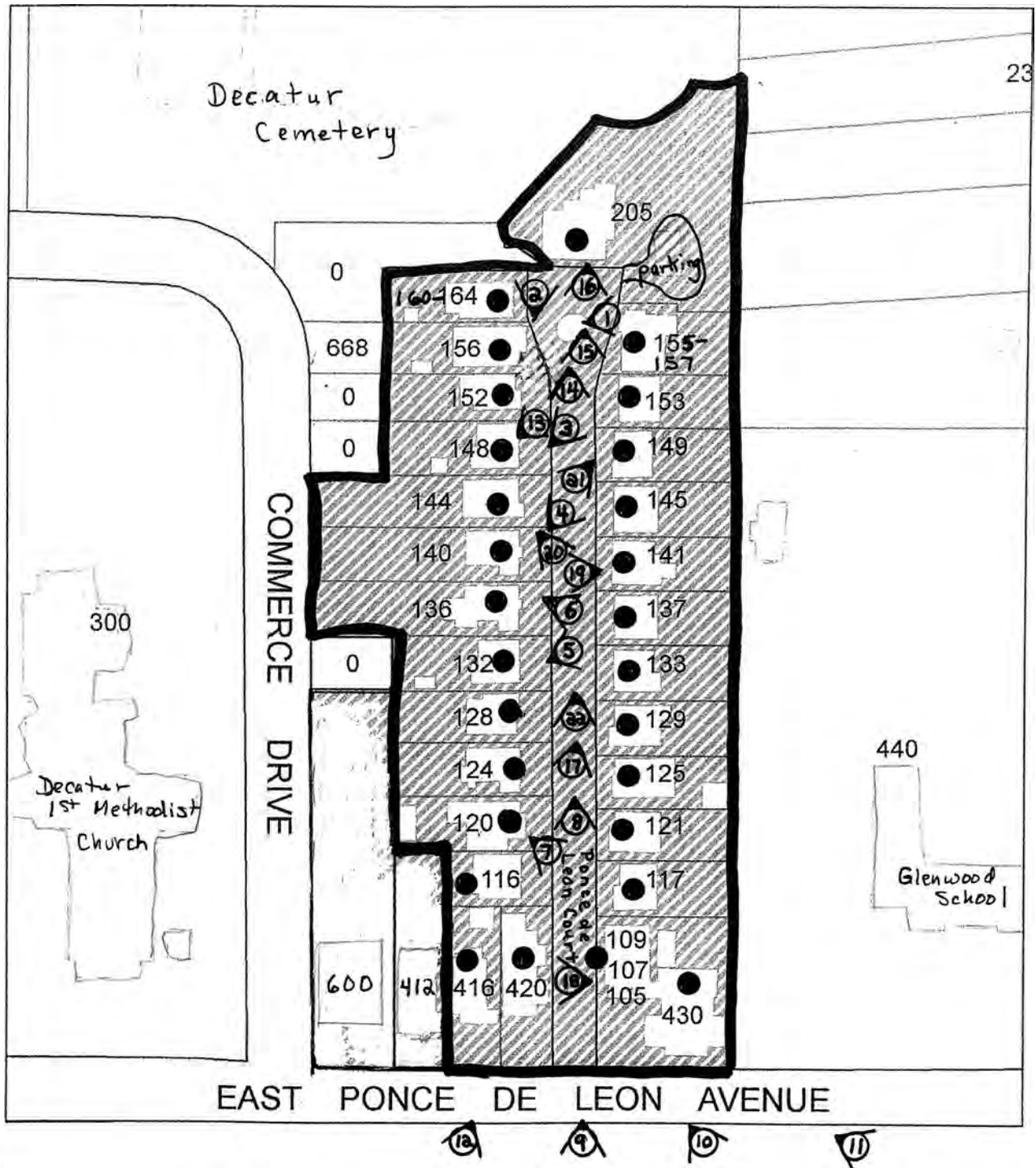
- 1 of 22. 152 and 156 Ponce de Leon Court, photographer facing west/southwest.
- 2 of 22. View of Ponce de Leon Court and planter from cul-de-sac at north, photographer facing south.
- 3 of 22. West side of Ponce de Leon Court, 148 on right, photographer facing west/southwest.
- 4 of 22. West side of Ponce de Leon Court, 140 on right, photographer facing west/southwest.
- 5 of 22. 128 and 132 Ponce de Leon Court, photographer facing west/southwest.

Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
Name of Property

DeKalb County, Georgia  
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- 6 of 22. 136 to 144 Ponce de Leon Court, photographer facing west/northwest.
- 7 of 22. West side of Ponce de Leon Court, 120 on left, photographer facing west/northwest.
- 8 of 22. View of Ponce de Leon Court from approximately between 120 and 121, photographer facing north.
- 9 of 22. View of Ponce de Leon Court from East Ponce de Leon Avenue, photographer facing north.
- 10 of 22. 430 East Ponce de Leon Avenue, photographer facing north/northwest.
- 11 of 22. East Ponce de Leon Avenue outside the district, photographer facing west/northwest.
- 12 of 22. 416 and 420 East Ponce de Leon Avenue, photographer facing north/northeast.
- 13 of 22. 148 Ponce de Leon Court, photographer facing west/southwest.
- 14 of 22. Planter and cul-de-sac from street, photographer facing north.
- 15 of 22. Planter and fir tree from street, photographer facing north.
- 16 of 22. 205 Ponce de Leon Court, photographer facing north.
- 17 of 22. East side of Ponce de Leon Court, photographer facing north/northeast.
- 18 of 22. 105-109 Ponce de Leon Court, photographer facing east.
- 19 of 22. 141 Ponce de Leon Court, photographer facing east.
- 20 of 22. West side of Ponce de Leon Court, 140 on left, photographer facing north/northwest.
- 21 of 22. 149 Ponce de Leon Court, photographer facing northeast.
- 22 of 22. View of Ponce de Leon Court from approximately between 128 and 129, photographer facing north.







**PONCE DE LEON COURT HISTORIC DISTRICT  
 DECATUR, DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA**


**NATIONAL REGISTER MAP**

National Register Boundary: 

Contributing: 

(Note: There are no noncontributing resources in this district.)

North: 

Photograph/Direction of View: 

Scale: 1 inch = approx. 140 feet  
 Source: City of Decatur

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: GEORGIA, De Kalb

DATE RECEIVED: 9/23/11 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 10/17/11  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/01/11 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/08/11  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 11000774

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 11.2.11 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



**Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
DeKalb County, Georgia  
Photograph 1 of 22**



Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
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Photograph 2 of 22





**Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
DeKalb County, Georgia  
Photograph 3 of 22**



**Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
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**Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
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Photograph 5 of 22**



**Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
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**Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
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**Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
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**Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
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**Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
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**Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
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Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
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**Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
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**Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
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Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
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**Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
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Photograph 19 of 22**



**Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
DeKalb County, Georgia  
Photograph 20 of 22**



Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
DeKalb County, Georgia  
Photograph 21 of 22



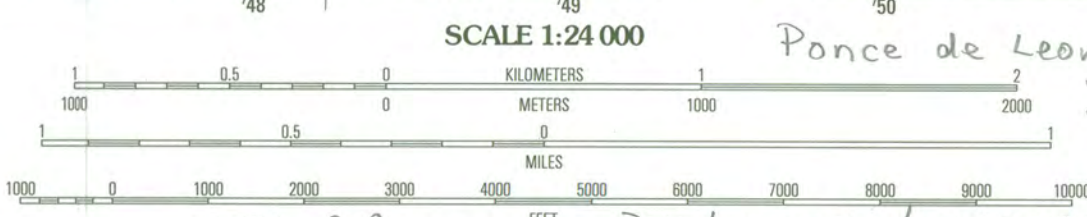
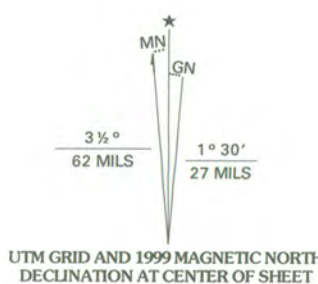


**Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
DeKalb County, Georgia  
Photograph 22 of 22**





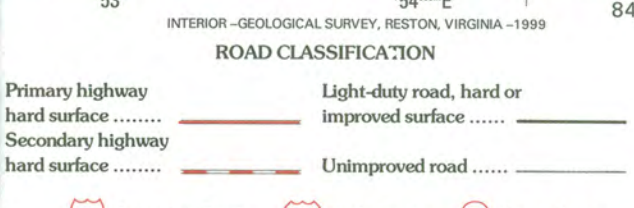
Produced by the United States Geological Survey  
Derived from imagery taken 1993 and other sources. Photoinspected using imagery taken 1997; no major culture or drainage changes observed. Survey control current as of 1991  
Boundaries, other than corporate, verified 1999  
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83). Projection and 1000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 16 10 000-foot ticks: Georgia Coordinate System of 1983 (west zone)  
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 83 and NAD 27 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software  
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map



Ponce de Leon Court Historic District  
DeKalb County, GA

QUADRANGLE LOCATION  
1 2 3  
4 5  
6 7 8

1 Sandy Springs  
2 Chamblee  
3 Norcross  
4 Northwest Atlanta  
5 Stone Mountain  
6 Southwest Atlanta  
7 Southeast Atlanta  
8 Redan



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048  
THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

NORTHEAST ATLANTA, GA  
1997  
NIMA 4151 IV SE-SERIES V845





 **GEORGIA**  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION**



MARK WILLIAMS  
COMMISSIONER

September 9, 2011

J. Paul Loether  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 "I" (Eye) Street, N.W. 8th floor  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

Please find enclosed the following nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for your consideration:

**Ponce de Leon Court Historic District (DeKalb County)**

Sincerely,



Gretchen Brock  
National Register & Survey Program Manager