

PH0352969

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JUL 6 1976
DATE ENTERED OCT 14 1976

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC ****** Willis-Sale-Stennett House

AND/OR COMMON
Great Oaks

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

W of Danburg, off GA 79 @ SR 1005

(Mailing Address - Route 1, Danburg, Georgia)

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Delhi - Danburg, Ga. VICINITY OF

10th - Robert G. Stephens, Jr.

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Georgia

13

Wilkes

317

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

__DISTRICT

__PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

__MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

__UNOCCUPIED

__COMMERCIAL

__PARK

__STRUCTURE

__BOTH

__WORK IN PROGRESS

__EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

__SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

__ENTERTAINMENT

__RELIGIOUS

__OBJECT

__IN PROCESS

__YES: RESTRICTED

__GOVERNMENT

__SCIENTIFIC

__BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

__INDUSTRIAL

__TRANSPORTATION

__NO

__MILITARY

__OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Mrs. Mary Sale Stennett

STREET & NUMBER

Route 1

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Danburg

VICINITY OF

Georgia

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Wilkes County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Washington

Georgia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

__FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" 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 Willis-Sale-Stennett House is located in Wilkes County approximately 7½ miles northeast of Tignall, Georgia, on State Road 1445. Set back about 25 yards from the road and approached by a circular drive, it is a two story Greek Revival frame house, built in the 1850's which originally was weatherboarded, but was re-sided in the 1950's, though the original flushed siding remains on the wall beneath the full width two-story portico on the front or south facade. The house has a high pitched gabled roof and two central chimneys, serving eight interior fireplaces. A third chimney, an end chimney, is found on the kitchen to the rear of the house. Some alterations have been made to the back of the house, that is, the filling in of the full width shed porch so as to change the access to the original kitchen and enlarge the present kitchen. The acreage on which the house is located consists of field and wood land which has been in the Willis family since James Henry Willis married Sarah A. Barksdale in 1840.

The portico of the south facade consists of five bays of unequal widths, though the proportional arrangement of architectural elements to either side of the wide central bay is such as to give an impression of symmetry and balance. Indeed, the rooms on the east side of the house are a foot wider than those on the west side, a difference which necessitated this exterior accommodation. The double-doored, transomed and side-lighted main entrance is framed by narrow fluted pilasters atop which a lintel, underlined by a band of dentils, forms a ledge which appears to support the balcony above it. The double-door is repeated at the second story balcony level, though here there is no transom, and the side lights and plain door frame are narrower than those of the main entrance. Carefully placed on both stories between each columnar opening is a shuttered, nine over nine paned, single windows, with the ones on the first story having boxed-lintels. The five square columns are unusual in their inclusion of a band of dentils at the bottom of each capital. The entablature which they support displays panels, each reflecting the width of the columnar spacing below it.

The east and west elevations of the house are identical, except that a low brick structure added to the foundation level on the east side of the house forms the entrance to a bomb-shelter built in the 1950's. Short boxed returns on the gables draw attention to the fact that the portico belongs to the main body of the house. The corner columns of the portico and continuations of the entablature on these facades emphasize the structurally supportive function of the portico. Here, as on all elevations, the windows are nine over nine paned and were originally shuttered.

The original northern elevation consisted of a full width shed porch with the south end of the separate kitchen placed flush to the east end of the porch. As on the south or front facade, the attempt to give the appearance of balance and symmetry was accomplished by placing windows one above another on both stories and between the columns of the porch on the first story. The kitchen retains its original end chimney with its stack detached from the gable. A recently built garage 40 feet to the northwest of the house, a recently built brick well-house 20 feet to the northwest of the kitchen and a barn of uncertain date 50 feet to the north northeast of the kitchen are the only visible intrusions, and none obscure the view of the house from the road.

The interior of the first story has a four room, central hall plan. The straight stairway to the second story is built into the wall between the central hall and the south-east corner room. It is this feature which must have necessitated that the east half of the house be wider than the west half. The central hall is ten by thirty-eight feet with
(continued)

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transomed and side lighted double doors at both ends, the doors each having two vertical panels. The length of this hall is somewhat countered by a supportive beam spanning the ceiling from west to east halfway down the hall. The southwest corner front room on this floor is distinguished from all other rooms in the house by its deep picture molding which is echoed in a secondary ceiling molding concentrically placed about two and a half feet from the picture molding. Both moldings are accentuated by a central and circular floral ceiling medallion. While the central hall and the northwest corner back room on the first story display picture moldings which are less intricate than either of the moldings of the southwest corner front room, no ceiling moldings are found elsewhere in the house.

The second story repeats this four room, central hall plan. Each of the four rooms has a closet on one or the other side of its fireplace. There is a ceiling crossbeam halfway down the hall on the second floor, as well, though here a straight stair to the attic is enclosed within the south end of the hall, and early in this century, a bathroom was added within the north end of the hall.

The attic is unfinished, though the stair to the attic and the single window in each gable suggest that there were plans to complete it. The roof structure, thus is readily apparent and reveals an unusual solution wherein studs, placed irregularly at intervals of twelve to eighteen inches apart rise from the floor beams to the rafters halfway down each slope. There is a groove in each of these studs about a foot below each of the rafters, and two beams, running from gable to gable, join these two rows of studs at this point. Seven cross or tie beams connect and brace the two beams which run from gable to gable.

The mantels throughout the house are alike insofar as they consist of unadorned pilasters beneath a plain frieze atop which rests a shelf with beveled support. The mantels in the southeast and northeast corner rooms on both floors are narrower than those on the west side of the house, while the mantel in the kitchen to the rear of the house is approximately six feet wide. Indeed, a cut was made into the entablature of this kitchen mantel, suggesting that the necessary proportions for a cooking fireplace were not accurately anticipated by the builder. While any painted oak graining which may have been found in the house originally is not presently apparent, the mantel in the southwest corner front room on the first story retains its original painted marbling, pale green and gray striations against a cream colored background.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input 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 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) History
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1850-1860

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of the Willis-Sale-Stennett House is in its architecture and its position in local history in the years just before the Civil War. The family tradition, which Mrs. Mary Sale Stennett, the present owner and occupant of the house, feels certain is correct, is that in 1854 James Henry Willis, Mrs. Stennett's grandfather, began the building of the Willis-Sale-Stennett House. It was completed in 1857, according to this tradition. There is no definitively corroborative documentary evidence, although the fact that the 1850 Census shows that three children were born to James and Sarah Willis in quick succession between 1847 and 1850 may be explanation enough for James' plans for building a large house. Further, the fact that James was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives for the 1857-58 term may suggest that his desire was to have the new house completed before his departure.

The major architectural significance of the Willis-Sale-Stennett House resides in its relationship to three other houses, the Chennault House, the Matthews House, both in Lincoln County, Georgia, and the Anderson House in Wilkes County, Georgia. (See National Register Nominations for all three). All four houses are found within a six mile radius, but their properties are not contiguous, and thus as a group they do not form a district in the usual sense. As a group, however, they do form a stylistic development which is most probably attributable to the influence of a single master builder in the years just before and after the Civil War.

While documentary evidence indicates that the Willis-Sale-Stennett House was completed in 1857, the documentary evidence for the Matthews House indicates that it was completed by 1861. Likewise, the Chennault House seems to have been begun between 1857 and 1858, and the Anderson House between 1865 and 1870. Thus there is the likelihood based on the documentary evidence that, while the construction of the Chennault House was probably begun before the construction of the Matthews House, for a time these two were being worked on simultaneously.

The stylistic evidence supports the documentary evidence. On the basis of stylistic analysis, the Willis-Sale-Stennett House is most reasonably understood as the first built in the series, being a fairly predictable example of the late Greek Revival style with its full width, two story portico supported by five square columns between which on the wall beneath eight single shuttered windows and two doorways (the one on the second story belonging to a small balcony) are carefully placed on both stories. A significant feature of the Willis-Sale-Stennett House is that the house and portico are both under a single roof, and thus the portico columns perform as essential supports in the structure of the house.

The second in the series, upon this visual analysis, would seem to be the Chennault House, which is similar in appearance to the Willis-Sale-Stennett House, particularly in its incorporation of the portico with the main body of the house and more generally, in its

(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Chambers, Margaret, personal inspection, October 27, 1975; interviews with Mary Stennett, owner and descendant of James H. Willis, October 27, 1975 and October 31, 1975.
 Newsome, Nell and F. M., Wilkes County Cemeteries; Washington, Ga., 1970.
 Willingham, Robert Marion, We Have This Heritage; Washington, Ga., 1969.
 Articles, Augusta Chronicle, October 2, 1969; Washington, Georgia, News-Reporter, March 23, 1967; Washington, Georgia, News-Reporter, Supplement, March 30, 1967.
Sageus, Charles, A Social and Economic History of the Danburg Community, M.A. Thesis; Univ. of Ga., 1951

(continued)of Ga., 1951

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Approx. 34 acres

UTM REFERENCES

(SEE CONTINUATION SHEET)

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	B	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	D	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The easternmost corner of the boundary of the Willis-Sale-Stennett House is located along State Road 1445 approximately one mile and 1750 feet southwest of the intersection of State Road 1445 and Highway 79. From thence the boundary makes a straight line towards the northwest for approximately 1250 feet, whereupon it makes a right angle turn towards the southwest and forms a straight line for approximately 1150 feet until it intersects with a county maintained dirt road. The boundary line then follows this dirt road in a south-easterly direction for approximately 1250 feet until it intersects with state road 1445.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES (cont.)

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Margaret Chambers, Intern (Elizabeth Z. Macgregor, Architectural Historian, Consultant)

ORGANIZATION

Historic Preservation Section, Dept. of Natural Resources

DATE

January 21, 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 6-25-76

DAVID M. SHERMAN

TITLE

Chief, Historic Preservation Section

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

104 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

James O. Pugh

DATE

10/4/76

DATE

10/8/76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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characteristic late Greek Revival robustness. The Matthews House is an appropriate third in this series, as it is but a variation on the Chennault House, especially in the visual complexity of its decorative detailing which exceeds the simplicity of both the Willis-Sale-Stennett House and the Chennault House. The Anderson House, as the fourth in this series, when compared with the Willis-Sale-Stennett House, is seen as retaining the massive girth combined with the use of many large windows to open up the walls -- features of all four houses -- but as otherwise being indicative of new trends in architectural form. Indeed, while the use of double windows on the Chennault and Matthews Houses is an indication of the influence of Victorian architectural forms upon the pre-existent late Greek Revival style exemplified by the Willis-Sale-Stennett House, the addition of brackets and lattice work to the entablature of the Anderson House portico is evidence of the increasing influence of the Victorian on the late Greek Revival immediately after the Civil War.

John Cunningham, the carpenter living with the Matthews in 1860, according to the Census, may well have been one of the carpenters, if not the master builder, who worked on the first three houses of this sequence of four. In 1860, he was thirty years old and at age twenty-three and twenty-four in 1853 and 1854 Joseph F. Matthews acted as his Agent in the paying of his poll tax. This does not mean that John Cunningham was necessarily residing with the Matthews at that time, but it does imply that Cunningham was at least in the vicinity. In 1855, a William Stokes, living in the same district as the Matthews, acts as Cunningham's Agent, but in 1856 and 1857 Cunningham pays his own tax and is living by himself, though still in the Matthews' District (the Goshen District of Lincoln County). The tax records are lost from 1859 and 1860, but the 1861 Tax Digest does not list John Cunningham in either the Goshen District or any adjacent District.

The implication is that his carpenter work in the area in which these four houses were built was completed by 1861. It is quite possible that as an inexperienced artisan in his early twenties this John Cunningham worked on the Willis-Sale-Stennett House, learning the essentials of the Greek Revival vocabulary. With greater confidence, he alone may have handled the commissions of the Channaults and Matthews, successfully experimenting with architectural forms as he worked. A two man treadle saw, which the Wayne Matthews have given to the Washington, Georgia, museum, may have been of Cunningham's making. Certainly, that Cunningham disappears from local records in 1861 supports local traditions that these three houses were done before the Civil War.

Whether the builder of the Anderson House was someone who had worked with John Cunningham or was someone who was influenced solely by the results of Cunningham's work can probably never be determined. One Danburg tradition states that a black carpenter directed the building of the Anderson House, and curiously ten black carpenters or brick masons appear in the 1870 Wilkes and Lincoln County census records. But, regardless of the identify of the builder(s); these four houses form a valuable sequence, both aesthetically pleasurable and instructively useful.

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Georgia Department of Archives and History, County Records - Census Records, 1840-1880;
Tax Digests, 1855-1861; Deeds Index, 1820-1903.

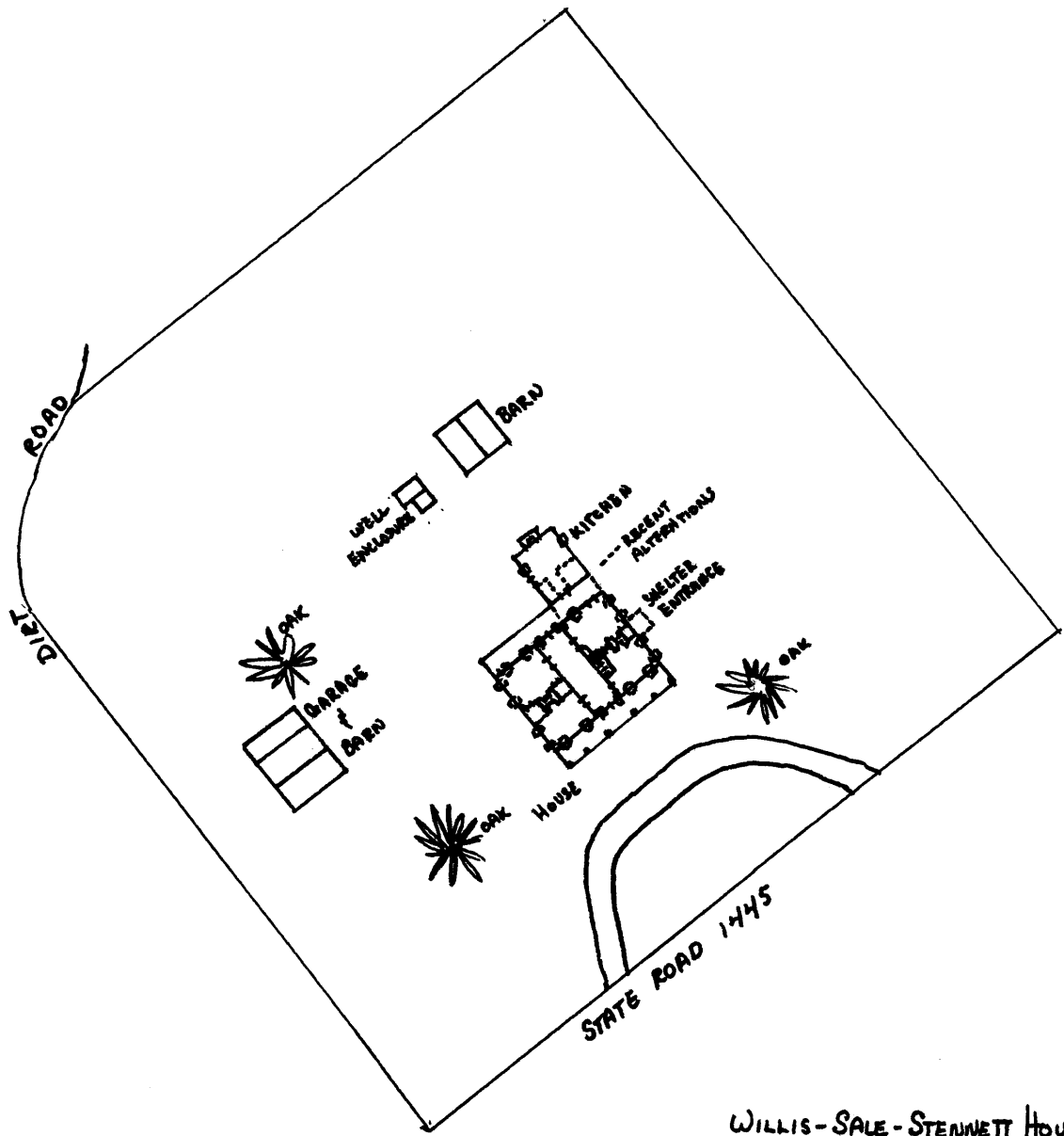
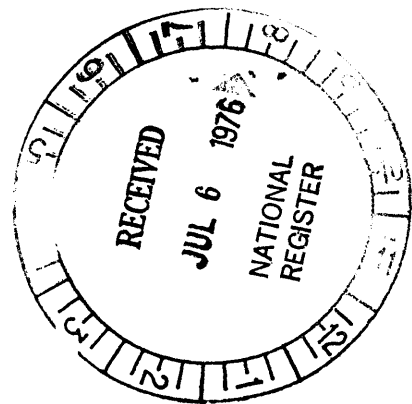
CONTINUATION SHEET Geographical Data ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

	Latitude	Longitude
NW	33° 55' 33" ^{3b}	82° 39' 16" ¹⁵
NE	33° 55' 33" ³¹	82° 38' 56" ⁵⁶
SE	33° 55' 13" ¹³	82° 38' 56" ⁵⁵
NW	33° 55' 13"	82° 39' 16" ¹⁵

Verbal Boundary Description (cont.)

The boundary line then makes a right angle turn, following State Road 1445 for approximately 1250 feet until it returns to the beginning point.

2
1



WILLIS-SALE-STENNETT HOUSE
WILKES Co., GA.

NOT TO SCALE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY MAP FORM**

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES --| ENCLOSE WITH MAP

NAME

HISTORIC Willis-Sale-Stennett House

AND/OR COMMON Great Oaks

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN Delhi VICINITY OF Wilkes COUNTY Georgia STATE

3 MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE Margaret Chambers

SCALE Not to Scale DATE January, 1976

REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES