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APR 23 1997

**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 DECATUR CEMETERY  
other names/site number Old Decatur Cemetery; Decatur City Cemetery

**2. Location**

street & number 229 Bell Street  
city, town Decatur (N/A) vicinity of  
county DeKalb code 089  
state Georgia code GA zip code 30030

(N/A) not for publication

**3. Classification**

**Ownership of Property:**

- ( ) private
- ( x ) public-local
- ( ) public-state
- ( ) public-federal

**Category of Property**

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

**Number of Resources within Property:**

	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>
buildings	0	2
sites	1	0
structures	2	1
objects	0	0
total	3	3

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

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.

*Mark R. Edwards*

Signature of certifying official

4/21/97  
Date

Mark R. Edwards  
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**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

*Edson H. Beall* 5/23/97

( ) determined eligible for the National Register

( ) determined not eligible for the National Register

( ) removed from the National Register

( ) other, explain:

( ) see continuation sheet

Signature, Keeper of the National Register

Date

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## **6. Function or Use**

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### **Historic Functions:**

FUNERARY: cemetery  
RECREATION AND CULTURE: monument/marker  
LANDSCAPE: public green space

### **Current Functions:**

FUNERARY: cemetery  
RECREATION AND CULTURE: monument/marker  
LANDSCAPE: public green space

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## **7. Description**

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### **Architectural Classification:**

NO STYLE (for cemetery)

### **Materials:**

FENCE & GATE: Fieldstone & wrought iron  
STRUCTURES: Wood beam & Wood frame with red brick veneering  
MONUMENTS: granite, marble, composite marble, concrete, red brick, cast iron, and sandstone.  
WALLS, PATHWAYS, & DRAINAGE: Granite, red brick, concrete, asphalt.

### **Description of present and historic physical appearance:**

#### **SUMMARY DESCRIPTION:**

The Decatur City Cemetery is a large urban acreage, part of which has been dedicated for cemetery use since the 1820s. It is located northeast of the town center, once the edge of town, on the highest point of land. It is the oldest known publicly owned burial ground in metro Atlanta. The cemetery is entered through gates on Commerce Drive, part of a wrought-iron fence with fieldstone piers dating from 1881. This first portion of the cemetery is the "Old Cemetery" (7.5 acres) where the 19th-century interments are located. After 1900, burials are found in the "New Cemetery" and its various 20th-century additions. Cemetery markers/tombstones in the older part are generally situated on an east-west axis, with markers ranging from small, crude hand-carved stones to monumental obelisks. Some graves are enclosed in stone tables, cribs, or ornamental iron fences. The southern half of the cemetery includes an African-American section, the city's pauper burial ground, and one for children who died at the local orphanage. The African-American graves contain cast concrete tombstones, unique to their section. The current appearance of the cemetery dates from 1881 when a formal landscaping plan was introduced by the City of Decatur. Surviving vestiges of this effort are the frame well house (now a gazebo), the granite boundary fencing, and the walkways, stairways, and drainage gullies, all out of granite. The roads in the

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cemetery once were granite blocks and are now covered in asphalt. Non-historic resources include the sexton's office (1951), maintenance building, and modern side entrance (Bell Street Gate). The newer areas of the cemetery have wider roads and wide, gently-sloping expanses of grassy lawns with a few trees. A man-made duck pond has been added in the southwest quadrant. The cemetery is now within the city of Decatur, with a city park to the north, mixed residential and commercial on the west and south, and residential on the east.

The Decatur Cemetery is a 58-acre tract located to the northeast of the town center of Decatur, the county seat, on the highest point of land. A wrought iron fence with fieldstone piers, built in 1881, encloses the southern face of the cemetery. The main entrance is through a wrought iron gate in the perimeter fence facing Commerce Drive (formerly Cemetery Road). The main gate opens to the central drive of what is known as the "Old Cemetery." This section contains the vast majority of the nineteenth century interments. Those after 1900 are typically in the New Cemetery which is comprised of land parcels acquired after that date. The Old Cemetery is the southern portion and the New Cemetery is the northern portion. All but two of the graves in the "Old Cemetery" section (comprising 7.5 acres) are situated on an east-west axis, with markers ranging from small, crude hand-carved stones to monumental obelisks. Some of the graves are enclosed in stone tables, cribs or ornamental iron fences.

Many of the earliest stones still survive. The crude inscriptions and general quality of the stone face indicate that they were not created by professional stonemasons. Some of the earliest grave sites may remain unknown due to deterioration of their fieldstone and/or wooden markers. The City of Decatur assumed stewardship of the cemetery in 1832, by constituting a five member board of commissioners.

Shortly thereafter the city divided the cemetery into plots. The graves of early Decatur citizens previously interred formed the basis of the original plan of the cemetery. Empty plots at the crest of the hill and alongside the main central path were reserved for prominent white citizens. The earliest African-American graves date from the turn of the century. A section of smaller plots separated by a road along the eastern edge served as the Negro burial ground. A concrete casting technique unique to the African-American burial tradition can be seen on numerous stones. Several plots on low-lying areas in the southeast corner of the original historic cemetery were used as a place for unmarked paupers's graves. All of the above features are still present in the "Old Cemetery" as it exists today.

The cemetery as a whole has been expanded numerous times over the intervening years and today encompasses 58 acres with over 20,000 available grave sites. The original historic section of the cemetery

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underwent a major beautification in 1881, reflecting the nationwide popularity of the rural cemetery movement. The beautification features have been preserved and maintained, and they are evident in the present cemetery. Built in 1881, a wooden well house, with lattice and shingle details, is exceptionally well maintained. The well has been sealed over with concrete for safety reasons, and is today used as a gazebo. The present grounds retain the tiered walls of granite block quarried at nearby Stone Mountain, Georgia. Walkways, stairways, and drainage gullies of granite block can also be seen. It is presumed that all the existing roadways in the original historic cemetery were once paved in the same granite block. Evidence of these blocks can be seen in areas where the newer asphalt paving material has degraded. At present, most roads in the cemetery have been resurfaced in asphalt, but the footpaths and drainage channels have been maintained in their 1881 constitution. The cemetery has a fence of wrought iron with fieldstone posts and a wrought iron gate opening from Commerce Drive (originally Cemetery Road) to the main central drive of the old cemetery. These gates were constructed during the same beautification project, and probably replaced an earlier entry way at the traditional main entrance to the cemetery.

The more recent sections in the "New Cemetery" are easily distinguished from the older sections by their wider roadways and differing grave orientation. In the more recent sections the traditional east-west grave arrangement has been abandoned. Graves are arranged such that their memorial marker inscriptions are visible to a visitor traveling the cemetery's roads by vehicle. The newer sections are large, gently sloping expanses of grassy lawn with a few trees interspersed. This is a typical arrangement for late twentieth century cemeteries in that it provides a landscape which is easy to maintain.

The cemetery has a man-made pond in which ducks are encouraged to live. There is a non-contributing sexton's office, a building resembling a small, red brick, columned residence built in 1951. It is humble but quite attractive in its tree shaded setting. There is a utilitarian outbuilding hidden from view behind the sexton's office for the storage of maintenance equipment. A secondary gate on the Bell Street entrance opens from Church Street to the more recent sections added along the cemetery's west boundary. This gate is also included as a non-contributing structure.

Throughout the cemetery there are grave markers that memorialize Decatur residents of all social strata. The craft techniques, architectural and design aesthetics, and religious iconography are important reflections of the history of the city of Decatur. The cemetery also has several commemorative markers. There is a memorial to Decatur's Confederate Civil War dead, erected in 1984 by the United

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Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC). Additionally, the UDC has marked numerous graves with small "C.S.A." markers to commemorate Confederate veterans who survived the hostilities and died many years later. The UDC has also placed a plaque on the entrance gate wall in honor of the battle there in 1864. The Daughters of the American Revolution have also added special markers to a handful of graves known to be the final resting place of veterans of that conflict. In the "New Cemetery" there is a large granite boulder with a brass plaque which was erected to commemorate all of Decatur's war dead, which dates from 1945. This was erected by the American Legion. The most recent memorial is at the end of the contemplation path where cremated ashes are interred. It was erected by Emory University (located 2 miles from downtown Decatur), and commemorates all those who have given their bodies for organ transplant and medical research.

The botanical features of the cemetery have not been fully catalogued. However, numerous mature specimens of oak, elm, holly, hemlock, cedar, magnolia, dogwood, and boxwood have been cultivated on all parts of the property to provide a beautiful park-like atmosphere. The site is bounded to the north by a city park (Glen Lake Park) and wooded areas composed of both hardwoods and a large number of indigenous evergreen species. The cemetery is bounded on the east and west by the back property lines of residences and businesses. However, wooded buffer areas exist to provide seclusion and privacy. The downtown Decatur area outside the original main gates of the cemetery on the south border now includes a large number of high rise office buildings. On most days, when weather permits, one will see Decatur office workers enjoying a work break on the cemetery grounds, as well as local residents coming to pay their respects to departed family and friends. Benches and trash receptacles have been incorporated to encourage frequent and extended visitation. Sanitary facilities are provided in the sexton's office, which is open to the public to obtain information and directions from the sexton and his staff who are at work on the grounds five days a week. As is the usual custom, gates are closed at sundown.

The cemetery retains its historic roadways, laid out before 1928, which were all platted into grave sites as needed over the following three decades. The landscape plan of paths and roadways and burial sites were well acclimated to the hilly nature of the cemetery and make it a beautiful setting.

**8. Statement of Significance**

**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):**

ART  
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT  
ETHNIC HERITAGE-BLACK  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE  
SCULPTURE

**Period of Significance:**

1826 - 1947

**Significant Dates:**

1826- earliest documented burials in the cemetery

December 22, 1832- The Georgia Legislature passed an act which provided that, "James Anderson, James Lemmon, Robert Jones, Thomas Stevens, and Jonathon B. Wilson be constituted a body corporate under the title, 'Commissioners of the Decatur Burial Ground,' with authority to fill vacancies in their own body."

July 22, 1864- The cemetery was the site of an engagement between the 8th Confederate Calvary, under command of Gen. Joseph Wheeler and Colonel John W. Sprague's troops of the Army of the Tennessee.

January 1879- First sexton, O. M. Word elected at a salary of \$4.50 a month.

1881- Extensive beautification of cemetery authorized and carried out by City of Decatur.

**Significant Person(s):**

N/A

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**Cultural Affiliation:**

N/A

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

Landscape architects (LA) and civil engineers (CE) known to have been associated with mapping and redesign of site in chronological order. (note: this should not be considered a comprehensive list due to lost and destroyed records)

- 1881- Robert Scott
- 1937- W. H. Weaver, CE
- 1944- C. R. Roberts, CE
- 1946- William C. Pauley, LA
- 1951- R. A. Clack, CE
- 1956- (illegible name, DeKalb County plat books)
- 1962- H. D. Rice, CE
- 1981- Edward L. Daugherty, LA
- 1988- Firm of Patterson & Dewar, LA

The following funeral home names are inscribed on stones in the African-American sections of the cemetery.

Cox Brothers Funeral Home, 380 Auburn Avenue, Atlanta, Georgia  
Haugabrooks Funeral Home, 364 Auburn Avenue, Atlanta, Georgia  
Tyler Funeral Home, 511 West Trinity Place, Decatur, Georgia

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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 Decatur Cemetery is significant in art and sculpture for the numerous surviving 19th-century funerary art forms, many in marble and granite, which adorn the graves. The elaborate wrought-iron fencing can also be included as art. All of these are typical of American funerary art in the 19th century but are especially well-preserved here. The scope of these monuments ranges from early nineteenth century hand carved stones to early twentieth century commercially produced Art Moderne style stones. The growth in the scale and ornamental quality of the monuments is consistent of the development of funerary art throughout the United States. The simplest and oldest burial markers, which reflect the most basic type of memorial in the cemetery, consist of crudely hand carved stone with the name and dates for the deceased, no decoration. This style has been referred to as "Pioneer Vernacular" for the purposes of this nomination. By the mid-nineteenth century, markers begin to display an increased use of iconography and funerary symbolism reflective of nationwide developments in Victorian Era cemetery art. Various examples of draped urns, obelisks, hands pointed toward heaven, the symbolic gates of heaven, and partially draped stones can be found throughout the "Old Cemetery" section. Later Victorian monuments of ornate high relief carvings mark the graves of prosperous local citizens of the nineteenth century. With the introduction of mass produced cemetery art in the second half of the nineteenth century, it was possible for families in the now urban area of Decatur to purchase sculptural memorials for their loved ones. The nineteenth century practice of fencing lots is also represented in the "Old Cemetery." Several lots are bound by brick or stone. There are even examples of cast iron urns and fence work. A cast iron fence protecting the grave of Miss Emily Pittman (d. 1852) is extraordinarily ornate. It has not been extensively effected by vandalism or natural forces.

The early 20th century saw changes in society which are reflected in the cemetery. The lettering on stones increased in size so as to be easily read from a moving vehicle. The variety and frequency of religious iconography decreased. Many stones begin to display aesthetics of the popular graphics and architecture of the early twentieth century. The most noticeable design aesthetics are Art Moderne and Art Deco which both lend themselves to graceful translation into carved stone. Interestingly, such stones are dated many years and sometimes decades after these artistic styles reached peak popularity nationwide. The twentieth century also saw the introduction of memorials to the veterans of the Civil War as well as

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World War I and World War II which are fine examples of public commemorative art.

The cemetery is significant in Community Planning and Development and Landscape Architecture because the cemetery reflects the need of a young, growing county seat, Decatur, to provide a public service, that of a public cemetery, for its residents, a service it continues to this day. This was a major service that towns began to provide as people moved in from farms (and family graveyards) to the city and in cases where churches had no land available to use for cemeteries. In 1881, the city instituted a landscape plan, adding curvilinear streets, granite paths, stairs, terracing, and fencing, to enhance the cemetery, as part of the national trend, the rural cemetery movement, of seeing cemeteries as public parks. As the city continued this enhancement of the city's cemetery, it also turned to prominent landscape architects and civil engineers to do a planned increase in acreage for cemetery use, rather than in an ad-hoc manner. William Pauley, one of Atlanta's foremost landscape architects, did the layout for the 1947 addition and perhaps other areas. The plantings that survive from these landscape efforts give the cemetery a peaceful and tranquil setting.

The Decatur Cemetery is also significant in landscape architecture because it is an expression of the nineteenth century Victorian landscape ideal for a cemetery-park. The section of Decatur Cemetery known as the Old Cemetery is a well maintained example of the vertical density, variegation, and embellishment of materials characteristic of Victorian design. Following the example of the rural cemetery movement that had begun at Mount Auburn in Boston in 1831, the cemetery reflects the changing attitudes of society toward death and the deceased. The movement was an attempt to make burial grounds, which had previously been viewed as unsanitary, poorly maintained, useless land parcels, into beautiful park-like settings for the enjoyment of the living. In many communities cemeteries became the first city "park" and as such were social places for picnics and quiet reflection in nature. The Decatur Cemetery is a example of this social trend. The cemetery was beautified through the addition of gracefully curving paths and tiers, the introduction of flowering and exotic plants and the picturesque addition of a well-house. It has been exceptionally well maintained, and has not undergone significant redesign or renovation since the introduction of the original beautification plan in 1881.

The cemetery is significant in Ethnic Heritage-Black as one of the oldest parts of Decatur from which its African-American history can be told. The fact that the city cemetery included both white and black

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sections is often forgotten in later times but was a fact of life in earlier days. Many early leaders of the black community are buried here and the monuments reflect the efforts of black craftsmen to use basic elements to create markers. In its totality, the Decatur City Cemetery is a microcosm of the history of Decatur because all elements of the city are accounted for and provided for.

As was the custom in the southeastern United States in the nineteenth century, the Caucasian and Negro races were segregated in life as well as in death. The "African-American section" of Decatur Cemetery is an area mostly separated from the white section by a roadway along the eastern border of the "Old Cemetery." No African-American markers survive in this section that predate the 1890s. There may be earlier interments marked by simple fieldstones or wood markers which have been obscured or destroyed by natural forces. The markers in this area which were produced by professional stone cutters are occasionally signed with the name of the funeral home which employed same. This signing of stones does not appear in the "White section" of the cemetery. A concrete casting technique that has been labeled "African-American Vernacular" in this nomination is also present. Negro graves are frequently marked with concrete cast markers in which stone shape and ornamentation are an integral part of the mold, but names and dates were changed by the manipulation of short lengths of wood dowels pressed into a soft clay bed in the mold prior to the addition of the wet mortar. This technique is likewise absent in the "White section." Of course, as the cemetery is still used as an active burial ground today, white and black graves of the mid to late twentieth century have been placed with no regard for historical integration barriers. As the period of significance dates to 1947, when "Jim Crow" laws were still in force, it is proper to highlight the existence of a strictly segregated "Black section" as an important facet of the history of the Decatur Cemetery.

**National Register Criteria**

The nomination meets National Register Criterion A because it reflects the broad patterns of American history because it was the city cemetery of a county seat town and has continued in its use ever since its creation in the 1820s. In this role the cemetery has reflected and recorded the changing dynamics of social structures, racial interactions, and gender roles in a small southeastern American city.

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The cemetery also meets National Register Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics, and is an excellent intact example of long extinct craft techniques and artistic religious symbolism in its monumental sculpture. Even the more pedestrian examples of funerary art and civic structures combine in a park like setting to form significant and distinguishable planned landscape entity.

**Criteria Considerations (if applicable)**

The Decatur Cemetery meets Criteria Consideration D because it derives its primary significance from its landscape design, the artistic nature of its monuments, as well as for its historical association with the founding of Decatur and its African-American heritage.

**Period of significance (justification)**

The period of significance dates from the earliest date from which there is supporting written evidence of a burial (1826) and was in continuous use from that time to a date fifty years prior to the completion of this nomination (1947). The cemetery has remained in continuous use and development during the entire historic period of its existence.

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

The following are nominated as contributing:

Contributing Buildings: 0  
Contributing Structures: 2, which are:  
Main gate and fence appurtenant  
Gazebo (formerly well house)

Contributing sites: 1, which is:  
the landscaped cemetery as a whole

The following are non-contributing:

Non-contributing buildings: 2, which are:  
Sexton's Office (1951)  
Associated maintenance building

Non-contributing structure: 1, which is:  
Contemporary side entrance gate.

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

The Decatur Cemetery is a 58 acre area located to the northeast of the town center of Decatur, Georgia on the highest point of land. In use as early as three years after the original charter of the city, it is the oldest known publicly-burial ground in the immediate area. The oldest known graves are of Ann Reynolds who died in 1827 and David Young who died in 1828. Additionally, there is written evidence that an earlier burial, that of Dr. Ormond Morgan, occurred in 1826. Earlier interments may have occurred, but no physical or written evidence has yet surfaced to definitively establish an earlier date. The cemetery was legally founded on December 22, 1832, when the Georgia Legislature passed an act that became law which provided that James Anderson, Robert Jones, James Lemon, Thomas Stevens and Jonathan Wilson form a corporate body with the power to govern the affairs of the cemetery. Examination of the headstones and landscape reflects the historical development of the city from a pioneer settlement to its adoption of cosmopolitan Victorian values and its further emergence into the automobile age of the twentieth century.

Pioneer Era:

The first interments in the cemetery were in the mid 1820s and reflect the early nineteenth century attitude toward life, death and burial of the Anglo-American pioneer community in Piedmont Georgia. It is believed that the grounds were once adjacent to a church, thus the first burials were probably on church ground revealing the importance of religious life in pioneer days. For reasons of practicality and sanitation the graves are on a high well-drained area. No doubt the first interments were in pine boxes and couldn't be risked to a low or swampy place. The earliest stones lack ornamentation, reflecting the predominantly Protestant population's belief that ornamentation of gravestones was an ostentatious display of vanity and pride which bordered on sinful.

In use before the town was officially chartered it is the oldest known publicly-owned burial ground in the Atlanta area.

The city of Decatur in DeKalb County, Georgia was chartered in 1823, two years after the state legislature parceled out the land obtained in a treaty with the indigenous Native American tribes in 1821. The earliest graves in the Decatur Cemetery of which there is physical or written evidence date to 1826-1828. Many of the early settlers of DeKalb County, Georgia were Carolinians of Scots-Irish descent. Many

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of these pioneers, who settled the area when it was still considered hostile territory, were buried at the cemetery when it was little more than a secluded hill. The first graves were placed on the crest of the hill.

As the town of Decatur began to grow and prosper around the cemetery the funerary monuments reflect that change. In time, widely available, commercially produced statuary allowed prosperous Decatur citizens to honor their dead with elaborately carved stones. Thus, the character of the cemetery began to change from that of a pioneer graveyard to an urban cemetery. The Civil War devastated the local economy thus temporarily retarding the introduction of ornate stones for the middle-class. However, the rich were not altogether affected and numerous elaborate monuments date from the war years. Of course, several monuments were erected decades after the parting of the deceased when disposable funds were more readily available. The Civil War also brought a new facet of history to the cemetery.

Civil War:

On July 22, 1864 Colonel John H. Sprague under the command of General McPherson of the Army of the Tennessee was attempting to reinforce federal troops with supply wagons. He was headed toward the besieged city of Atlanta traveling down the Roswell-Decatur road (now Clairemont Rd). General Joseph Wheeler of the Confederate Cavalry Corps engaged Sprague to the east of the city of Decatur at what is now the Agnes Scott College campus. Sprague's regiments were repulsed into the city and beyond the high ground of the courthouse into the cemetery where they held a defensible line. Before Wheeler could cut the supply line his regiments were recalled by William J. Hardee to assist his army in defense of the city of Atlanta. Both sides claimed victory. Sprague was given a battlefield commission to Brigadier General for thwarting Wheeler and in 1894 was awarded a Medal of Honor for his part in the Battle of Decatur. Under General Wheeler, Lt. John Prather of the 8th Confederate Regiment served. A Decatur resident he fought at the Battle of Decatur and is buried in the Cemetery.

Rural Cemetery Movement/Victorian Era:

The influence of the rural cemetery movement which began earlier in the century and advocated the landscaping of cemeteries into more park-like settings is evidenced at Decatur Cemetery. As the city progressed into the Victorian era, terraces were cut into the hillside and reinforced with brick and stone. Additionally, picturesque curving paved paths were laid out allowing visitors maximum enjoyment

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of the ornamental plants and monuments. The majority of the paths are for foot traffic only and several stone steps aid visitors on their ramble through the grounds. In 1881, a well house was also added to the grounds. The well has since been cemented over for safety reasons, but the simple wood beam structure with pyramidal slate roof and open lattice work is in good condition and is currently used as a gazebo.

The arrangement of the "Old Cemetery" reflects the society of the time. The most important townspeople are located on the highest tier, ornate markers and obelisks marking their final resting place. Further down the hill are the graves of the middle class, their graves are ornate but not ostentatious. Additionally, on low-lying land there is a visually distinct historic African-American section, as well as a "potter's field" for the interment of those who died penniless. The markers in the "Black section" display craft techniques and workmanship unique to African-American funerary tradition. A plot nearby is the site of Orphan's Home lot which houses sixteen marked and thirteen unmarked children's graves. Thus the cemetery also gives evidence of the segregation of races prominent for most of Georgia history, as well as of a strict class structure within the majority white population.

Modern Era:

The coming of the twentieth century brought numerous sweeping social changes, many of which are reflected in the "New Cemetery", none more pervasive than the influence of the automobile. The newer sections of the cemetery are most definitely laid out to accommodate the vehicular more so than pedestrian traffic. The roadways are wide enough to allow two cars to pass each other, even while a third is parked curbside. All monument markers face the nearest roadway, and have large, deeply-incised surnames, as opposed to the three or more names of an interred individual, rendered in relief, characteristic of the previous century. While the system of roads and roadways was in place by 1928, the actual platting for burial space and landscaping of the newly-added tracts took place as needed over the 1930s-1950s. The current Sexton's Office was built in 1951.

The 1928 Map of Atlanta shows that the roads and paths presently part of the New Cemetery were in place and designed by then. While the actual dates of land acquisition are not a part of this nomination, the plats recorded at the county courthouse date when the city had the land landscaped and divided into lots. This was obviously on an as-needed basis. The dates of these platings is as follows:

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1925: Sections 1 and 2  
1938: Sections 1, 7, 8  
1944: Section 9  
1947 and 1951: Section 10  
1956: Section 11  
1962: Section 12

All of these plat divisions had to be approved by the Decatur City Commission.

The landscape of the "New Cemetery" is a sweeping undulating grassy lawn. It is designed in the mode of the easily maintained perpetual-care cemetery. The City of Decatur instituted a comprehensive plan in 1983 to insure that the cemetery could be preserved and maintained in an economically viable manner. The newer design is pleasing but devoid of the picturesque roughness and plot-defining barriers so characteristic of the "Old Cemetery." The "Old Cemetery" requires more sensitive care than can be borne at public expense. Thankfully, local citizens have formed volunteer groups to aid in the proper stewardship of Decatur's departed residents. The cemetery, though, remains owned and operated by the City of Decatur, as a public burial ground, as it has since the 1830s.

Plaques and memorials of many different types have been added to the cemetery grounds in recent years. Among those commemorated are veterans of numerous wars as well as those who have given their bodies for organ donation and medical research. A cinerarium was constructed in 1982, one of two planned. A cinerarium path has also been added to the grounds. The monuments and rich complex history of the cemetery makes it an integral part of the city of Decatur. Because its growth and development so meaningfully reflects the growth of the town, it is an important local site worthy of distinction.

Some of the well-know and locally-important people buried in the cemetery are the following:

There are three Revolutionary War veterans whose graves are known in the cemetery:

John Hays- (b. Nov 2, 1751 - d. June 17 1839) Revolutionary War veteran.

John Maffett- (birth and death dates unknown, "supposd (sic) to be 87") Revolutionary War officer.

Col. James McNeil- (1757-1853) Revolutionary War veteran and Georgia Legislator.

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Capt. William Towers- (1772-1846) War of 1812 veteran.

Dr. Thomas Holley Chivers- (1806-1858) A physician, painter, inventor and poet. He was a friend of Edgar Allen Poe. Their poetry is similar and each accused the other of plagiarism.

Mary A. H. Gay- (1828-1918) Author of Life in Dixie During the War considered to be one of finest examples of a Civil War diary.

Col. John C. Prather- (1833-1920) A Confederate officer who defended the city of Decatur on the site of where he is now buried.

Benjamin Swanton- (1897-1890) An early Decatur entrepreneur he operated a grist mill, tannery, brickyard, and cotton gin. Builder/owner of the Swanton House, oldest surviving house in Decatur, now owned and open to the public by the DeKalb Historical Society.

Charles and Eleanor Latimer- (Charles- March 3 1799 -January 28, 1884, Eleanor- September 19, 1813-February 24, 1899) Parents of Rebecca Latimer Felton, First U.S. woman senator and early Women's rights advocate.

Col. George Washington Scott- (February 22, 1820-October 3, 1903) Founder of Agnes Scott College named for his mother.

Milton and Eliza (Murphy) Candler- (Milton- January 11, 1837-August 8, 1909, Eliza- Oct 22, 1839-Jan 4, 1917) He was a U.S. Congressman and brother to: Bishop Warren Candler, founder of Emory University; Asa G. Candler, builder of the Coca-Cola empire, and John Candler, a Georgia Supreme Court Justice.

Charles Murphy (1799-1861). U. S. Congressman, State legislator, delegate to the Secession Convention. Italian marble monument is one of finest there, erected by his daughter, it was smuggled through the Civil War coastal blockade.

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## **9. Major Bibliographic References**

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Strangstad, Lynette. **A Graveyard Preservation Primer**. The American Association for State and Local History. Nashville, TN. 1988.

Willard, Levi. **Early History of Decatur.** A series of letters and journal entries reprinted by **The DeKalb New Era.** Decatur, Georgia. Sept. 23, 1920.

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

- State historic preservation office
- Other State Agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other, Specify Repository: Archives of the DeKalb Historical Society, headquartered in the Old DeKalb County Courthouse, Old Courthouse Square, Decatur, Georgia, 30030. Phone (404) 373-1088.

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

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property** 58 acres

**UTM References**

- A) Zone 16 Easting 750590 Northing 3741420
- B) Z16 E750930 N3741310
- C) Z16 E750910 N3740810
- D) Z16 E750550 N3740960

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary is marked on the enclosed 1987 landscape map/plat map which was drawn to scale.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary is all the City of Decatur, the owners, own at this location that is considered the city cemetery. The nomination includes the current legal boundaries.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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**name/title** Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., Historian  
**organization** Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**street & number** 500 The Healey Building, 57 Forsyth Street  
**city or town** Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303  
**telephone** (404) 656-2840 **date** April 21, 1997

**Consulting Services/Technical Assistance (if applicable)**

**name/title** Kimberly Brigance and Mark DiChiara  
**organization** Master of Heritage Preservation Program of Georgia State University, Dr Timothy J. Crimmins, Director.  
**street & number** Georgia State University, University Plaza  
**city or town** Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303  
**telephone** (404) 651-2250 **date** May 22, 1996

- consultant**
- regional development center preservation planner**
- other:** Historic Preservation students

Note: There were two earlier student efforts at a nomination. In 1983, Gayle Sanders, a student at the University of Virginia, submitted a draft nomination form. Later, a National Register student effort was submitted to this office in June, 1992, from a class in the College of Architecture, at the Georgia Institute of Technology. The students involved were Brian Ahern and Scott Morris. This nomination was part of an annual National Register class conducted by Professor Pat Connell. The major contribution of this 1992 effort to the file was research into the plats and boundaries.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
**Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

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**Name of Property:** Decatur Cemetery  
**City or Vicinity:** Decatur, Georgia  
**County:** DeKalb  
**State:** Georgia  
**Photographer:** James R. Lockhart  
**Negative Filed:** Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**Date Photographed:** March, 1997

**Description of Photograph(s):**

- 1 of 24: Entrance Gates (South Entrance); photographer facing northeast.
- 2 of 24: Old Cemetery Section, Entrance road, and gazebo/well house; photographer facing north.
- 3 of 24: Old Cemetery, southern end/entrance area looking toward town; photographer facing southwest.
- 4 of 24: Old Cemetery, entrance area; photographer facing northeast.
- 5 of 24: Old Cemetery, top of hill looking toward new cemetery; photographer facing northwest.
- 6 of 24: Old Cemetery, African-American Section on east side; photographer facing northeast.
- 7 of 24: Old Cemetery, looking back up the hill; photographer facing southwest.
- 8 of 24: Old Cemetery, looking backup the hill; photographer facing southwest.
- 9 of 24: Old Cemetery, stairs back up hill; photographer facing south.
- 10 of 24: Old Cemetery, road leading toward New Cemetery; photographer facing southwest.
- 11 of 24: New Cemetery and pond looking toward Sexton's Office; photographer facing northeast.
- 12 of 24: New Cemetery, World War II Boulder at top of pond; photographer facing southeast.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Photographs**

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13 of 24: New Cemetery, cinerarium on east side; photographer facing east.

14 of 24: New Cemetery , looking back (south) toward Old Cemetery across gully; photographer facing south.

15 of 24: New Cemetery, Sexton's Office; photographer facing south.

16 of 24: New Cemetery, on north side of Sexton's Office; photographer facing northeast.

17 of 24: New Cemetery, Bell Street entrance gates; photographer facing northeast.

18 of 24: New Cemetery, just behind Sexton's Office; photographer facing northwest.

19 of 24: New Cemetery, north of photograph 18; photographer facing northeast.

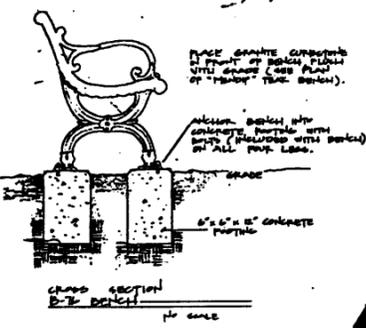
20 of 24: New Cemetery, east side of cemetery toward ravine; photographer facing northeast.

21 of 24: New Cemetery, east side; photographer facing southwest.

22 of 24: New Cemetery, east side; photographer facing south.

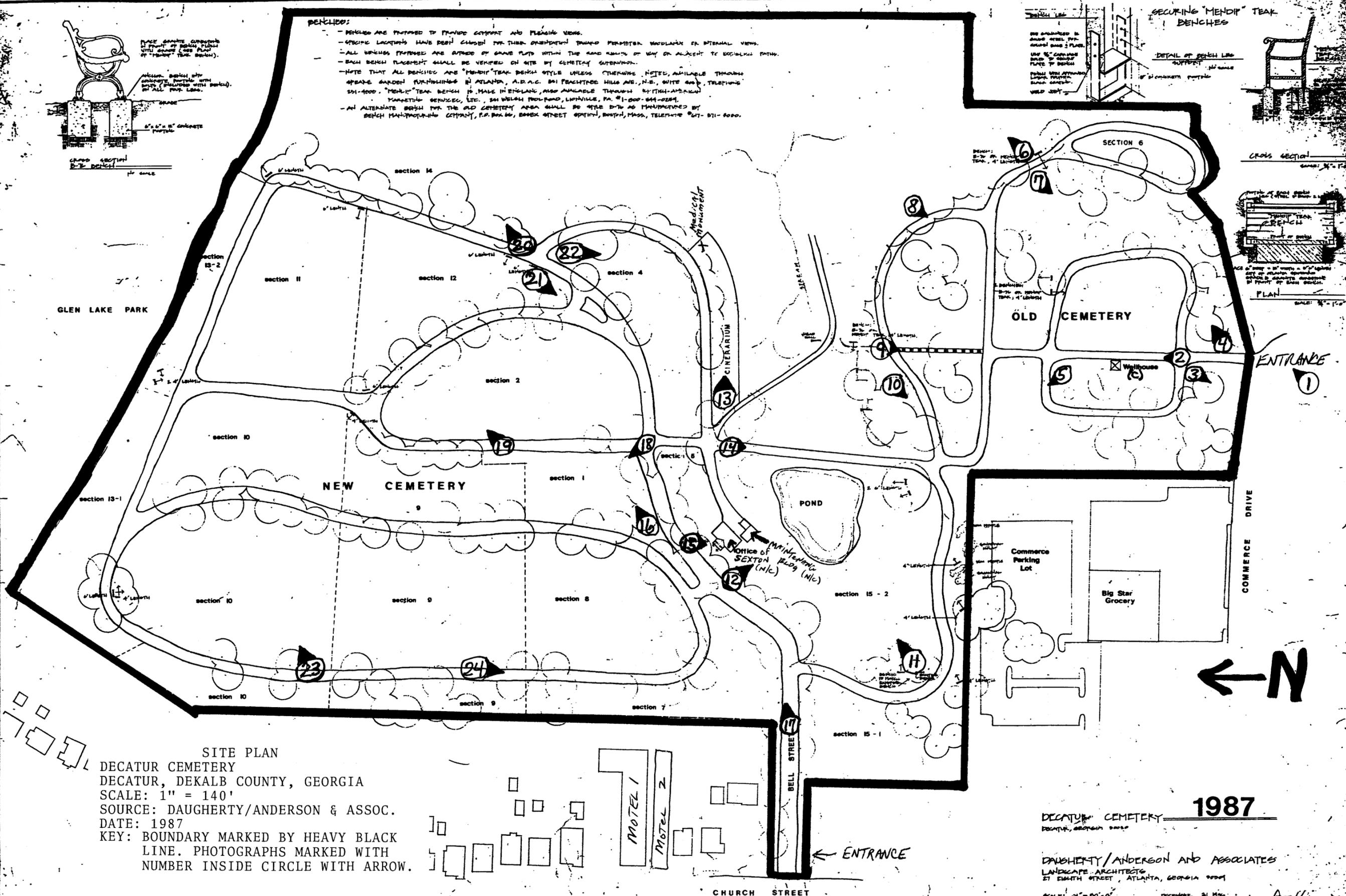
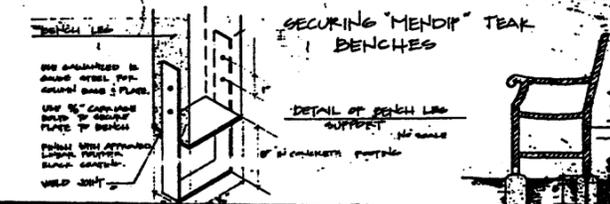
23 of 24: New Cemetery, northwest side; photographer facing northeast.

24 of 24: New Cemetery, west side; photographer facing south.



**BENCHES:**

- BENCHES ARE PROVIDED TO PROVIDE COMFORT AND PLEASING VIEWS.
- SPECIFIC LOCATIONS HAVE BEEN CHOSEN FOR THEIR ORIENTATION TOWARD PERIMETER WOODLAND OR INTERNAL VIEWS.
- ALL BENCHES PROVIDED ARE OUTSIDE OF GRAVE PLOTS WITHIN THE ROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY OR ADJACENT TO WALKWAY PATHS.
- EACH BENCH PLACEMENT SHALL BE VERIFIED ON SITE BY CEMETERY SUPERVISOR.
- NOTE THAT ALL BENCHES ARE "MENDIP" TEAK BENCH STYLE UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, AVAILABLE THROUGH SPEARS GARDEN FURNISHINGS IN ATLANTA, A.D.A.C. 381 PEACHTREE HILLS AVE., N.E., SUITE 600, TELEPHONE 501-4000. "MENDIP" TEAK BENCH IS MADE IN ENGLAND, ALSO AVAILABLE THROUGH BETHUN-AMERICAN FURNITURE SERVICES, LTD., 281 WELSH ROAD, LITTONVILLE, PA. 91-000-004-0029.
- AN ALTERNATE BENCH FOR THE OLD CEMETERY AREA SHALL BE STYLE B71 AS MANUFACTURED BY BENCH MANUFACTURING COMPANY, P.O. BOX 66, BONEK STREET, SOUTH, MASS., TELEPHONE 617-871-6000.



**SITE PLAN**  
 DECATUR CEMETERY  
 DECATUR, DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA  
 SCALE: 1" = 140'  
 SOURCE: DAUGHERTY/ANDERSON & ASSOC.  
 DATE: 1987  
 KEY: BOUNDARY MARKED BY HEAVY BLACK LINE. PHOTOGRAPHS MARKED WITH NUMBER INSIDE CIRCLE WITH ARROW.

**DECATUR CEMETERY 1987**  
 DAUGHERTY/ANDERSON AND ASSOCIATES  
 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS  
 27 EIGHTH STREET, ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30301  
 SCALE: 1" = 60'-0"  
 DESIGNED: 11/11/86  
 REVISED: JANUARY 20, 1987  
 CHECKED: JUNE 26, 1987  
 A-16