Form 10-300 (Rev. 6-72)

T. NAME

COMMON:

2. LOCATION

STATE

District

Agricultural

Commercial

☐ Educational

Entertainment

OWNER'S NAME:

CITY OR TOWN: Decatur

CITY OR TOWN:

Decatur

None DATE OF SURVEY:

TITLE OF SURVEY:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

STREET AND NUMBER:

STREET AND NUMBER:

Mr. Daniel Bonner

1862 Candler Road

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Dekalb County Courthouse

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

☐ Site

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Mary Gay House

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Decatur

Georgia 3. CLASSIFICATION

524 Marshall Street

CATEGORY

(Check One)

☐ Object

X Building

☐ Structure

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTOR INVENTORY - NOMINATION

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Public

🗴 Private

☐ Both

Government

Industrial

Military

Museum

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☐ In Process	☑ Unoccupied	🔀 Restricted	
☐ Being Considered	Preservation work	Unrestricted	
	in progress	□ No	
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Park	Transportation	Comments	
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7.	DESCRIPTION							
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	CONDITION		(Check Or	ne)		(Che	eck One)	
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The Mary Gay House, located in downtown Decatur, is one of the very few remaining buildings in the area that date from the Civil War era.

Presently the house has two stories and is oriented toward the east on Marshall Street with a jerkin head gaoled roof and partial front porch. The original one story Classical style c.1850 house with a central temple form portico, faced southward originally on "several acres" some distance from West Ponce de Leon Street, then called Green Street. The central portico roofline on the south facade has been changed, steps reoriented and two of the four columns removed to the present front porch. What appears to be the original doorway has simple trim and a four light transom.

The original house probably consisted of the parlor, two small rooms on each side and at least one room to the rear. In the parlor is an Adam style mantel with heavy entablature, three sunburst designs on the freize and supporting fluted pilasters. Simple molding frames the original doors and windows; later door trim additions have wider trim. In the adjoining room on the left is a simpler mantel with a molding framing the fireplace opening, a wide freize and shelf defined by wide dentils. An apparently original closet is adjacent to the fireplace with a carpenter lock on the closet door. The only other mid-19th century mantel in the house is found in the room directly north of the parlor. It is similar in overall detail to the parlor mantel, however the freize has no sunburst detailing. In all rooms mentioned are found wide, approximately five inch flooring, as well as a variety of simple baseboard moldings.

Sometime around the turn into the 20th century the Gay House was oriented eastward on Marshall Street. With a jerkin head roof, this now one and a half story structure has simple bracketed eaves and a partial front porch that uses two of the original portico columns. Interior stair, mantel and flooring details suggest an early 20th century renovation.

Two outbuildings dating from the 19th century are to the west of the structure. Both frame structures, one is presently a storage house and another is primarily a shed, with what appears to be a well house attached. The present day environment of the Mary Gay House is on the fringe of a residential, but fast turning commercial area of downtown Decatur, less than two blocks from the courthouse square.

PERIOD (Check One or More as	Appropriate)		
Pre-Columbian	☐ 16th Century	☐ 18th Century	20th Century
☐ 15th Century	☐ 17th Century	🔀 19th Century	
SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicab	le and Known) C.	1850	
AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Ch	eck One or More as Appropri	ate)	
Abor iginal	☐ Education	☐ Political	Urban Planning
Prehistoric	Engineering	Religion/Phi-	Other (Specify)
☐ Historic	☐ Industry	losophy	History
Agriculture	☐ Invention	Science	
🔀 Architecture	Landscape	Sculpture	
☐ Art	Architecture	Social/Human-	
☐ Commerce	Literature	itarian	
Communications	Military	Theater	
Conservation	☐ Music	Transportation	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Mary Gay House, a c.1850, originally simple classical style frame structure, is significant historically and architecturally as one of a very few extant pre-Civil War, Decatur area buildings and also as the home of Miss Mary Gay, a noted local historian and author.

As an architectural example of a mid-19th century building, the Mary Gay House is outstanding especially for the interior details including the mantelpieces, locks and closet area described on the facing page. Early in the twentieth century, probably when the property was sold to a Johnston family about the time Miss Gay died in 1918, the house was renovated to face Marshall Street.

Miss Mary Ann Harris Gay, the occupant and owner of this house for over sixty years, is herself a significant figure in local history. Miss Gay, born in 1827, in Georgia, moved to Decatur with her mother and half sister, in 1850 from Marietta. Her mother, Mary Stevens Stokes, is listed in the 1860 census as a seamstress and courthouse records indicate she owned five acres in Decatur; Mary Gay and her sister, Missouri Stokes, are listed as domestics.

Toward the turn of the century Mary Gay writes of Civil War times and is the author of four books, The Transplanted, Life in Dixie During the War, The Pastor's Story, and Prose and Poetry. In Life in Dixie During the War for which Joel Chandler Harris wrote the introduction, Miss Gay gives an eyewitness account of the war years in Decatur. She was 33 years old when the war began and although her book is highly sentimental, she recounts the ransacking and devastation of her house and surrounding areas, revealing much priceless local history. During this time, the main portion of the Union army camped in Decatur, with General Garrard's Calvary selecting the Gay acreage as their headquarters. In a short time the men had demolished the barn and used the planks to make rough shelters for themselves. they remained until after the Confederate Army evacuated Atlanta after a six week seige. According to Miss Gay's obituary in the Atlanta Journal, "during the Civil War Miss Gay was prominent in soldier welfare work and it was through her efforts that the Alexander H. Stevens Memorial Institute at Crawfordsville, Georgia, was founded. At the end of the Civil War, Miss Gay toured Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee in order to secure funds to rebuild the Baptist Church at Decatur which had been destroyed." During the war time she stored Confederate goods in her house, crossed through Union lines (continued)

The Atlanta Journal., November 7, 1918, p.16 Boddie, John B., Historical Southern Pamilies. Clarke, Caroline McKinney, The Story of Decatur, 1829-1899, Decatur, 1973 Gay, Mary, Life in Dixte During the War, Atlanta, Poote & Davis, Co., 1901 Lovett, Howard M., Grandmother Stories from the Land of Used-to-Be. Macyregor, Elizabeth, personal inspection, October 29, 1974. Thomas, Ken., Researcher, Historic Preservation Section The GEOGRAPHICAL DATA LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A MECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROVERTY CORNER LATITUDE LONGITUDE COORDINATES CONNER LATITUDE LATITUDE LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES OPERATING A MECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROVERTY OF LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES OPERATING THE PROVERTY OF LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE DEFINING A MECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROVERTY OF LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE DEFINING A MECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROVERTY OF LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES OF LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE DEFINING THE AND LONGITUDE DEFI	9. j	MAJOR	BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RE	FERENCES								
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April 7, 1975

Date

Form 10-300a (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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(Continuation Sheet)

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8. Significance

to carry messages to Confederates and secured food for many of the Decatur women and children after the Union army occupation of Decatur.

The Mary Gay House is a newly rediscovered landmark in Decatur. Presently the house is unoccupied and in potential danger of being removed from its presently original site or torn down; however the local historical society has brought awareness to the house and its situation which will aide in the preservation of this mid-nineteenth century Decatur structure.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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REQUEST BY THE JUNIOR LEAGUE OF DEKALB COUNTY, INC.

TO ALLOW THE MARY GAY HOUSE TO REMAIN ON THE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES DURING ITS

RELOCATION MOVE AND AFTER THE MOVE ON ITS NEW SITE.

Justification for Relocation of Mary Gay House

The relocation of the Mary Gary House to Adair Park, Decatur, Georgia, from Marshall Street, Decatur, Georgia, is a practical, necessary move in order to save this historical structure.

The Mary Gay House property is for sale by the owners of the property for \$185,000.00. They have donated the house to the Junior League of DeKalb County, Inc. There are two options available: 1. To purchase the property, or 2. To move the house to a suitable new site. The Junior League, working with the City of Decatur, DeKalb County, and the DeKalb Historical Society, is unable to secure funding for purchase of this property. It is probably fortunate for all concerned because the encroachment of business has severly damaged the integrity of the Marshall Street property for historical restoration. The 100'X 200' lot is bordered by a used car lot, automobile repair shop, one residence (now for sale for commercial development), and another automobile dealership. A narrow two-lane side street is the only access to the property and major thoroughfares in the vicinity make additional or future access almost impossible. Parking space at the site is nonexistant due to street conditions. The nearest available space is onstreet and public gargage parking approximately one block away.

Few of the citizens of DeKalb County are aware of the house, its location, or its historical significance, due primarily to the location. Restoration plans on this restricted, out-of-the-way site would be severly curtailed. In contrast, at the Adair Park location, all of the problems inherent at the Marshall Street site are eliminated. In addition, the Swanton House (National Register) is located at Adair Park. These two significant homes will enhance one another.

The early date of construction of the Mary Gay House, its relation to the Civil War, and the infamous lady who lived there, Miss Mary Gay, make this house a many-faceted treasure. Decatur and DeKalb County are fortunate that there is available property in close proximity to the original site which is less than a mile away. History will be preserved.

Economics of the situation dictate that the Mary Gay House <u>must</u> be moved. There is no choice. A decision to allow this house to remain on the National Register during the move and at the new location will significantly aid in its immediate restoration.

