

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 Steele-Cobb House

and/or common Same

**2. Location**

street & number 2632 Fox Hills Drive N/A not for publication

city, town Decatur N/A vicinity of congressional district 4th - Elliott Levitas

state Georgia code 013 county DeKalb code 089

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>N/A</u> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Mr. and Mrs. Owen Thomas Bugg, Jr.

street & number 2632 Fox Hills Drive

city, town Decatur N/A vicinity of state Georgia 30033

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Superior Court

street & number DeKalb County Courthouse

city, town Decatur state Georgia

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

Historic Structures Field Survey:  
title DeKalb County, Georgia has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1977  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources

city, town Atlanta state Georgia

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## 7. Description

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**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved      date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Steele-Cobb House is a two-story, two-over-two, frame, shingled, Plantation Plain-style house with a double verandah centered on the front facade and shed rooms on the rear. The rooms are arranged two-over-two with a central hall and end chimneys.

The verandah has simple spoke railings with square posts which support a roof on the second floor. A pair of windows with six-over-six panes flank the trabeated front door on the first floor and the balcony door on the second floor. Two six-over-six paned windows flank the brick end chimneys on each floor.

The interior of the house is divided in two by a central hall with a dining room as one enters the left and the stairs to the second floor in back on the left. The living room is on the right as one enters the hall. The central hall ends in the shed kitchen and den addition added at the back of the house. On the far left and right of the central block have been added additional rooms. On the far left is a bedroom, with a screened porch, and on the far right (off the living room) is a sun porch.

The baseboard moulding in the hall and throughout the central block of the house is composed of plain wide boards that are flat against the plastered walls. The dining room has three windows with this style of moulding around them and a fireplace on the outside end of the room between two of the windows. This fireplace has a simple mantle with a pediment in relief on the lintel and fluted posts. The ceiling medallion is a recent addition.

The living room has the same detailing as the dining room and a fireplace with a simple mantle, relief pediment on the lintel and fluted posts. The living room was repaired after a 1963 fire by using details in the dining room as a guide.

Upstairs, there are two wide, low-ceilinged bedrooms on either side of a small hall that leads to the upper verandah. The ceilings in the bedrooms are very low, making them appear almost to be half-story rooms. The fireplaces in these rooms have plain, flat mantles and lintels with fluted posts that are similar to the downstairs fireplaces. The moulding in both bedrooms and the upstairs hall is flush with the walls, as that downstairs.

The floors throughout the house are made of wide, pegged, slightly irregular pine boards. The walls and ceilings are plastered. The beams supporting the house in the low dirt, walled basement are logs that have only been roughly squared with much of their bark left on the surface. They are pegged, mortised and tenoned.

[continued]

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Continuation sheet

Description

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The grounds retain a natural landscaping with large water oaks in the front yard providing a rural setting for the house, which is now engulfed by a subdivision. A few of the cedar trees that once abounded on the property remain on the road leading to the house from Medlock Road but are not on the nominated property.

There is one outbuilding that is presently a garage apartment and which was probably built in the 1920s or 1930s. Also on the property and shown on the enclosed sketch/plat map is a wooden shed used for storage and a stone barbecue used for outdoor cooking.

The house has had some additions to the rear. The kitchen was added to the house and then modernized in 1937 at the same time the sunporch and bedroom were added, as mentioned above.

The property is surrounded by a subdivision and is only a block and a half from Lawrenceville Highway, a major thoroughfare. It has retained a portion of its original rural setting despite the changing land use of much of the original farmstead.

Photographs

The Historic Preservation Section has determined that the photographs taken in September, 1980 still provide an accurate view of the property. No significant changes have been made since this date.

# 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) local history
	<input type="checkbox"/> invention			

**Specific dates** ca, 1855      **Builder/Architect** Unknown

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Steele-Cobb House is significant in architecture and local history. Architecturally, it is significant as a good example of the Plantation Plain-style house with a typical central hall and two-over-two room arrangement with end chimneys. This represents the earliest type of residential architecture in the county and is a rare surviving example for the metropolitan Atlanta area. The house is locally significant as the home of the Steele family, having been built by Michael A. Steele, who, in 1850, married Martha Lucinda Smith, daughter of Robert H. Smith, the builder of the Tullie Smith House. The Steeles were significant to the local community during the years they owned this house.

Michael A. Steele, a son of Isaac Steele, a DeKalb County pioneer, married Martha Lucinda Smith on January 8, 1850. Five years later, they bought the north half of Land Lot 62 and part of Land Lot 101 from Robert Crockett for \$800. In 1842, Crockett had purchased all of Land Lot 62 and parts of Land Lots 49 and 101 from the estate of Jesse F. Cleveland, still another DeKalb County pioneer.

The Steeles had seven children while living in the house. Among them was their youngest son, Leslie J., born in 1868, who became mayor of Decatur, 1915-1920, and U.S. congressman, 1927-1929.

Martha Lucinda Steele died in 1882, and in 1888, her husband sold the house and property, including all of Land Lot 101, on which this house rests, to their daughter Mary and her husband, J.S.A. Tilly. The house thus remained in the family as it did again in 1916, when the Tillys sold it to their daughter Mattie McKee.

The Tillys were responsible for the eventual subdivision of the Steele Plantation into smaller home lots.

During antebellum days, Michael A. Steele, farmed his 360 acres raising corn, sweet potatoes, and wheat, but no cotton. It was similar in size and products to the then-nearby Robert H. Smith Home (now preserved at a new location as the Tullie Smith House), which consisted of 810 acres, where they raised twice as much corn but, again, no cotton.

[continued]

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Research by Carol Stevens of the DeKalb Historical Society, including draft nomination. Additional research and site visit by Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 2-1/4 acres

Quadrangle name Northeast Atlanta, Ga.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UMT References

A 

1	6	7	5	1	6	9	0	3	7	4	3	5	9	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

E 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

F 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

G 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

H 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

### Verbal boundary description and justification

All that tract or parcel of land lying and being in Land Lots 62 and 101 of the 18th District of DeKalb County, Ga., as marked on the enclosed loan survey plat by a heavy black line. It is all the current owners own and all that is still associated with the house. List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., historian

organization Historic Preservation Section Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources date November 10, 1980

street & number 270 Washington Street, S.W. telephone (404) 656-2840

city or town Atlanta state Georgia 30334

# 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Elizabeth A. Lyon  
Elizabeth A. Lyon

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 4/21/82

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u>William Byers</u> Keeper of the National Register	Entered in the National Register date <u>6/17/82</u>
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

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Significance

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Cully A. and Lois D. Cobb began buying pieces of the estate beginning with the house lot in 1938. By 1939, they owned eighty-seven acres and were able to experiment with the farming and stock-raising methods that Mr. Cobb had advocated as an agricultural representative. He had been editor of the Southern Ruralist (1919-1932) before joining the Roosevelt Administration as chief of the cotton section of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration from 1933-1937. On his return, he headed the Ruralist Press until 1971.

Here they raised cattle, turkeys, sheep and the grain to feed them. Mrs. Cobb also had a storehouse of ideas on the farm home as the center of the farm and on modern farm kitchens and bathrooms from her days in the Girls Club and as editor of the women's pages at the Southern Ruralist. They called the house "Briarpatch," added the wings and bathrooms, and remodeled the kitchen.

Mr. Cobb Willed the property to Emory University of Atlanta on December 20, 1967. This took effect at his death in 1975 at age ninety-one. Later, it was sold to the current owners.

The architectural significance of the Steele-Cobb House rests not only with its being one of the few remaining Plantation Plain-style homes in the county, but also because it reflects the building patterns of two DeKalb County families united by marriage. The Plantation Plain features of the house include the two-over-two room construction with central hall, end chimneys, and the shed rooms in back. A feature not found on most Plantation Plain homes is the double verandah on the front facade.

One of the other Plantation Plain homes from DeKalb County (although now moved to adjacent Fulton County) is the Tullie Smith House. It was built in the 1840s by Robert H. Smith, the father of Martha Lucinda Smith, who married Michael A. Steele in 1850. Her house, the Steele-Cobb House, thus reflects changes of technique or lack of changes in the same type of house when her own home is compared to that of her father. As was the tradition in those days, the older Smiths would have assisted in the building of the Steele home. Many newlyweds even had houses of this nature given to them as wedding presents, although there is no tradition that this was the case here. The Steele-Cobb House reflects the more formal, central hall with a room on each side, which is not found in the earlier Tullie Smith House. Yet, on the other hand, some of the mouldings in the Tullie Smith House have fancier beveled edges than the simple, straight board mouldings of the Steele-Cobb House. The Steele-Cobb House is situated on a hill for drainage purposes and to, no doubt, afford the best view of the farm.

The Steele-Cobb House is thus significant as one of two restored homes surviving in the metropolitan Atlanta area that can be studied and compared because of their interconnected history and architecture, hopefully to shed further light on a past era.