

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 6 1978

DATE ENTERED AUG 30 1978

**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 **
Swanton House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
720 Swanton Way

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
Decatur

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
4th Elliott H. Levitas

— VICINITY OF

STATE
Georgia

CODE
13

COUNTY
DeKalb

CODE
089 ✓

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

— DISTRICT
 BUILDING(S)
— STRUCTURE
— SITE
— OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

— PUBLIC
 PRIVATE
— BOTH
PUBLIC ACQUISITION
— IN PROCESS
— BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

— OCCUPIED
 UNOCCUPIED
— WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
 YES: RESTRICTED
— YES: UNRESTRICTED
— NO

PRESENT USE

— AGRICULTURE MUSEUM
— COMMERCIAL PARK
— EDUCATIONAL PRIVATE RESIDENCE
— ENTERTAINMENT RELIGIOUS
— GOVERNMENT SCIENTIFIC
— INDUSTRIAL TRANSPORTATION
— MILITARY OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
DeKalb Historical Society ✓

STREET & NUMBER
720 Swanton Way

CITY, TOWN
Decatur

— VICINITY OF

STATE
Georgia

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. DeKalb County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER
556 North McDonough Street

CITY, TOWN
Decatur

STATE
Georgia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Historic Architectural Survey, DeKalb County

DATE
July 8, 1977

— FEDERAL — STATE COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS Historic Preservation Section, Department of Natural Resources

CITY, TOWN
Atlanta

STATE
Georgia

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE <u>1968</u>

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Swanton House is a 1 1/2 story four-room, central hall Plantation Plain style house. A portion of the house was constructed in c.1825, but the present appearance of the structure is indicative of the major additions made by Benjamin Swanton in c.1852. Due to the economic pressures of encroaching development in Decatur in 1968, the Swanton House was moved several hundred feet from its original location on Atlanta Avenue to the present site on Swanton Way. Although it is in a new location, the house rests on property originally owned by the Swanton family.

The house was examined in 1965 by Mr. Isaac W. Williamson and evidence was found which indicated that an early log structure had been enlarged upon at a later date (see Plan A). It was found that a 16 foot by 34 foot area including the present rooms A and Front Hall were framed with logs having a flattened surface along the top edge to receive floor boards; Rooms B, C, D and Rear Hall were framed with sawn lumber (see Plan B). The foundations also indicated two different periods of construction with the older portion of the house being supported on stone foundations and the newer portion being supported on brick foundations.

Mr. Williamson also found that the sill between Rooms A & B (see Plan B) is hand-hewn timber with abandoned mortise holes on the Room B side, newer holes to receive hand sawn timbers to frame the floor of Room B. This seems to indicate that an additional room existed in the position of Room B in the original log structure.

The additions made in c.1852 by Benjamin Swanton include Rooms B, C and D and an interior fireplace between Rooms C and D. Two rooms also exist in the attic and an additional fireplace opening occurs in the room above C and D. A central one-story portico was added to the front entrance at this time.

The interiors of the house are quite plain with plastered walls apparently composed of clay, lime and hair and having only a base moulding. The fireplace fronts are also simply detailed with wood surrounds and small mantle shelves. Several interesting details do exist in the house. In the second floor room above Rooms C and D the chimney penetrates the center of the room and a fireplace is located in this free standing position. The fireplace front is a very plain wood surround with a small mantle shelf. In the room above Rooms A and B a vent exists as a transom above the door. This vent which rotates on a horizontal axis was apparently provided to allow for better air circulation when the door to the room was closed.

The present appearance of the house is the result of a restoration made in 1968 after the house was moved to its present site. The restoration of the house was based on the findings of Mr. Isaac W. Williamson, family recollections, and an early watercolor painting of the house indicating the Swanton additions. The restoration work was carried on by Mr. Wales Thomas. In restoring the house several Victorian and 20th century additions were stripped away and an effort was made to return the house to its c.1850 appearance.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
	<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			History
				Military

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1825 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Ammi Williams

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Swanton House is the most important existing building connected with the early history of the city of Decatur. Not only is the Swanton House the oldest extant building in Decatur and a fine example of the Plantation Plain Style, but in its 150-year history it has had connections with important families in Decatur as well as events figuring in Decatur's involvement in the Civil War.

The city of Decatur was chartered in 1823 and the original log structure (see Plan A) is reputed to have been constructed in the 1820's by an early settler named Ammi Williams. The early history of the house cannot be fully substantiated due to the burning of the Decatur Courthouse in the 19th century and the subsequent loss of early county records.

The log structure was purchased in 1852 by Benjamin Franklin Swanton who made the additions which are evident in the present residence. The house with Swanton's new additions was representative of the type of dwelling owned by many of Decatur's citizens. In its enlarged condition the Swanton House was a fine example of the style known as Plantation Plain.

Benjamin Franklin Swanton was one of the most important early industrialists in Decatur. Swanton moved from New Hampshire to Dahlonega, Georgia, at the time of the gold rush in order to sell mining machinery. In c.1852 he moved to Decatur to sell cotton gins. His varied list of business ventures in Decatur included the operation of a cotton gin, sawmill, gristmill, brickyard, tanyard and machine shop. All of these businesses operated within several blocks of the old Decatur Courthouse. The oldest brick residence in Decatur is reputed to have been constructed from bricks made at the Swanton brickyard.

During the Civil War, Swanton, his wife, and daughter Elizabeth went to Maine, leaving the house in the care of a Mrs. Johnson, a widow with ten little girls. Swanton House served as the headquarters on July 19, 1864, for the Federal Army of the Tennessee which occupied Decatur en route to Atlanta. The fact that General Thomas W. Sweeney, commander of the 2nd Division of Dodge's 16th A.C., established his headquarters in the Swanton House, is recorded in the diary of James P. Snell, a headquarters clerk and war correspondent.

When Benjamin Franklin Swanton died on February 18, 1890, his son, John Bowers Swanton, took over the house, lands, and industries. The original estate remained intact until the death of J.B. Swanton in 1897, when John's wife, Josephine Woodbury Swanton, sold the machinery of the various industries and used the lumber from the buildings to build tenant houses. After Josephine's

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Williamson, Isaac S. The Swanton House, unpublished study 1965, copy available through Wales Thomas, Decatur, Georgia.

Interview with Mr. Wales Thomas on October 22, 1976.

Swanton, Louise May. The Swanton Genealogy, copy available at DeKalb Historical Society, Decatur, Georgia.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Northeast Atlanta

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

16A

1	7	7	4	9	5	8	10	3	7	3	9	9	5	10
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

From Warranty Deed 10-14-71, Book 2718, p. 53. The property is described as follows: "Beginning at an iron pin located at the intersection of the southeast side of

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Georgia			
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Betty M. Strack, Architect / Deni Lamb, Intern, Historic Preservation Section
ORGANIZATION

DATE

Historic Preservation Section, Dept. of Natural Resources
STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

270 Washington St., S.W.
CITY OR TOWN

404-656-2820
STATE

Atlanta

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Elizabeth A. Lyon

TITLE

Elizabeth A. Lyon
Acting State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

6/11/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

8/20/75

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTERS

Charles W. Williamson

DATE

8-29-78

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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death in 1909, the land was divided and sold as city dwelling lots, the Swanton House being passed down to her daughter Estelle Swanton Kerr. After Estelle died in 1929, the house was handed down to Josephine Kerr Thompson, the last Swanton to reside at Swanton House.

The property on which the Swanton House originally stood extends on both sides of Atlanta Avenue. On the south side, the property is located west of Marshall Street, across Peavine Creek and up Swanton's Hill close to the railroad. The tanyard, machine shop and brickyard were all located within this area; the blacksmith's shop was on the west side of Swanton's Hill. On the north side of Atlanta Avenue, the property extended from Ponce de Leon to Adair Street. A gin and mill were located in this area, over Peavine Creek.

In 1968, the existence of the Swanton House was threatened due to urban renewal plans. At this time, the house was the only extant historic structure on the Swanton property. To save the house from destruction, Mills B. Lane bought the Swanton House and donated it to the DeKalb Historical Society, financing the moving and restoration. The Swanton House, formerly at 240 Atlanta Avenue, is now located at 720 Swanton Way.

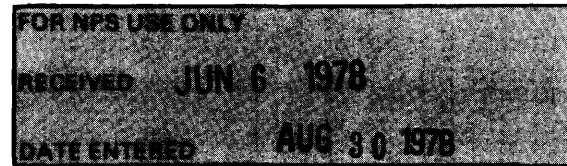
The present location of the Swanton House is between an empty lot and Adair Ebster Park, with apartment condominiums across the street and from the park westward.

By 1968, the original location of the house on the Swanton property had been so altered that only the house itself remained as a historic resource. Urbanization had seriously impacted the historical integrity of the site. In order to preserve the structure, it had to be relocated and was relocated on a portion of the original estate of Benjamin Franklin Swanton. Its move did not adversely affect the historical significance of this site. Although the house is no longer on its original location and although the historic environment of its new location is not reminiscent of the original environment of the nineteenth century, it is on property historically owned by Swanton. The move, though unfortunate, was the only means of preserving the structure.

The Swanton House is important to the city of Decatur through its connections with important events in Decatur's early history and as the last example of a life style which was representative of a large segment of antebellum Decatur's history.

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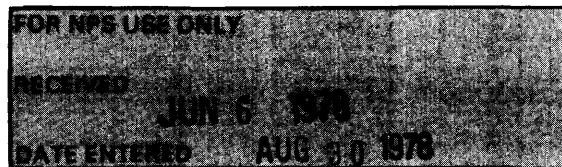


Major Bibliographical
CONTINUATION SHEET References ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

Hudgins, Carl T. Mills and other early Dekalb County Industries (and their owners).
Unpublished paper, November 1951. Copy available Dekalb Historical Society,
Decatur, Georgia.

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Verbal Boundary
CONTINUATION SHEET Description ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

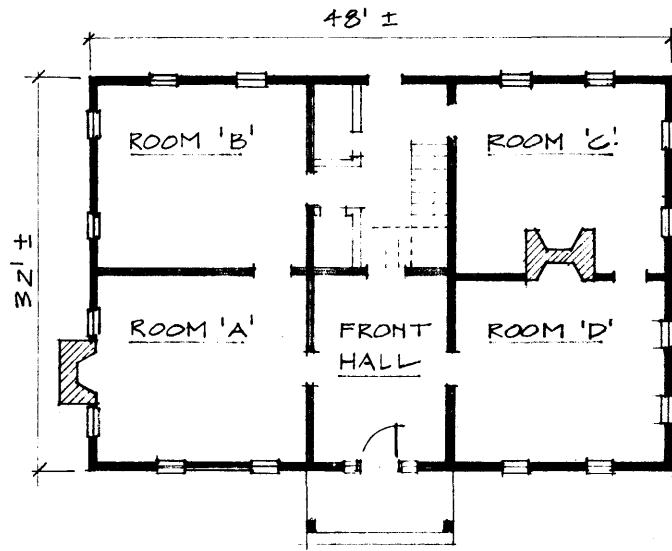
the right-of-way of Trinity Place (a 60 foot right-of-way) with the northeast side of the right-of-way of Water Circle (a 30 foot right-of-way), and running thence northeasterly along the southeast side of the right-of-way of Trinity Place a distance of 160 feet to an iron pin; running thence southeasterly along the line that is parallel to the northeast side of the right-of-way of Water Circle a distance of 70 feet to a point; running thence southwesterly along the line that is parallel with the southeast side of the right-of-way of Trinity Place a distance of 160 feet to a point on the northeast side of the right-of-way of Water Circle; running thence northwesterly along the northeast side of the right-of-way of Water Circle and a distance of 70 feet to the point of beginning."

SKETCH MAP

Swanton House, Decatur, DeKalb County, Georgia

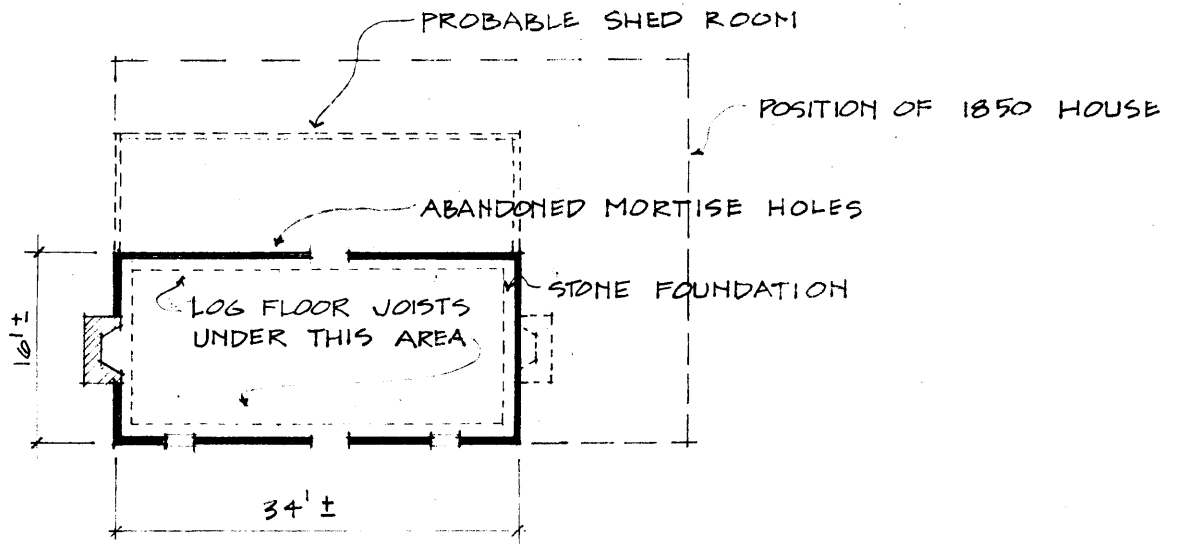
AUG 30 1978

JUN 6 1978



PLAN B - EXISTING

PLAN REFLECTS SWANTON ADDITIONS



PLAN A - c. 1825

PROBABLE FLOOR PLAN

DRAWINGS TAKEN FROM SKETCHES BY ISSAC
W. WILLIAMSON 1965 OF SWANTON HOUSE