

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH 0689891

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED NOV 27 1978  
DATE ENTERED JAN 19 1979

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 *Complete*  
Atlanta Women's Club, ~~Community Playhouse, Lucille King Thomas Auditorium~~  
AND/OR COMMON  
Atlanta Women's Club, Peachtree Playhouse

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER  
1150 Peachtree Street, N.E. NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CITY, TOWN CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
Atlanta Fifth - Fowler  
STATE VICINITY OF COUNTY CODE  
Georgia 13 Fulton 121

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 type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Civic

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME ✓  
Atlanta Women's Club  
STREET & NUMBER  
1150 Peachtree Street, N.E.  
CITY, TOWN STATE  
Atlanta Georgia 30308

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
Fulton County Courthouse  
STREET & NUMBER  
Central Avenue  
CITY, TOWN STATE  
Atlanta Georgia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE  
Architectural Survey of Fulton County  
DATE  
1976 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL   
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS  
Historic Preservation Section, Dept. of Natural Resources  
CITY, TOWN STATE  
Atlanta Georgia

# 7 DESCRIPTION

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

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Women's Club complex embodies a three-part construction sequence. They are in order: the Clubhouse, Banquet Hall and the Auditorium.

The Clubhouse was built in 1898 as a private residence. It was acquired in 1919 for use as the clubhouse facility for meetings, social events, etc.

The major style is French Chateau, inspired by the country style predominant in sixteenth-century France, and is based on D'O of the sixteenth century and other Norman works. Constructed of load-bearing stone-block walls, its appearance is asymmetrical. A round tower is at the southeast corner. A wide porch/portico opens out to the east from the front of the house onto Peachtree Street. Second and third stories are represented by steep roofs with clay tiles and are pierced by dormers. Tall chimneys rise from the roof ridges. Extensive landscaping on the south side, though not original in design, is very neatly kept and is quite handsome next to the building.

The south facade adjacent to the landscaping also exhibits French influence with a large rectangular projection which is the parlor. Other features that are repeated are tall chimneys, round towers and steep roofs. A round tower is also the focal point of the south facade. The north facade has less fenestration. The French styles are also repeated with a small round tower at the northeast corner. The massing is broken up by the continuation of the porch from the east (front) side. A service drive is immediately north of the building and runs parallel to the property line, about two feet short. A later addition on the north side of the house is reflected by the use of painted brick as the enclosure material. The openings are either double-hung wooden windows or beveled glass. The paving material is concrete for the drive, and stone for the walk and patio.

The banquet hall was added directly west of the clubhouse in 1921. The architects succeeded in relating the two structures with a Louis XV style. Details of facades come from the Petite Trianon in France.

The north facade of the banquet hall is represented by a series of arched openings which are either doors or windows. These are divided into smaller lights of glass, resembling French doors. The exterior is of a greystone. The south facade, facing the landscaped area, displays added construction. With the addition of the auditorium, an outer lobby has been added, so that the original arched wall is now an interior wall in the lobby. The present facade wall was matched to the greystone appearance, and now defines the edge of the lobby area.

The auditorium, or playhouse, of all these structures is the most plain and unadorned. The major material is a stuccoed texture. The south and north

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facades are grey in color and are quite massive planes with little ornamentation. The architects recognized this and displayed the medallion of the Atlanta Women's Club as raised detailing, as well as exterior lighting fixtures. The west facade, which is also the rear of the stage, faces Crescent Street. The material is plain red brick, and the only relief to this is the loading dock which ramps up from street level to stage level, about six feet. The structure is a load-bearing brick-wall system with a series of steel trusses that intersect at the center of the auditorium. This is expressed in the design of the original skylight system, which now is used as a lighting cove.

Directly to the south of the auditorium and immediately inside the west property line off of Crescent Street is the swimming pool. It is on grade on its eastern edge but from the Crescent Street side it forms a six-foot wall. The pool, built about 1925, was designed by architect Cochran and has been out of use for many years due to its high operation costs and the belief that the lack of a filtering system was a major contribution to polio.

To enter the clubhouse, one passes through a large portico/patio through tall, wood bevel-glass doors. Entering on the main foyer, the room is characterized by arches, motified as those on the outside. A large parlor is on the left with original rugs, furnishings, gas lamps (wired for electricity), fireplaces, with original detail carvings of lions' heads. To the right is a dining room with large oak tables and handmade inlaid wood furniture. Doors are set in recesses with plaster detailing concentrated at these openings. Ceilings are plaster with a concentration of detail around the light fixture. Straight ahead to the right is the old servants' quarters and present-day kitchens. Straight ahead to the left is the grand open circular staircase which leads to the bedrooms on the second level. A foyer is at the top of the stairs and is oval in shape with various rooms arranged off of it. Fine examples of period furniture are in this area. Original fixtures line the ceiling where lights used to shine on paintings when exhibited. A typical room is large, with a fireplace and double-hung windows that are rounded in form. A bath was typical in these rooms. All of the building shows detailing (fireplaces, newel posts, beveled glass) furnishings (gas lamps, inlaid furniture, hardwood floors, rugs) and overall is in excellent condition, although much has been painted an unsoothing color of pink.

The rooms in the structure are used for the offices of the club and also serve as function rooms, and provide some living rooms for the members.

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Straight back down some six stairs off of the main foyer corridor to the west is the banquet hall. It is a rectangular room, deep rather than wide. The floor is hardwood for dancing and sound control. The ceiling is plaster over a steel structure and is slightly barrel-vaulted along the main axis. Low-relief detail is found on the ceiling. The two main walls, north and south, are symmetrically arched; arches on the north are windows, and those on the south are doors opening up on the auditorium lobby. The ornamentation is simple and for the most part consists of floral festoons. Original furnishings, such as leather-covered doors to the kitchen on the west and bentwood chairs, are excellent examples of craftsmanship and are in fine condition. Apparently a new mechanical system has been furnished as the original wire-type return ducts are now affixed with a new type of diffuser.

The west wall of the banquet hall opens into the foyer of the auditorium. The lobby is of marble and similar to the two other buildings with exposed Caen stonework, French doors, and low-relief detailing, etc. These sets of doors open on the west side to the lobby of the auditorium.

On the left side is the added box office, women's room and concession stand. Behind the concession stand is the original cornerstone dated 1921, and it contains various items such as club memorabilia, a coin of the latest minting of each denomination, the rotogravure section of the Atlanta Constitution and Journal of April, 1921, and a picture of Mrs. Lucille King Thomas, for whom the auditorium was named. To the right are doors that enter from the drive.

In the auditorium there are three sections of seating. The orchestra contains two sections, one of approximately twenty rows of seats and separated by two aisles and four sets of boxes on either the right or left. The balcony consists of ten rows and may be approached from the left or right as soon as one enters the auditorium. Behind the balcony in the center is the "fireproof" booth for movies.

The interior retains much of its original furnishings and detailing. The walls are simple, and are made of plaster. On the orchestra level, the walls are pierced with casement openings to allow natural light inside. Curtains can cover up the openings when darkness is desired. On the second level, the walls consist of large panels broken up by simple raised detailing. The low relief consists of images of famous poets, playwrights, etc.

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The color scheme, at one time beige, is now a deep red, with all the low plaster detailing accentuated by colors of green, tan, blue, gold, etc.

Most of the detailing is on the proscenium-arch opening, as this is where one's attention is usually drawn. It consists of a regular pattern of raised plaster, and is broken up on either side at the boxes with a pediment and urn.

The ceiling is vaulted, with the focus on the center chandelier. This area used to have a skylight which would allow natural sunlight to penetrate into the auditorium. When this was not desired, a mechanically-controlled curtain could be activated to create a dark house. In renovation done for the stage, it was decided that this was not needed, and modern lighting that Broadway shows demand was installed. Additional lighting is provided from four glass chandeliers on each side of the ceiling which are supported by chains, and small candelabra-type lighting between the openings on the orchestra-floor level.

The orchestra floor is slightly slanted to the orchestra pit, where some seating has been removed to create a small orchestra pit. New chairs were installed in the house on both levels and the total capacity is now around 650.

The hall has excellent acoustics and sight lines. This is primarily due to the pitch of the seating and excellent choice of finish materials by the architects. The stage has been modernized with a new house dimmer to replace the abrupt extinguishing previously used.

A new fly rail has been built at the second level on stage-right to give more room to work on the 24-X-36-foot stage. A new loading dock was also added recently, and this will allow for contemporary shows to be arranged with little logistical problems. Below the stage are dressing rooms, which recently have been remodeled, as they originally were designed for users of the club's adjacent swimming pool. Originally no dressing rooms were designed, as it was merely a recital hall. The stage was also designed to hold gym equipment as the hall was not used all that often. This equipment was so used as they could change to auditorium use rather easily.

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# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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	1898 Clubhouse, 1921 Banquet Hall, 1922 Auditorium	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	W.T. Downing - Clubhouse P. Thornton Mayre, Barrett Alger, Banquet Hall, Auditorium
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE			

The significance of the structure is based on the architecture of the building and its additions, and on the importance of the Atlanta Women's Club to the art, literature and philanthropy in Atlanta.

The Atlanta Women's Club was organized November 11, 1895. It was founded due to a meeting in Atlanta of the General Federation of Women's Clubs during the Cotton States Exposition. The main objectives of the organization, laid down by the founder and first president, Mrs. Douglas Rebecca Lowe, was "three fold -- social, literary, and humanitarian." Meetings prior to the acquisition of the present clubhouse were in the DeGive Opera House (Loew's Grande). Since then, the club moved to another house on Baker Street in what now is downtown, and acquired the present structure in 1919.

The Women's Club complex represents a major development of the culture and lifestyle of the Atlanta area. The aims of these people were multifaceted with emphasis on the community and theatre. The various added elements, the clubhouse, banquet hall, auditorium, and pool, were prearranged as per a master plan done by P. Thornton Mayre and Barrett Alger, dated May 7, 1921. This development put the total investment of their property in the 1920s in excess of a quarter of a million dollars.

The clubhouse, designed as a private residence by architect Walter T. Downing for Mr. and Mrs. William A. Wimbish, was the first part of the complex. Built in 1898, it was opened up as the clubhouse on February 7, 1920, in order to provide better community service and for expansion of space. At that time, the master plan was envisioned, and a building and funding committee were set up to check out the feasibility of these dreams. The Women's Club at that time had many hundreds of members, many of whom were in the top elite of Atlanta's upper-class structure.

The banquet hall was added at the cost of approximately \$35,000 in 1921, about a year after the acquisition of the clubhouse. Designed by architects P. Thornton Mayre and Barrett Alger (the same architects who with Oliver Vinour designed the nearby Fox Theatre building) designed this structure sympathetically with the clubhouse. The Louis XV style repeats the motifs and material color, texture, openings, etc., and it helps tie the two structures together.

[continued]

(7)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- The Atlanta Journal, issues of May 7, 1921; April 16, 17, 1922.
- Atlanta Magazine, August, 1972.
- Matthews, Jane Foster, and Sawyers, Elizabeth M. The Old and New in Atlanta (Atlanta, 1976).
- Women's Club Scrapbook, 1921-22, Atlanta Historical Society.
- Interview with Mrs. Fargarson, president of Atlanta Women's Club, April 15, 1977.
- Unsigned draft of nomination form prepared by student, Georgia Institute of Technology, 1977.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 acre, approx.

QUADRANGLE NAME Northwest Atlanta

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,6 | 7|4,2|3,0,5 | 3,7|4,1|2,9,0

B    |    |   

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C    |    |   

D    |    |   

E    |    |   

F    |    |   

G    |    |   

H    |    |   

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point 187' south of the southwest corner of the intersection of Fourteenth and Peachtree streets and running south with Peachtree Street 123'; thence [continued]

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Martha Norwood, Historian, Historic Preservation Section

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Historic Preservation Section

July 1978

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

270 Washington Street, S. W.

404/656-2840

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Atlanta

Georgia 30334

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE   

LOCAL X

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*  
Elizabeth A. Lyon

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

11/16/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

ATTEST: *Charles A. ...*  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER  
*Robert ...*  
SECRETARY OF RECORDS

DATE

1.19.79

DATE

1/10/79

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The hall was used for dinners, lunches and other events in the Women's Club's extensive programs. Many prominent Atlanta women have either dined there or been a part of the Women's Club itself.

On April 17, 1922, the Women's Club Auditorium, or the Lucille King Thomas Auditorium, as it was dedicated, opened at the cost of \$110,000. The women financed the entire project by themselves by purchasing life insurance from the Volunteer State Life Insurance Company.

The building was also designed by P. Thornton Mayre and Barrett Alger, and was built by W.P. Francis, contractor. It was hailed as a masterpiece. The Atlanta Journal proclaimed it as "South's Most Complete Auditorium, Gem Like in Its Beauty." The opening play was called "Democracy DeLuxe," and attracted many prominent Atlantans and Georgians, such as Governor Thomas Hardwick and wife, Atlanta mayor James L. Key and wife, and the architects. The opening represented "a monumental achievement," as it "surpasses in cost of erection, beauty every other womens club auditorium in the United States..." and "... stands foremost as a conspicuous achievement of the club women."

For its day, the Thomas auditorium was very technically advanced with many innovations. This was to help the auditorium be the "center of community drama in Atlanta."

The seating arrangement in the orchestra and balconies is spacious, as are the aisles. The stage itself included footlights, a proscenium drop curtain, and all the other necessary equipment of the day. An interesting innovation in the way of a movable curtain over the center skylight was remotely controlled to provide darkness whenever desired. This was done to make it:

... one of the most unique buildings in America in that it was built to serve a dual purpose -- an auditorium where sunlight may penetrate and to be used when meetings, lectures, and the like are held, and a modern theatre when this is desired.

Everything from recitals to movies to lectures could be had because of this versatility.

The accoustics were clearly studied with special emphasis put on hearing women's voices. Recently it was said it was "the best place in town to sing" by a well-known soprano.

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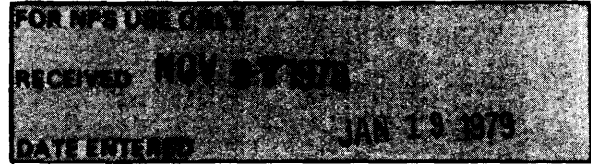
Over the years, the auditorium was used fairly irregularly. Recently, however, due in part to the increased awareness in theatre in Atlanta, the auditorium was restored. Some of the improvements such as added lighting, and stagework, were on the technical side. On the public side were new seats, electrical wiring, new paint, carpet, etc. This reinstated the belief that the building should "be a jewel box."

Every winter, a tradition is carried out by bringing Broadway plays to Atlanta. A major reason is that the auditorium (or playhouse) is intimate enough, and at the same time large enough to support the art. The playhouse is the only Broadway-type theatre that exists today in Atlanta. Famous names such as E.G. Marshall, Robert Vaughn, Eli Wallach, Dina Merrill and Barbara Rush appear regularly. If it were not for the playhouse, Atlanta would probably be bypassed by these contemporary stars.

The complete complex represents a period of high commitment of these women to community service, with many people helping put much effort and capital into these structures. Over the years, the area around the Atlanta Women's Club has begun to deteriorate, as suburban flight increased. Fortunately, due to the untiring efforts of these women to maintain the club, despite high taxes, land speculation, etc., the buildings are in generally excellent condition. The area in recent months has been cleaned up due to civic and political undertakings, and the neighborhood in general has become more desirable for residential living. These women have been a part of the effort to maintain the integrity of the neighborhood.

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**CONTINUATION SHEET** Verbal Boundary    ITEM NUMBER 10    PAGE 2

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west 322.3' to Crescent Avenue; thence north 125' along Crescent Avenue; thence east 322' to point of origin, as shown on Fulton County Tax Map 106, Sheet 5, District 17, Land Lot 106 at 1150 Peachtree Street, excluding right-of-way for public roads. (See attached portion of tax map.)

Atlanta Women's Club  
Fulton County, Georgia  
Fulton County Tax Map 106, Sheet 5  
Land Lot 106, District 17  
Tax Assessors Office  
Scale 1" = 80'

JAN 19 1979

NOV 27 1978

