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**GEORGIA**  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION

## The Georgia Ranch House Initiative

Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century Ranch Houses in Georgia



May 2010 Richard Cloues, Ph.D.

Ranch Houses in Georgia are *historic*.

They are *old enough*, they are *important enough*, and they have been *studied enough*.

That is the conclusion of our office's five-year research project to document the history and significance of the Ranch House in Georgia.

2



We began this project several years ago when we first started encountering Ranch Houses in our programs.

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Some of our first encounters came through Section 106 environmental reviews of highway projects.

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Others came from environmental reviews of community development projects involving the rehabilitation or replacement of "older" neighborhood housing ...

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And weatherization projects including replacement of windows and doors.

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Still other Section 106 projects involved the demolition of Ranch Houses in low-lying areas for floodplain clearance.

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But other encounters came from proposed National Register nominations for historic neighborhoods that included Ranch Houses intermixed with older houses ...

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And from some early interest in nominating entire Ranch House subdivisions.

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Our office also was concerned about what we saw happening to Ranch Houses, including drastic remodelings ...

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Gutting of not just interiors but exteriors as well ...

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Adding second floors ...

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Converting Ranch Houses to commercial uses along formerly rural roads that have since become commercial corridors ...

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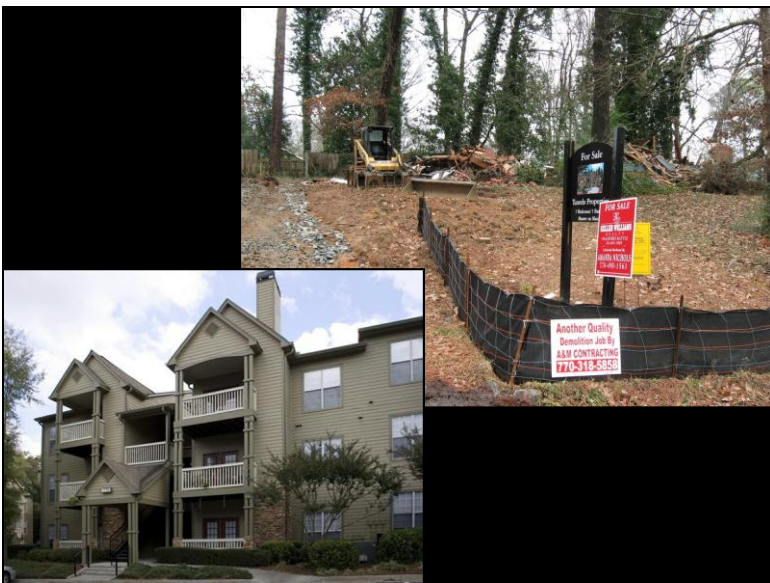
Demolishing Ranch Houses in mid-century neighborhoods for new residential development ...

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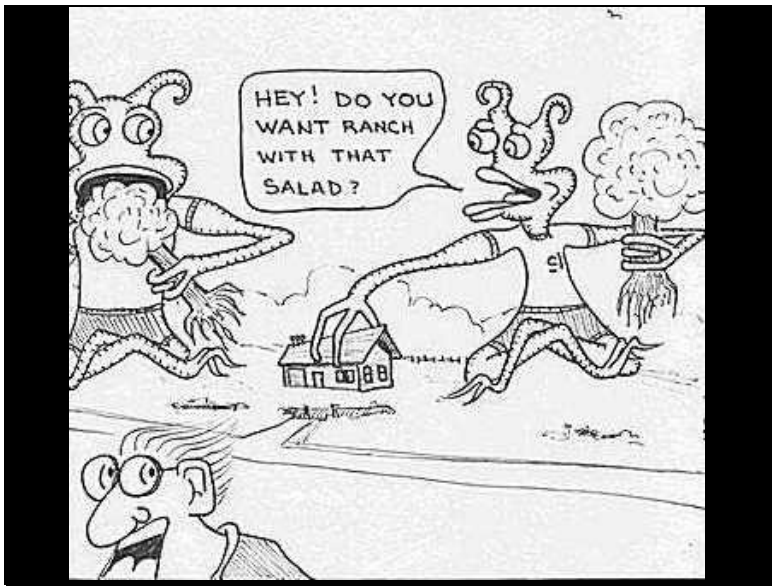
Often followed by constructing out-of-scale and out-of-character "McMansions" in their places ...

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And destroying tracts of Ranch Houses for higher-density redevelopment.

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Indeed, it began to look like Ranch Houses might be disappearing almost as fast as they had been built!

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Prompted by all this, we decided it was time to take a serious look at these ranch houses and their prospects for the future.



The objectives of our Ranch House Initiative were five-fold:

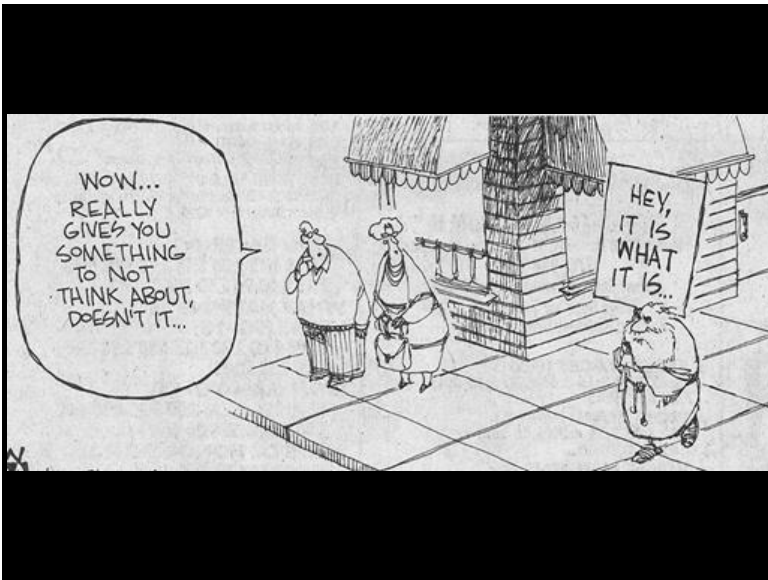
To document the *history* of the Ranch House in Georgia;

To identify the different *types and styles* of Ranch Houses in the state;

To chart the *geography* of Georgia's Ranch Houses;

To identify their *character-defining architectural features*;

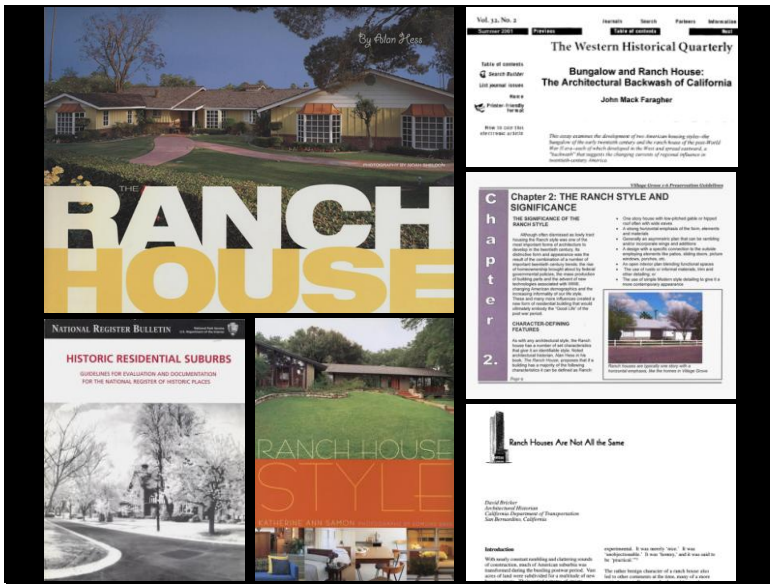
And to take note of any distinctly "Georgia" or "Southern" Ranch House traits.



Our goal was to determine if Ranch Houses are historically and architecturally significant and if so why.

Some things we did along the way:

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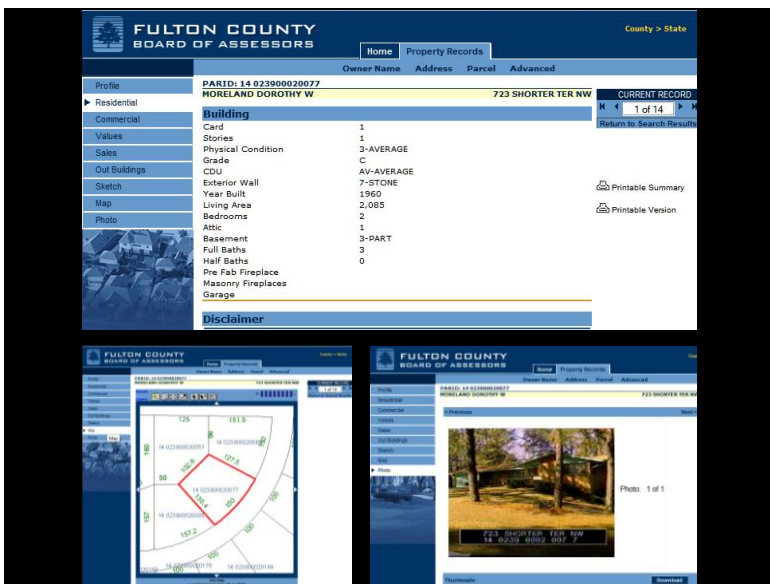
We conducted a literature search and discovered a lot of information about the history of the Ranch House nationally and in the Southwest but virtually nothing about the Ranch House in the Southeast.

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We carried out some quick windshield surveys in targeted areas of the state to see what was actually out there in terms of Ranch Houses ...

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And we supplemented these field impressions with readily available information from on-line property tax assessment files.

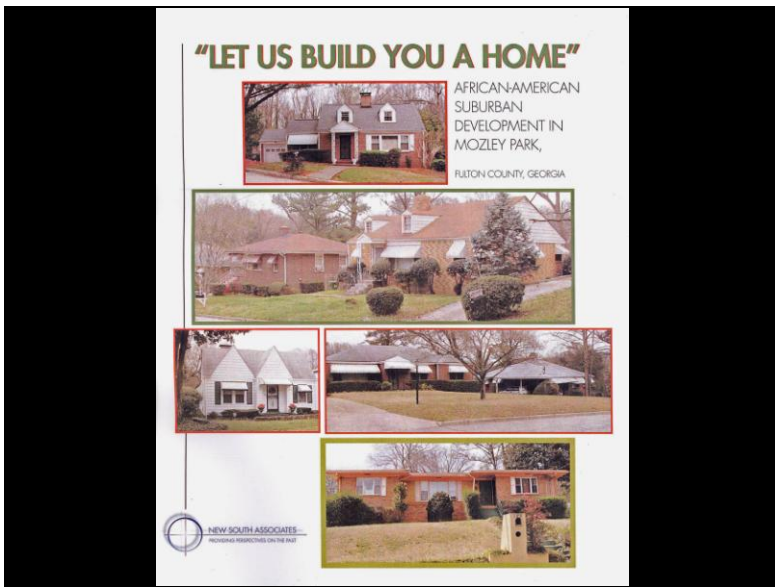


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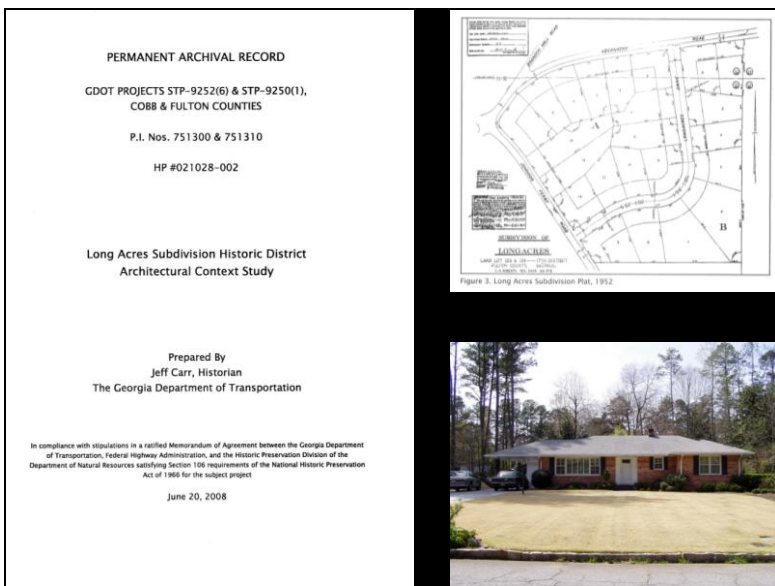
We researched dozens of national and regional Ranch House plan books including several published by Atlanta companies or individuals such as the Home Builders Plan Service, Leila Ross Wilburn, and W. D. Farmer.

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We took maximum advantage of opportunities for conducting focused research studies of mid-20th-century houses ...


25



Primarily through the Section 106 process.

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Georgia Chapter  
Upcoming Events



**Consider the Ranch: A look at the development of the Ranch House**  
Richard Cloues  
August 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> 2007, 6 PM  
Location TBA

**Modern Living  
Living Modern**  
Late September 2007  
Details to follow

More about Modern Georgia: [www.docomomoga.org](http://www.docomomoga.org)  
Questions: [info@docomomoga.org](mailto:info@docomomoga.org)



*The Ordinary Iconic Ranch House*  
A book by  
**Richard Cloues**  
State Historic Preservation Officer,  
Unit Manager, Survey and National Register  
Thursday, Nov. 16, 6:30 p.m.

**March Lunch and Learn Lecture!** With speakers Richard Cloues and Melissa Forgy

Richard Cloues, unit manager & deputy state historic preservation officer for Georgia's Historic Preservation Division will begin the presentation with the history of the Ranch House in Georgia. Melissa Forgy, Executive Director for the DeKalb History Center, will present the results DHC's recent look at this mid-century housing type. The "Ranch House Initiative" was developed by the DeKalb History Center with the support of Commissioner Jeff Rader in an effort to understand the ranch house boom that occurred in nearly every part of DeKalb County throughout the mid to late 20th century. In addition to an overview of the county's history during this time period, the presentation will focus on four notable ranch neighborhoods in DeKalb: Northwoods, Sargent Hills, Briarpark Court and Belvedere Park.

**Wednesday, March 24**  
**Noon to 1:00 p.m.**  
Old Courthouse on the Square, Second Floor, Superior Courtroom  
Free - bring your lunch!

We orchestrated a public information campaign to get the word out ...



And solicited public input, particularly from people who had lived in ranch houses all their lives.

**Humble little houses changed America**

Doraville subdivision of iconic ranch style may gain 'historic' status.

By Mark Davis  
[mrdavis@ajc.com](mailto:mrdavis@ajc.com)

The future beckoned. Chuck and Millie Fadden announced they were moving out of her parents' Long Island home and heading to Georgia. In 1955, that was big news; everyone in the neighborhood talked about the young couple's plans down South.

Their new home? It was a curious collection of angles and glass, with big windows facing a backyard so new that bramble still clung to the trees. Just one story tall, the home backed into the sloping lot and rested on a concrete slab. It even had a curious name: ranch house.

Odd name or not, the couple was smitten. They bought their home in Northwoods, a new subdivision in Doraville. They got one of the fancier models, a three-bedroom, one-bath structure. It set them back \$13,750. They shook hands, signed the papers and moved in.

Northwoods would grow in.

**Houses continued on A18**

**COLLIER HEIGHTS**



The 1950s Collier Heights home of construction magnate Herman Russell and the son Michael was a gripping scene for Harry Luther King Jr. and other black leaders forbidden to sit segregated restrooms downtown. The neighborhood was "built by blacks and financed by blacks," one resident said.

**Suburb stepped in Atlanta history**

African-American neighborhood nominated for National Register

By JIM ARCHAMBEY  
[jeash@ajc.com](mailto:jeash@ajc.com)

Collier Heights doesn't look particularly historic. The steep, wooded hills of the west Atlanta neighborhood are sprinkled with ranch houses and eight-tracks built during the 1950s. It's a quiet, leafy enclave of brick homes and garages, few cars, most ever hospitalized on their curving lanes.

"I never thought this area was historic until I started hearing some of the neighbors talk about it," said Gilbert Evans, a retired postal supervisor who moved to Collier Heights in 1968.

Now he knows differently. The state of Georgia has just nominated Collier Heights for the National Register of Historic Places. If the National Park Service approves, it would become the first ever Atlanta-area neighborhood to be designated a national historic landmark.

"I never thought this area was historic until I started hearing some of the neighbors talk about it," said Gilbert Evans, a retired postal supervisor who moved to Collier Heights in 1968.

▶ Photos see HISTORIC, D5



**SCAD Architectural History Blog**

Home About Calendar Faculty Activities Lectures Symposium Series Students Student Work Careers Alumni Resources

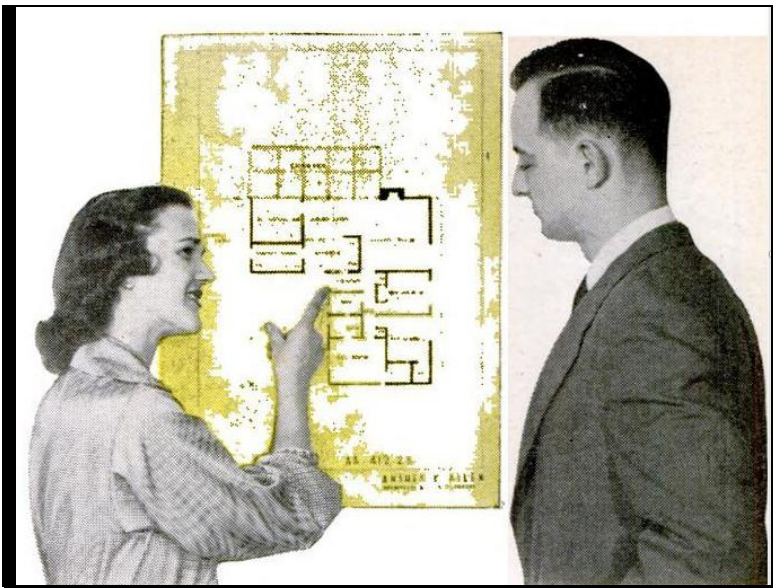
**Dr. Richard Cloues lectures on the Iconic Ranch House**

WELCOME  
Sharing information and opinions about the field of architectural history and about the public, academic and professional organizations that support it.

NOVEMBER 11, 2007

Along the way we got some good press coverage.

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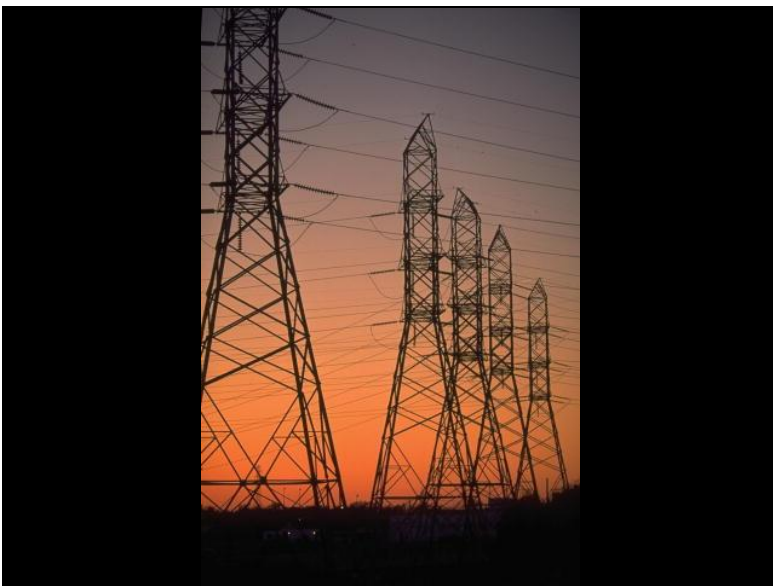
We held information-sharing workshops with other agencies and their consultants ...

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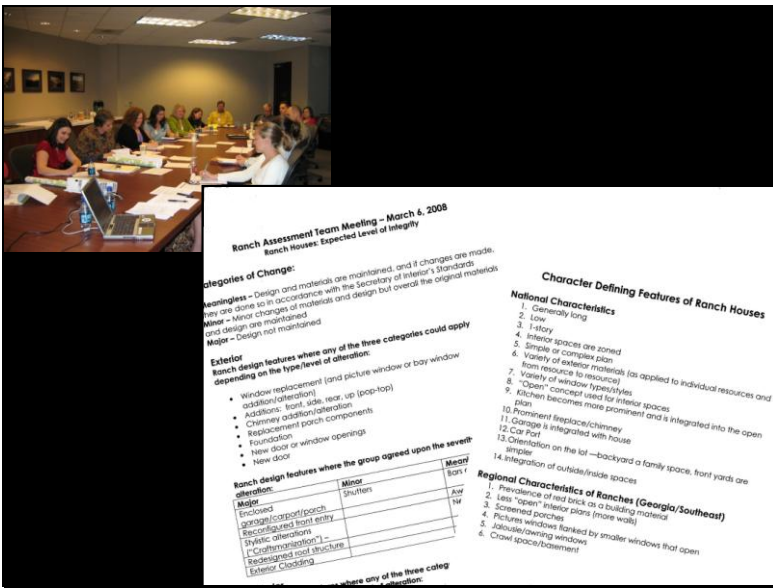


Including the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) ...

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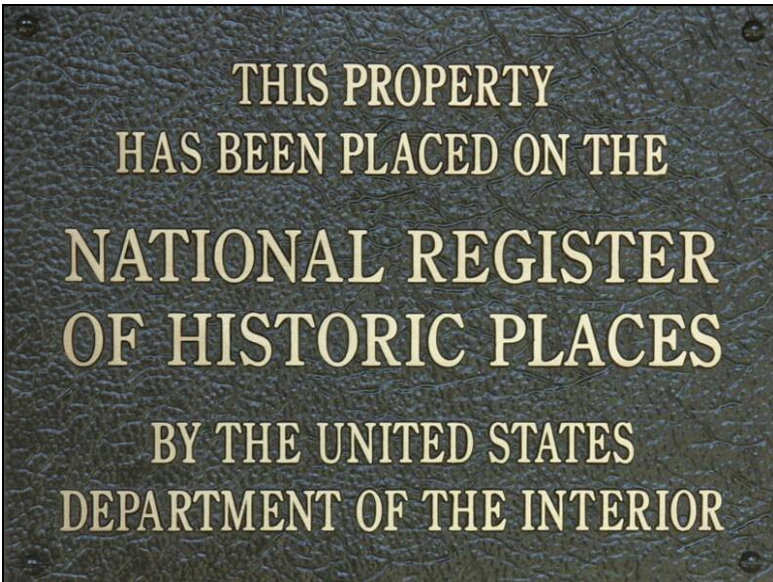
And the Georgia Transmission Corporation (GTC), one of the state's major electric utility companies ...



And we worked with an interagency task force supported by GTC and GDOT which reviewed our research findings and helped establish protocols for documenting and evaluating the significance of Ranch Houses.

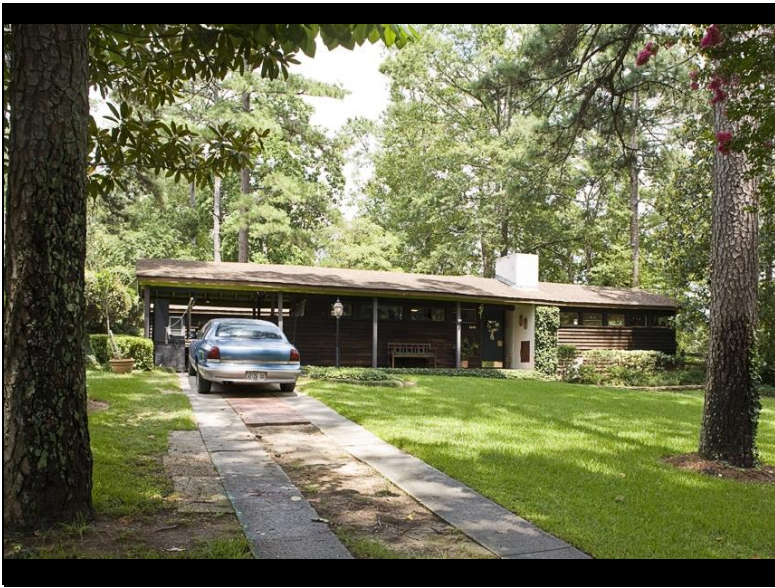


The work group was comprised of GTC and GDOT cultural resources staff and consultants and staff from our office's survey, National Register, and environmental review programs.



We also went ahead with our state's first National Register nominations for Ranch Houses:

35



One for an individual Ranch House in Macon ...

36



An early "California Contemporary" style house built in 1950;

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One for a 1950s Ranch-House subdivision in Savannah ...

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With a variety of standard and custom-designed houses;

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And one for Collier Heights in Atlanta, the nation's pre-eminent mid-century African-American suburb.

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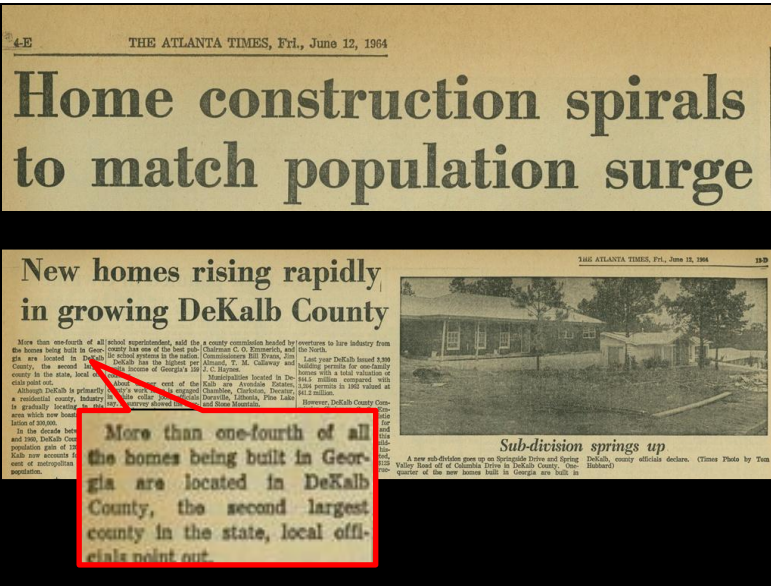
Much of this work was done in conjunction with preservation consultants and graduate students in the Georgia State University heritage education program.

41



During this past year we worked on a project with the DeKalb History Center and Georgia State University to document Ranch Houses in DeKalb County (the project report is posted elsewhere on this website).

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DeKalb County, in the Atlanta metropolitan area, was the epicenter of mid-20th-century ranch-house development in Georgia.

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Reference products of the Ranch House Initiative to date include a *history of the Ranch House in Georgia ...*

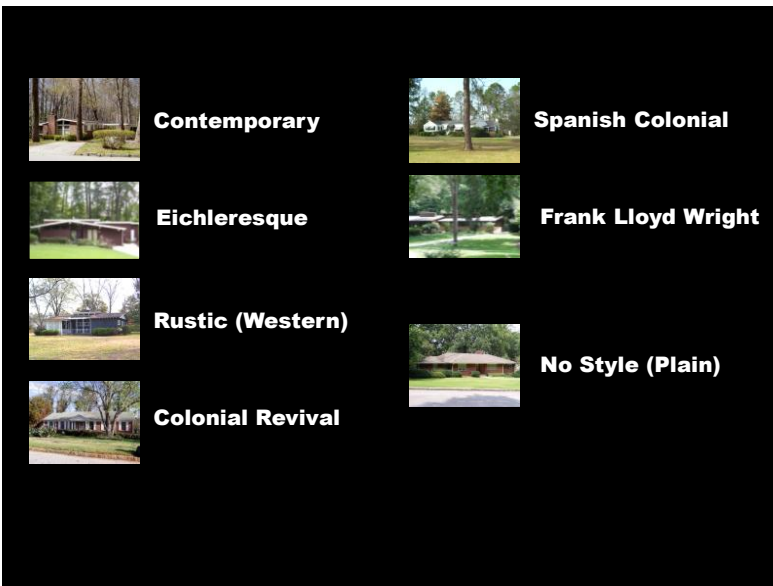


In the form of a PowerPoint presentation (available for viewing in two parts here on our office's website) ...

which includes a *chronological overview* of the Ranch House in Georgia ...

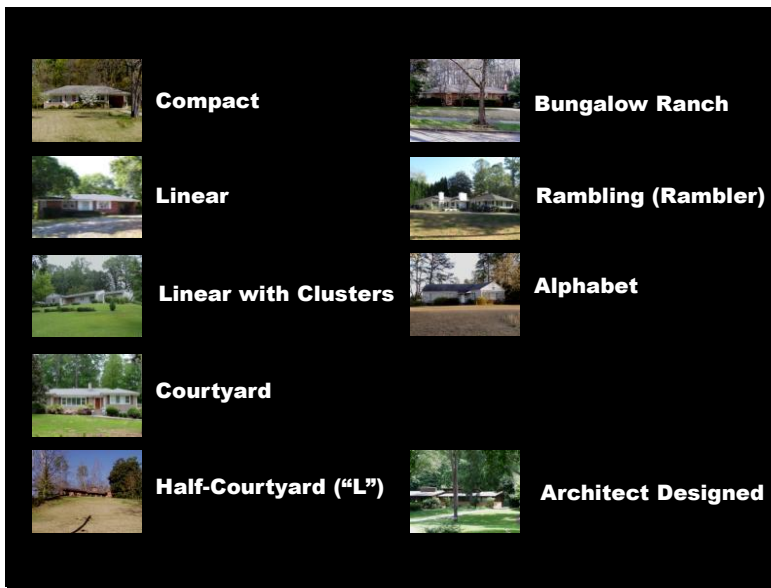


A *geographical analysis* of the Ranch House in Georgia - where Ranch Houses were built in Georgia, as well as when ...

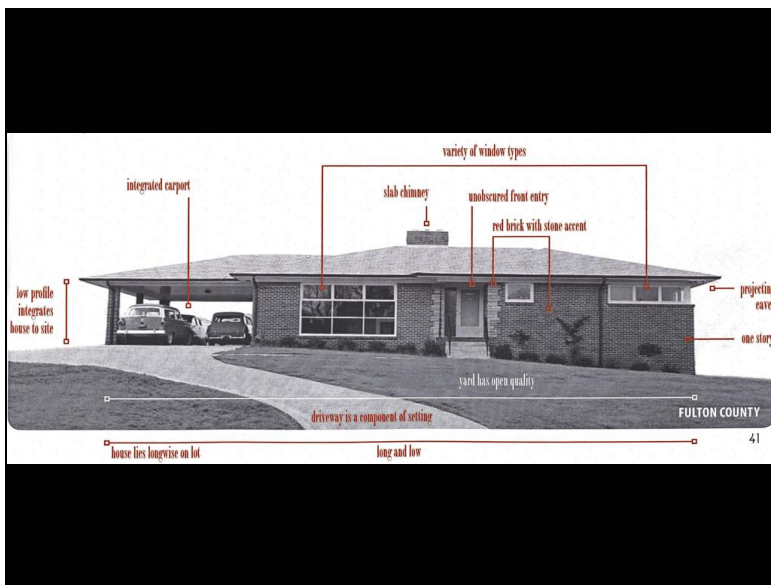


A descriptive list of the various *architectural styles* associated with Ranch Houses in Georgia (also available for viewing elsewhere on our office's website) ...





A companion list of the various *sub-types* of Georgia Ranch Houses (also on our website) ...



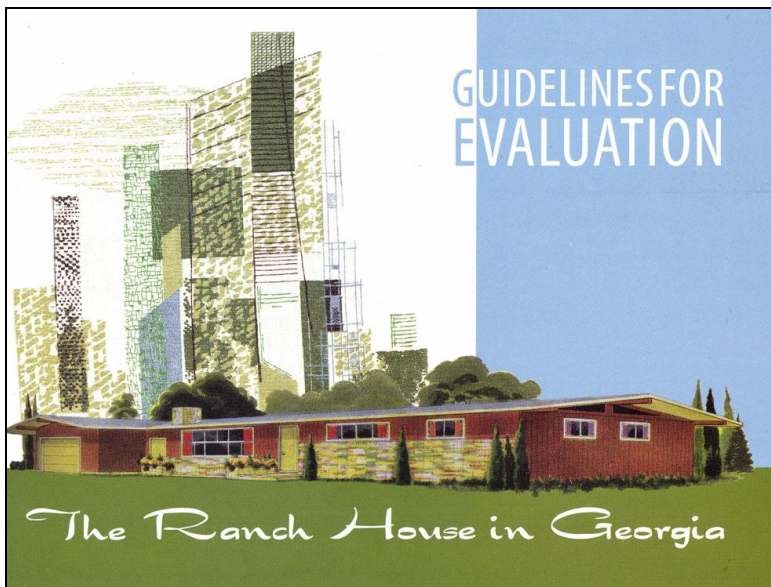
An account of the character-defining features of the Ranch House in Georgia -- features that make these Ranch Houses architecturally significant ...



Distinctive aspects of the Georgia Ranch House, including screened porches ...



And red brick as the favored construction material



Just recently made available is *The Ranch House in Georgia: Guidelines for Evaluation...*

Prepared by a consulting firm, under contract with Georgia Transmission Corporation, on behalf of the interagency Ranch House task force and our office ...

And available for viewing or downloading right now on our office's website, and soon to be available in printed form through an on-line on-demand publisher.



The *Guidelines* explain, step-by-step, in a lavishly illustrated manner, how to *identify, document, and evaluate* Georgia's ranch houses consistent with the recommendations of the interagency task force and guidance from our office.

**Low, long, and integrated** are the essential character-defining features that distinguish the Ranch House Building Type from other one-story houses. The house design will further distinguish Georgia Ranch House properties with exterior features, interior features, the siting of the house to the site and landscape, decorative techniques, and signs. The aim is to provide a descriptive and well-illustrated guide that preservation professionals can draw on to assist field survey and evaluation.

**EXTERIOR FEATURES**

**Character-Defining Features**

- One story, one story with lower level
- Low and long
- Simple or complex plan
- Multiple roof types having projecting overhanging eaves
- Variety of window finishes but red brick is dominant building material
- Colorful materials may be used for accents such as granite, other stone, wood, and concrete
- Chimney makes an architectural statement
- Front door is square
- Variety of window types are present; together window with center picture window and flanking operable windows are common
- Windows are hinged, back that open into outside living space are also common
- Screened porches are part of house's design. They can be found on the end or front, the breezeway between carport and house, or on rear of house
- Generally, garage becomes attached to the house
- Carport are incorporated into design. Carport types, when present, are open, one-sided, hidden with brick screen wall or tucked into side of the house

**INTERIOR FEATURES**


- Open living spaces or
- More conservative (traditional) interior plan

Practical written advice is supplemented by period and contemporary visuals.

**Remember...**  
These are guidelines to a process not a formula!

The *Guidelines* present a process for identifying, documenting, and evaluating resources -- *not a formula!*

### Ranch House Guidelines Training Agenda



**Where:** Georgia Transmission Corporation  
2100 East Exchange Place  
Tucker, GA 30084-5342

**When:** May 13, 2010  
8:45 - 3:45

9:00 — 9:05 Welcome, Christy Johnson, GTC  
9:05 — 10:00 The Ordinary Iconic Ranch House, Richard Cloues, HPD  
10:00 — 10:25 Character Defining Features, Patrick Sullivan, New South Associates

**BREAK:** 10:25 — 10:40

10:40 — 11:00 Landscape Features, Christy Johnson, GTC  
11:00 — 12:00 Evaluation Guidelines, Mary Beth Reed, New South

**LUNCH:** 12:00 — 1:00 Working Lunch  
*Participants are strongly encouraged to bring their own lunches as this time will be used for Q&A following the morning session. Cafeteria also available on site.*

1:00 — 1:15 Group breakout sessions — Led by Ashley Regan, GTC; Sandy Lawrence, GDOT; Amanda Schvaneit, HPD; and Madeline White, GDOT  
1:15 — 2:15 Group evaluations

**BREAK:** 2:15 — 2:30

2:30 — 3:30 Group Reports  
3:30 — 3:45 Summary/Closing

### QUICK GUIDE

**COMPACT RANCH**  
This type is small and simple. It is characterized by a low-pitched roof, often gabled, with a single-story main level and a two-story rear section. The house is compact and efficient.



**LINEAR RANCH**  
This house is a long, narrow structure with a low-pitched roof. It is characterized by a long, narrow main level and a two-story rear section. The house is simple and efficient.



**LINEAR WITH CLUSTERS RANCH**  
This is a linear house with a cluster of rooms. It is characterized by a long, narrow main level and a two-story rear section. The house is simple and efficient.



**COURTYARD RANCH**  
This is a linear house with a courtyard. It is characterized by a long, narrow main level and a two-story rear section. The house is simple and efficient.



**GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION**  
ORDINARY ICONIC RANCH HOUSE  
NEW SOUTH ASSOCIATES

### QUICK GUIDE

**HALF COURTYARD RANCH**  
This is a linear house with a half-courtyard. It is characterized by a long, narrow main level and a two-story rear section. The house is simple and efficient.



**BUNGALOW RANCH**  
This is a linear house with a bungalow style. It is characterized by a long, narrow main level and a two-story rear section. The house is simple and efficient.



**RAMBLING RANCH**  
This is a linear house with a rambling style. It is characterized by a long, narrow main level and a two-story rear section. The house is simple and efficient.



**ALPHABET RANCH**  
This is a linear house with an alphabet style. It is characterized by a long, narrow main level and a two-story rear section. The house is simple and efficient.



**GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION**  
ORDINARY ICONIC RANCH HOUSE  
NEW SOUTH ASSOCIATES

Release of the *Guidelines* was accompanied by an all-day workshop directed in part by our office for GTC and GDOT cultural resources staff and consultants.



We hope the information now available on our website will help with the process of identifying, documenting, and evaluating these important mid-20th-century historic houses.

## LANDSCAPE AND SETTING

**MAIN FEATURES**

- Deep set beds are typical.
- Many integrate existing trees into landscape design.
- Foundation plantings are in evidence as well as an emphasis on lawns.
- Driveways are a component of ranch house settings.
- Front yards have an open quality to them.

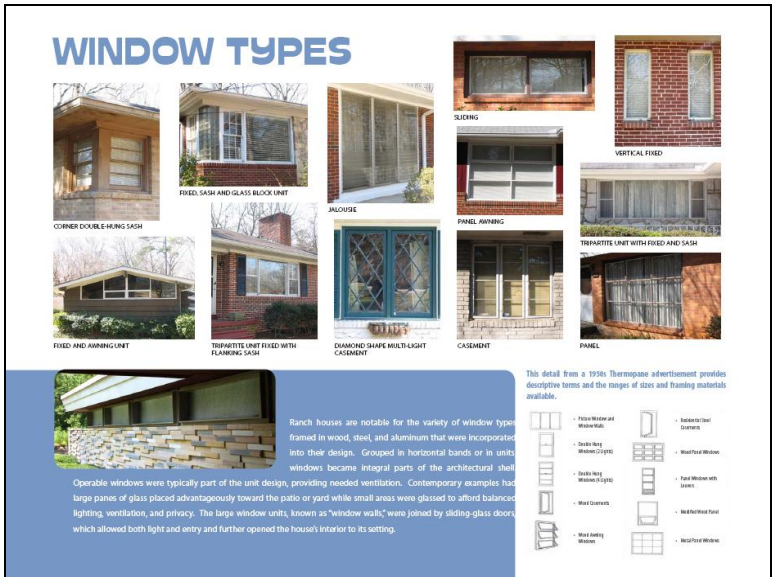
In the near future, we will be expanding the Ranch House Initiative to include additional research into collateral topics such as landscaping and subdivision layouts.



And through the interagency task force we will revisit the current *Guidelines* and make adjustments and refinements based on increased working knowledge.



We will also be supplementing the historical information about Ranch Houses in Georgia with technical guidance regarding appropriate restoration and rehabilitation techniques.



Our first initiative along these lines will be to address technical issues regarding window repair and replacement.

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**Youngstown Kitchens**

**THE NEW HOME 2703 YOU CAN BUY PLANS**

*A complete three-bedroom house now, but...*

**It's a house planned to grow with the family**

*By John S. Ketchum, A.S.A.*

Subsequent technical guidance may address additions, kitchens, and bathrooms.

**HOME PLAN & GUIDE BOOK**

**for a bright tomorrow...**

**a new home today**

**PARADE OF HOMES WEEK-FALL 1959**

**Geographical Index:**

- CASS COUNTY PAGE 6
- CLAY COUNTY PAGES 7 THRU 12
- JACKSON COUNTY PAGES 18 THRU 46
- JOHNSON COUNTY PAGES 47 THRU 93
- PLATTE COUNTY PAGES 95 THRU 97
- WYANDOTTE PAGES 99 THRU 104

*Compliments of Your H. B. A. Professional Builder*

**HBA**

Our long-range goals are to not only foster a greater understanding of the history of the mid-20th-century Ranch House in Georgia but also promote its preservation for future generations.

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May 2010

Richard Cloues, Ph.D.