

J.W. MANN HOUSE
1918 Dresden Drive
Chamblee vicinity
De Kalb County
Georgia

HABS GA-2389
GA-2389

HABS
GA - 2389

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
100 Alabama St. NW
Atlanta, GA 30303

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

J. W. MANN HOUSE

HABS No. GA-2389

Location: 1918 Dresden Drive
Chamblee Vicinity
DeKalb County
Georgia

Present Owner: United States Postal Service
Realty Asset Development Branch
Facilities Service Center
Memphis, Tennessee 38166-0330

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: None. Demolition pending HABS documentation.

Statement of Significance: The J.W. Mann House is historically significant for its association with early twentieth century dairy farming – a thriving agricultural business in north Dekalb County during the early decades of the twentieth century. Architecturally, the house illustrates a common and widely constructed house type – the Craftsman Bungalow – a style used frequently for rural farm houses throughout the southeast prior to World War II. The Mann House, once isolated in a rural, agricultural context, is now surrounded by post World War II residential development and intensive commercial development on nearby Clairmont Road and Buford Highway.

PART I: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The proposed U.S. Postal facility site is located in north Dekalb County between two major transportation corridors – Peachtree Industrial Boulevard (formerly Peachtree Road) and Buford Highway. By 1915, as indicated on the attached 1915 Dekalb County Taxpayers Map, land lot #243 was owned by Asa Griggs Chandler (see Map A). At that time, the northern section of Dekalb County was predominantly composed of rural farmsteads catering to dairy farming. Few secondary roads existed and the small community of Chamblee was the predominant seat of commercial and social exchange. The construction of Camp Gordon, a World War I military installation built in 1917 on the former H. P. Tilley plantation, was the first large-scale development built in north Dekalb County. The Camp was located at Clairmont (formerly Decatur Road) and Dresden Drive (formerly Chandler Road) (see Map B). Camp Gordon encompassed 2,600 acres bounded by what is now Clairmont, Dresden, Peachtree Road and Buford Highway. The current proposed Postal facility site is located just west of the former Camp. Following the War, the government disposed of the property at public auction and T.R. Sawtell, a real estate speculator purchased the property and began to sell parcels for farm land.

The site of Camp Gordon, though reduced to approximately 200 acres, subsequently became the site of a County owned airport in 1940. In March of 1941 the airfield was commissioned as a U.S. Naval Reserve Aviation Base and by 1942 was enlarged to the status of a full-fledged Naval Air Station (see Map C). The control of the airfield was returned to the county by 1959 and converted to civilian use.

The period between World War I and World War II saw little development in north Dekalb County outside of the military installation. Upon decommission of Camp Gordon and the subsequent sale of large portions of the property, many small dairy farms were established in the area as well as the development of granite quarries. By 1939, J.W. Mann owned a small 12 acre dairy farm at 310 Chandler Road (now Dresden Drive) and referred to in the 1939 Dekalb County Directory as the "J.W. Mann Dairy." The Mann property originally comprised a large portion of the current proposed Postal facility site – specifically Parcels 14, 13, 18 and 12 on the attached Plat Map.

The only large-scale residential development which occurred in the area prior to World War II were the Brookhaven Heights and Fernwood subdivisions established south of Chandler Road and just east of Peachtree Road. In 1943 the Atlanta City Directory lists only three (3) residents on Chandler Road (now Dresden Drive) from 4072 Peachtree Road east and north of Old Decatur Road (now Clairmont Road). As late as 1945, the site currently proposed for the Postal facility appears to have been occupied by only the former Mann residence and still considered farmland (see Map C). Archway and Mannville Drives were not constructed until after World War II as indicated by Dekalb County Road Maps from 1945 and 1951 (see Maps C and D) and Atlanta City Directories.

In the years immediately following World War II and into the 1950's, north Dekalb County experienced its greatest period of growth and development. The impetus for this tremendous growth was the coming of General Motors to north Dekalb in 1948. Following the opening of the assembly plant were numerous business such as Boyle-Midway, Inc., the areas first industrial plant, U.S. Envelope Company, Write-Rite Company, Westinghouse Lamp Division, General Electric Aparatus Division, Iron and Equipment Company, Georgia Tractor and Equipment and Roberts-McGeeny Printing Company.

The war boom also initiated the area's largest era in residential development and transformed the sparsely populated farmlands into planned subdivisions and neighborhoods. The largest and earliest subdivision built in the immediate vicinity of the proposed Postal facility site was the Georgian Hills subdivision located just west of Clairmont Road and three (3) blocks north of Dresden Drive. Georgian Hills was developed in the late 1940's and early 1950's in response to the growing need for housing following the war and subsequent business boom in north Dekalb

County. Residential development continued to occur on and adjacent to Dresden, Archway, Mannville and Clairmont in the Dekalb-Peachtree Airport vicinity throughout the 1950's and 1960's. Clairmont Road also experienced commercial development during the 1970's and presently the Road, between Bragg Street on the north and Buford Highway on the south, is characterized by commercial strip development.

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

The oldest structure located on the proposed site is the former J.W. Mann House (Parcel 12), built c.1932. The house is believed to have been the seat of the J.W. Mann Dairy, a small family owned dairy business operating in the area from the early 1930's into the early 1940's. The modest one-story frame dwelling depicts a typical Craftsman Bungalow style residence distinguished by a clipped-gable roof, four-over-one Craftsman-type double-hung sash windows and diminutive, gable-roofed front stoop. The former farm house is surrounded, in typical fashion, by mature pecan trees.

1. **Architectural Character:** The J.W. Mann House merits recording because it illustrates a building form and architectural style which was commonly used as rural farm housing during the early twentieth century. The house appears to be a survivor from the area's period of small farmsteads, though its original rural setting has long since been destroyed by the intensive suburban residential development now surrounding the site.
2. **Condition of fabric:** The house is in a poor state of deterioration with evidence of termite infestation and damage, water infiltration and poor maintenance. The house has been used as residential rental property for many years and the lack of regular maintenance has contributed to accelerated deterioration of the structure.

B. Physical Description

1. **Exterior:** The overall appearance of the house is that of a modest, Craftsman Bungalow denoted by such features as 4/1 sash windows, a diminutive front stoop with decorative supporting knee braces and a jerkin head roof. The house is clad in weatherboard siding which terminates at each corner behind plainly molded corner boards. All window and door surrounds are denoted by plain, applied board moldings and large louvered vents are located on each gable end.
2. **Interior:** The interior of the house has sustained numerous alterations including the application of contemporary sheet paneling, removal of some doors and removal of the front bedroom fireplace and mantel. Surviving features include typical two-panel doors, plain board window and door surrounds and standard 4" wide pine flooring. The most notable surviving feature is a period fireplace mantel in the front living room. The mantel is composed of small, smoothly-finished stones applied to thin concrete block pavers with use of a dark, tinted grout. The mantel shelf is consistent in finish and material with all other surviving woodwork in the house.

