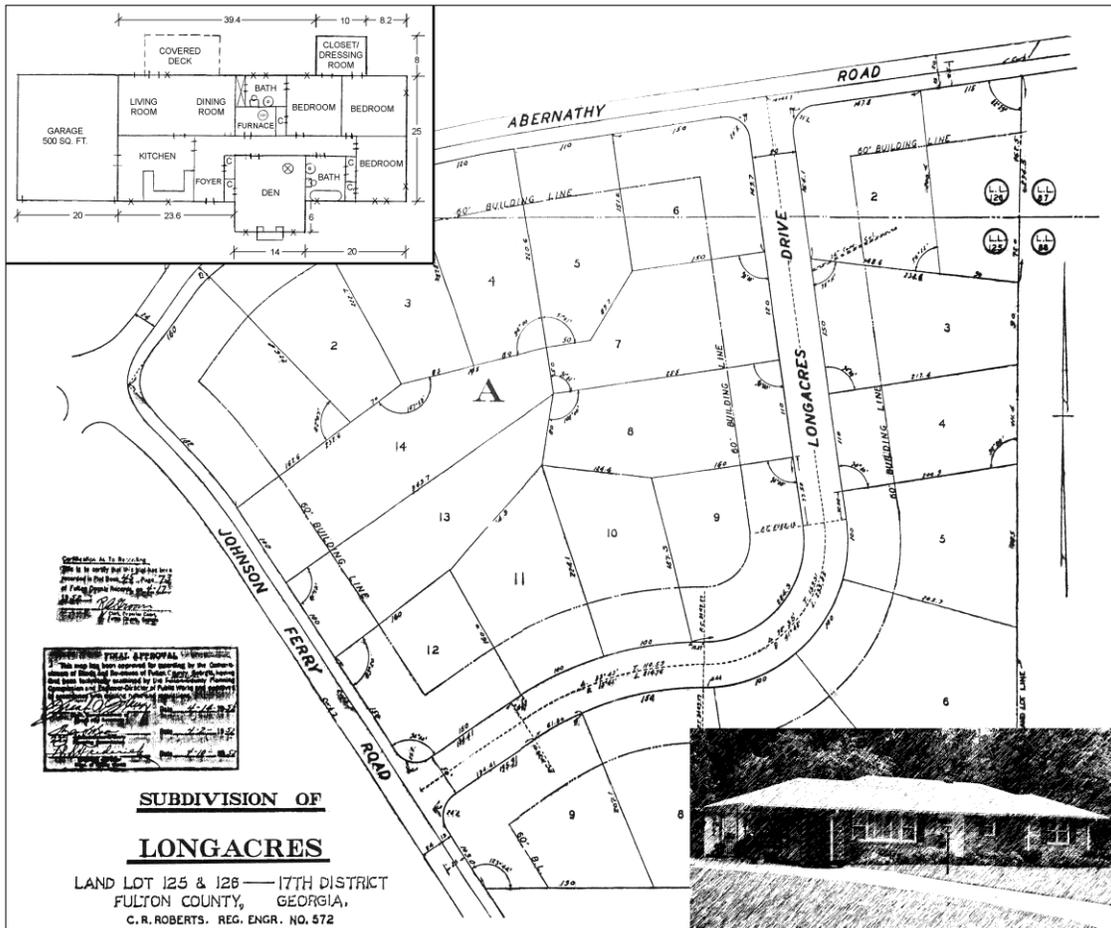


# LONG ACRES SUBDIVISION HISTORIC DISTRICT ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT STUDY FULTON COUNTY, GEORGIA

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Georgia Department of Transportation  
Office of Environment/Location  
Atlanta, Georgia

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## Preface

The Georgia Department of Transportation has begun implementation of a road widening project along Johnson Ferry Road and Abernathy Road in Sandy Springs, Fulton County, Georgia. As a result of Section 106 compliance efforts for that project, the Long Acres Subdivision Historic District - a 1950s Ranch house subdivision - was identified in 2003 as a National Register eligible historic property located within the area of potential effects of the undertaking. When it was determined that the project would result in an adverse effect to the historic district, mitigation measures were developed that included photographic documentation of the Long Acres Subdivision as well as the preparation of an architectural context study that would examine the development of the subdivision within the broader context of post-World War II suburban development.

As Ranch houses recently began turning 50 years old - the typical age threshold for inclusion in the National Register - the preservation community in Georgia has grappled with how to evaluate them. The development of the Ranch house has been studied to a certain degree at a national level, with its origin having been traced to an early-twentieth-century revival in California of Western and Southwestern ranch and hacienda design; however, the significance of the Ranch house and the way it has manifested in Georgia has not been well understood. In response to the need for a better understanding of the Ranch house in Georgia, a working group was convened in February 2008 to study the type and develop guidelines on Ranch house evaluation. That group included representatives of the Historic Preservation Division (SHPO) of Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Georgia Department of Transportation, Georgia Transmission Corporation, and historic preservation consulting firms. As a result of the efforts of this working group, Ranch house evaluation guidelines are nearing completion. Against this backdrop, and independent of those efforts, the following architectural context study of the Long Acres Subdivision Historic District was prepared.

The purpose of this study was to explore the development of the Long Acres Subdivision within the larger context of post-World War II suburbanization at the national, regional, and local level. Research questions ultimately focused on how the subdivision compared to idealized models for subdivision design, Ranch house design, and landscape design of the period, and whether its development history was typical within the larger context of 1950s American suburbanization. The results of the study confirm that contextually, the Long Acres Subdivision fits well into the larger theme of American suburban development of the 1950s, and its development is typical for that period. In terms of subdivision layout and design, Long Acres incorporated some of the characteristics promoted by planning organizations, but did not exactly meet the idealized form of 1950s subdivision design. Landscaping in the subdivision, on the other hand, was fairly typical of the period in Georgia, consisting of an initially sparse landscape that developed and evolved over time as residents modified plantings and hardscapes to suit their tastes and needs. Finally, the architecture of the Long Acres houses does not exemplify the idealized Ranch form as it was promoted nationally; it rather suggests the existence of a Georgia variant of the Ranch house, which is characterized by less 'open' floor plans, less integration of indoor and outdoor spaces, and fairly uniform window types.

Several people deserve acknowledgement for their valuable assistance in the preparation of this study. Quinton S. King, the builder of Long Acres, was a great help in providing information on the development and construction of the subdivision. Information on historic photographs was provided by Peter J. Roberts (Georgia State University Library) and Greg Germani (the Atlanta Time Machine website). Floor plan sketches of some the houses were provided by Dianna D. Hunt & Associates, Inc. Finally, Sandy Lawrence provided a keen eye in her review and editing of the study. Thank you all.

The Georgia Department of Transportation is pleased to publish *Long Acres Subdivision Historic District, Architectural Context Study, Fulton County, Georgia* as Report Number 19 in its Occasional Papers in Cultural Resource Management series.

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## **Introduction**

The Long Acres Subdivision Historic District was identified as a National Register eligible historic property through the efforts of the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and subsequent amendments. The historic district is located in Sandy Springs, Georgia, roughly bounded by Johnson Ferry Road to the west, Abernathy Road to the north, and just east and south of Long Acres Drive (see Figure 1). Comprised of 21 Ranch houses constructed in the early to mid 1950s, one Contemporary style house built in 1958, and one non-historic (1997) in-fill house, the Long Acres Subdivision Historic District was determined to possess a local level of significance in the areas of community planning, architecture, and landscape design. The Georgia Department of Transportation has undertaken a project that would widen and reconstruct Johnson Ferry Road and Abernathy Road in the vicinity of the historic district [GDOT Projects STP-9252(6) & STP-9250(1)], which has resulted in the demolition of ten historic houses within the district. In an effort to mitigate partially the adverse effect to the Long Acres Subdivision Historic District, GDOT has prepared the following documentation, which examines the historic district within the broader context of post-World War II residential development in America and the Atlanta area.

## **Post-World War II Suburban Development**

Suburbanization in the United States has a long history, from the earliest railroad suburbs dating from the mid nineteenth century to planned residential communities under construction today. However, some of the most dramatic changes in American settlement patterns occurred during the post-World War II period as a result of the construction of the interstate highway system and the need to house large numbers of returning soldiers and their families. By the early 1950s, large-scale highway projects were underway in most major metropolitan areas. A few years later, the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 accelerated the construction of the interstate highway system and urban expressways. The increased decentralization of metropolitan populations resulted from easy and relatively quick access to areas outside of cities. Also helping to spur suburban development during this period was the availability of low-cost, long-term mortgages, a general increase in prosperity, and innovative building techniques that included standardized and prefabricated building components. Such conditions were very favorable to the burgeoning merchant builder industry, which also benefited from increasingly available credit that allowed corporate builders to thrive. Merchant builders went to work buying huge tracks of lands, laying out subdivisions, and mass producing houses based on standard designs. Houses

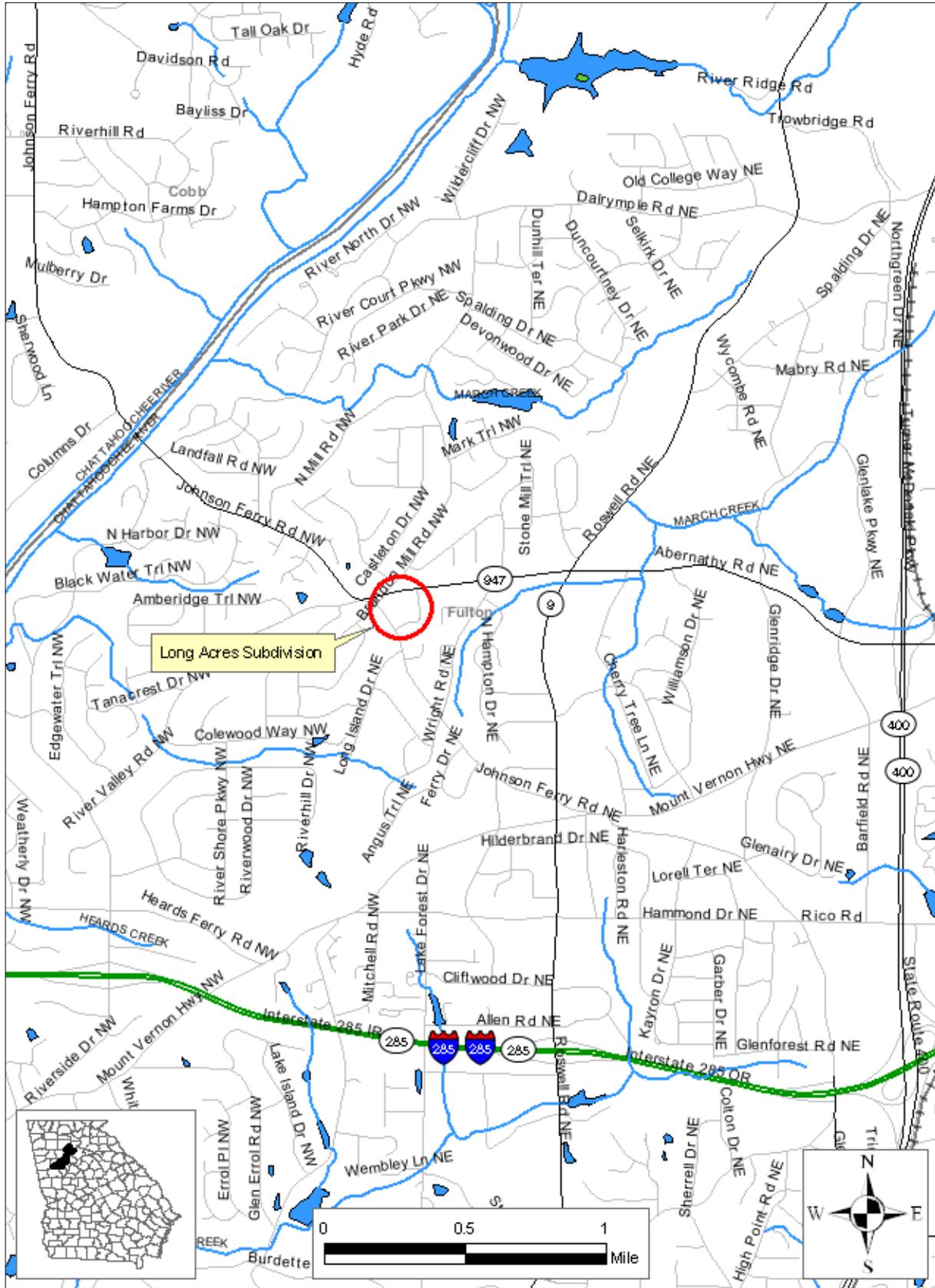


Figure 1 - Location of the Long Acres Subdivision Historic District

sold very quickly during this period, allowing builders to finance additional construction and new projects, perpetuating the building cycle.<sup>1</sup>

In the Atlanta metropolitan area, the trend toward suburbanization was well underway after the end of World War II. During the decades leading up to the 1950s, the area was growing faster than any other Southern city, and its population grew to over a million people during the 1950s.<sup>2</sup> This dramatic growth began during the war as the federal government invested over \$10 billion in military bases and industry throughout the south. Military support facilities and bases including Fort McPherson and Fort Gillem drew thousands of soldiers to the Atlanta area. Roughly 100 war-related businesses were in operation during the war years, including the Bell Bomber Plant in Marietta, which employed over 28,000 people in 1945. The population around the Atlanta area continued to grow as industrial and commercial development expanded during the post-war period, which saw 800 new industries open in Atlanta.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 2 - Atlanta Expressway, 1955, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University Library

The construction of local highways around the city helped spur the development of surrounding suburbs. During this time, the Georgia General Assembly created the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) (in 1947) in order to help the Atlanta region accommodate the rapidly growing and dispersing population. The MPC adopted a regional approach to planning and sought to influence neighborhood design, land use patterns, zoning, and highway design.<sup>4</sup> It encouraged the development of lower population density suburban communities around

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<sup>1</sup> David L. Ames and Linda Flint McClelland, "Land Use and Site Development" in *Historic Residential Suburbs: Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places*, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service (2002).

<sup>2</sup> Texas A&M University, Real Estate Center, "Metropolitan (MSA) Population Data by Decade," <http://recenter.tamu.edu/data/popmd/pm0520.htm> (accessed May 9, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Andy Ambrose, "Atlanta," New Georgia Encyclopedia, <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-2207&hl=y> (accessed May 9, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Leigh Burns et al., "Section One: Context and History" in *Atlanta Housing 1944 to 1965*, Georgia State University, Case Studies in Historic Preservation, (Spring 2001)

the city, ideally with 30,000 to 40,000 residents each, which would be connected by free-flowing arterial highways. “Pleasant neighborhoods” in the suburbs were to be filled with open spaces and parks, planned retail districts, and shopping centers.<sup>5</sup>

Like the larger Atlanta metropolitan region, Sandy Springs witnessed dramatic growth and rapid suburbanization after the end of World War II. Before the war, Sandy Springs was largely rural and characterized by agricultural land and rolling forested hills that drew vacationing Atlantans to their summer homes. However, in the early 1950s Ranch subdivisions began to appear in the area as merchant builders and real estate speculators bought and divided larger properties and began to build. Some of the earliest subdivisions in the area were Long Acres (1952), located at the intersection of Johnson Ferry Road and Abernathy Road, Mt. Vernon Woods (1953), located east of Roswell Road and north of the Mt. Vernon Highway, and Ferry Heights (1953), located off of Johnson Ferry Road, north of its intersection with Roswell Road.<sup>6</sup> The Long Acres Subdivision was originally pastureland that was purchased and subdivided by the Roy D. Warren Company of Atlanta, a real estate company and new construction financier that was very active in Fulton County in the early 1950s. Parcels in the subdivision were then bought by the Q. S. King Contracting Company, who constructed houses and sold the parcels to the original residents of the subdivision. According to Mr. King, most of the construction in Long Acres was speculative, where a house would be built before a homebuyer was identified. Although, some parcels were purchased undeveloped and Mr. King would then construct the house according to the preferences of the new owner.<sup>7</sup> Of the original houses remaining in the Long Acres Subdivision, 4 houses were constructed in 1952, 10 in 1953, 5 in 1954, 2 in 1955, and 1 in 1958 (only one non-historic infill house is located within the subdivision).

The Q. S. King Contracting Company continued to build through the mid 1970s. Some other subdivisions constructed by the company include the Ferry Heights Subdivision (beginning in 1953), just south of the Long Acres Subdivision; Chattahoochee Plantation Estates in Cobb County, which was eventually incorporated into the Atlanta Country Club; and several projects along Paces Ferry Road in Vinings. Other notable builders of the time in the Atlanta area included Jim Clay, who along with 25 other builders, created the Atlanta Country Club; Fred Fett, who constructed more contemporary style houses in the early 1960s along Johnson Ferry Road; and Hoover (Herb) Mayberry, who worked with Q. S. King on the Ferry Heights Subdivision.

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<sup>5</sup> Metropolitan Planning Commission, “Up Ahead: A Metropolitan Land Use Plan for Metropolitan Atlanta” (1952)

<sup>6</sup> Mt. Vernon Woods, “Neighborhood History,” <http://mtvernonwoods.com/index.php?pageId=44808> (accessed May 9, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Quinton S. King, personal communication (2008).

Commercial and office developments soon followed the early 1950s residential development in Sandy Springs, appearing along State Route 9/Roswell Road in strip-type centers that served the growing residential population; the first shopping center in the area was constructed in 1955 on Roswell Road. The construction of I-285 in the 1960s and GA-400 in the 1970s stimulated additional growth including the construction of office parks, apartments, and higher density residential developments, especially around interchanges.<sup>8</sup>

## **Post-World War II Subdivision Design**

Federal Housing Administration (FHA) guidelines influenced significantly the layout of subdivisions during the period following World War II. The typical design of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century subdivision was influenced by the gridiron model, which was transplanted from urban centers as they expanded outward. However, beginning in the 1930s, the FHA (established by the National Housing Act of 1934) began promoting a more curvilinear design approach, which was based on earlier picturesque models seen in the work of Frederick Law Olmsted and the City Beautiful Movement. By the post-World War II period, the FHA had established standards for the layout of subdivisions that included an appreciation for existing topography, the elimination of four-way intersections and sharp corners, the arrangement of houses to create privacy, and the incorporation of common areas such as parks and playgrounds. Such standards became the norm by the late 1940s and 1950s as a result of the FHA's review of subdivisions for mortgage approval and their publication of the standards. The building industry further cemented the curvilinear models' prominence by adopting nationwide standards that could help standardize building practices and reduce overall construction costs.<sup>9</sup>

In the Atlanta area, the MPC promoted the incorporation of the cul de sac into subdivision design (see Figure 3). The idea was to reduce noise and the amount of vehicular traffic traveling through neighborhoods, which presumably would create a safer environment for homeowners and their children. Cul de sacs were also thought to be well suited to the topography of Atlanta. A series of curvilinear dead-end roads were thought to accommodate better Atlanta's rolling hills, rather than a strict grid imposed over uneven ground.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> City of Sandy Springs, Georgia, "Comprehensive Plan," p. 12 and Technical Appendix pp. 61-62 (2007).

<sup>9</sup> Ames and McClelland, "Land Use and Site Development."

<sup>10</sup> Burns et al., "Section One: Context and History," 29-30.

In Sandy Springs, subdivision development is generally characterized by curvilinear streets, limited access points to neighborhoods, and the presence of cul de sacs.<sup>11</sup> However, not all post-World War II subdivisions in the area incorporated the cul de sac. Some were designed with a road intersecting a secondary arterial roadway that would circle back to meet that same arterial roadway. And others, like the Long Acres Subdivision, were



Figure 3 - Subdivision design promoted by the Metropolitan Planning Commission (from *Up Ahead*, 1952)

designed to connect two arterial roadways (see Figure 4). The siting of Long Acres at the intersection of Johnson Ferry Road and Abernathy Road and the relatively small scale of the subdivision made it difficult to incorporate all of the principals of subdivision design promoted by the FHA and the Metropolitan Planning Commission. The design of the subdivision did not eliminate through traffic - it abuts an undesirable four-way intersection, and Long Acres Drive connects Abernathy Road to Johnson Ferry Road - and all of the lots were developed as residential properties, leaving no public spaces or parks. However, Long Acres does exhibit some of the characteristics that were promoted by the FHA and the MPC. The alignment of Long Acres Drive was laid out by the Roy D. Warren Company in a curvilinear fashion that avoids a sharp turn as it

travels south and turns gently to the west (see Figure 4 and Appendix B, Photographs 1 & 2). Also, the deep lots vary in size, shape, and topography, further emphasizing a kind of picturesque sensibility where the subdivision was designed to take into consideration natural features of an area, rather than imposing the design over the existing landscape. Such considerations were typical of mid-twentieth-century subdivision design.

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<sup>11</sup> City of Sandy Springs, 12.

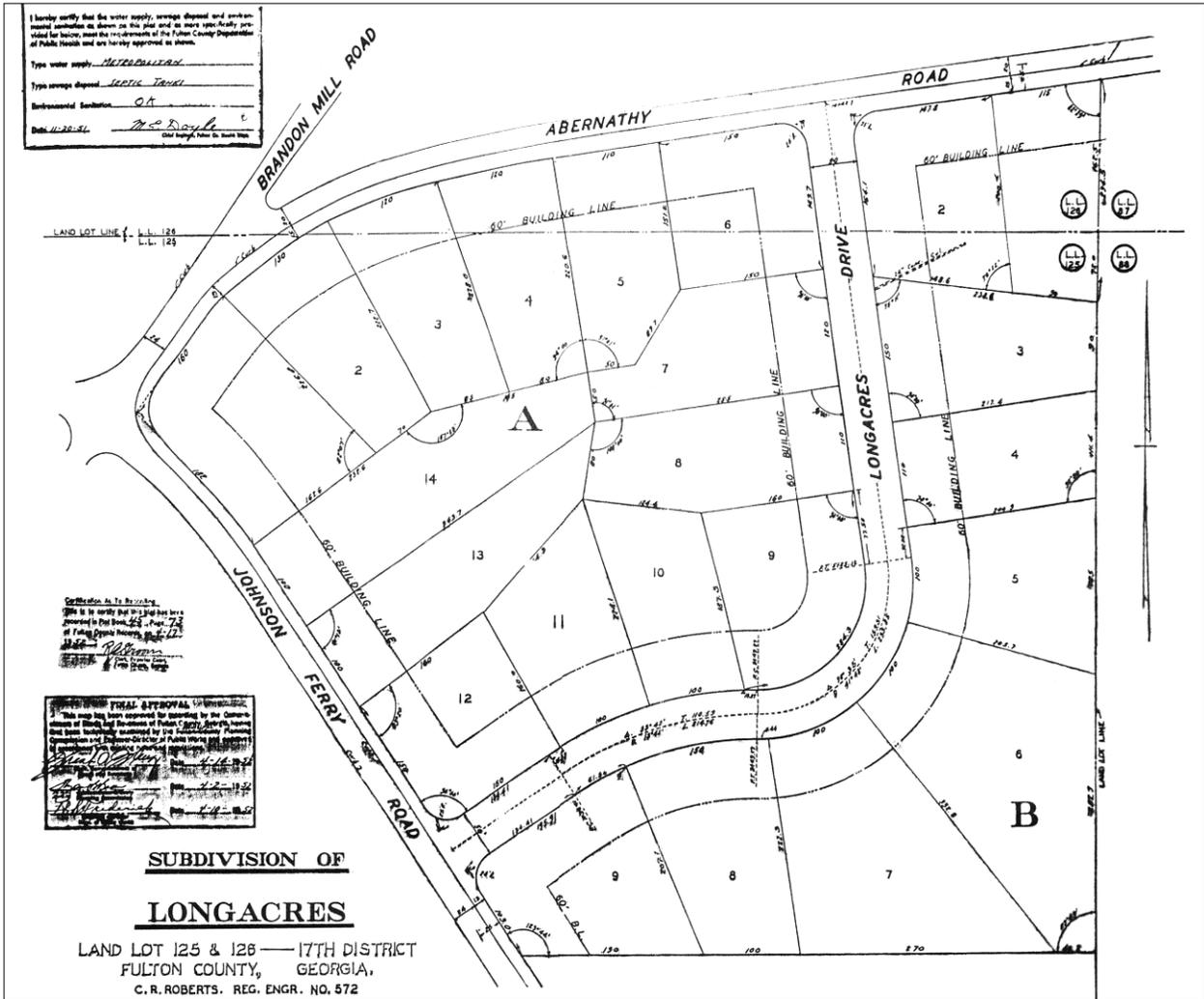


Figure 4 - Long Acres Subdivision Plat, 1952

## The Ranch House

The widespread success of the Ranch house type was a mid-twentieth-century American phenomenon. The Ranch was enthusiastically embraced by builders and the public, and huge numbers of the type were constructed during the 1950s. However, the origin of the Ranch can be traced back to an earlier effort to revive the architecture of nineteenth century Southwest and California ranches and haciendas. During the 1930s, architects including Cliff May, William Wurster, and H. Roy Kelley (all Californians) began to develop an architecture that embodied the romanticized ideals and aesthetics of rural Southwestern living. They sought to recreate the casual Southwestern lifestyle with an architecture that was both rustic and refined at the same time, something that would embody rugged individualism and a carefree lifestyle while appealing to suburban middle class families.<sup>12</sup> The resulting designs incorporated low, rambling forms, rustic details and natural materials, full-length porches or porches cut into the house, board and batten siding, open plans, and the integration of interior spaces with private courtyards and patios.

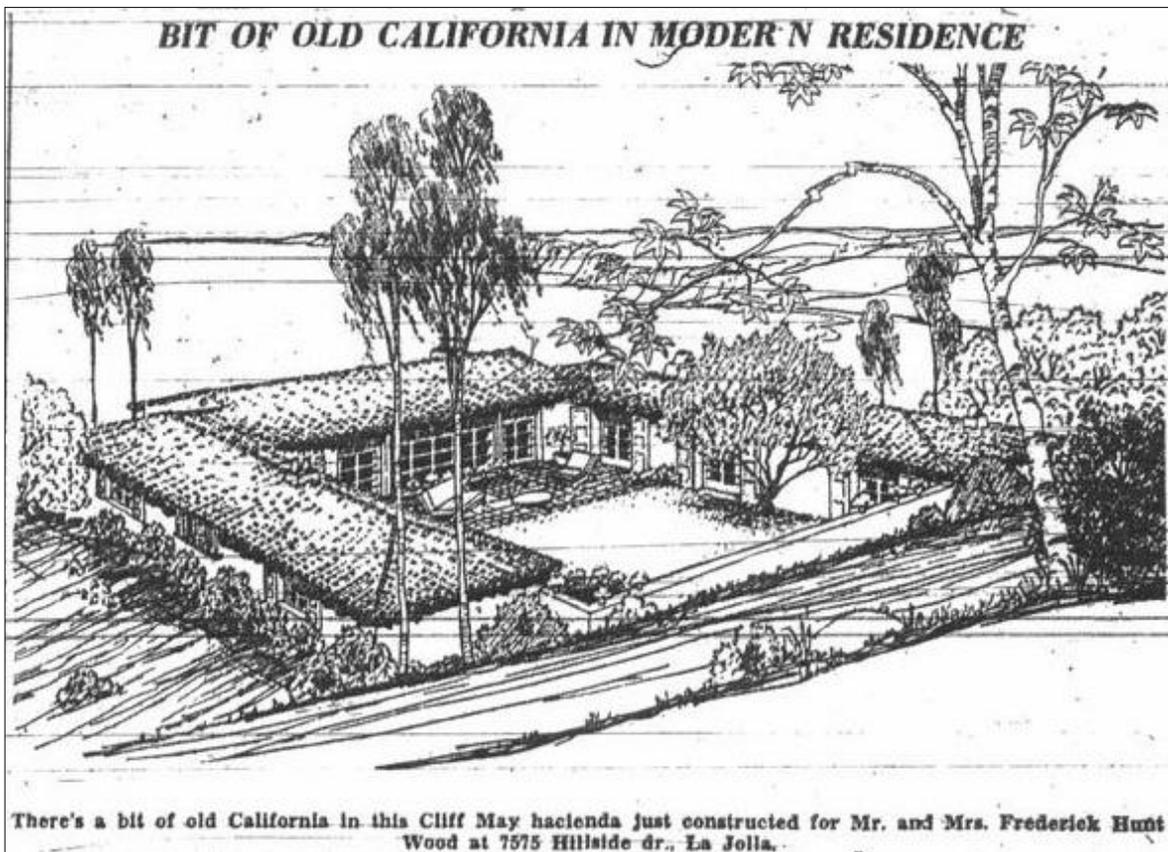


Figure 5 - Violetta Lee Horton House, La Jolla, California, 1935, by Cliff May

<sup>12</sup> David L. Ames and Linda Flint McClelland, "House and Yard" in *Historic Residential Suburbs: Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places*, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service (2002).

By 1940, the Ranch was an accepted type throughout the United States, and in California it had been transformed from a custom-built, architect designed house to a mass-produced product, thanks in large part to developers such as David Bohannon and Marlow-Burns who developed an early method of “production line” construction. Rather than building one house at a time, they introduced mass building techniques where materials for the entire subdivision would be staged nearby, cut to standard lengths, and delivered to the construction sites.<sup>13</sup> This early rise of the Ranch was interrupted briefly when the U.S. entered World War II.

After the war, America witnessed an explosion of Ranch house construction. Fueled by a mass media frenzy, the type was popularized through television, movies, books such as Cliff May’s *Western Ranch Houses*, plan books, subdivision premiers held by builders, and magazines such as *Sunset Magazine*, *House Beautiful*, and *Better Homes & Gardens*. These mass marketing efforts were wildly successful as they promoted a type of house that was modern and convenient but that also had a rugged and informal sensibility. The industrial nature of mass-produced tract housing could be muted to a degree by the use of rustic elements and the promotion of a casual lifestyle with activities flowing between indoors and out, while maintaining privacy. Elements incorporated to achieve these ends included sliding glass doors, picture windows, open carports, exposed timbers and beams, screens of decorative concrete blocks, recreational rooms, open floor plans, and the orientation of the house away from the street and toward backyard terraces or patios. Additionally, Ranch house design soon incorporated zoned or clustered public/private spaces as families grew in size and as televisions and record players became affordable for the typical suburban family.<sup>14</sup>

Developing parallel to the ‘traditional’ Ranch phenomenon was Contemporary residential architecture. Based largely in the modernist movement and tied to the International Style, Contemporary design incorporated modern materials (steel, glass, and concrete), cantilevered forms, floor-to-ceiling windows, post-and-beam construction, and dramatic rooflines. At the same time, Contemporary design employed typical Ranch-like characteristics including the integration of indoor and outdoor spaces, open floor plans, patios and terraces, carports, sliding glass doors, and privacy screens of decorative concrete blocks.<sup>15</sup>

In Georgia, Modernism was slow to appear, and it never really took hold like it did in other parts of the country, like California. This may have been due to more traditional tastes of Georgians or financiers’ reluctance to fund modern style construction projects because they were not seen as prudent investments. Whatever the reasons, modern architecture was

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<sup>13</sup> Alan Hess, *The Ranch House* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2004), 40-42.

<sup>14</sup> Ames and McClelland, “House and Yard.”

<sup>15</sup> Ames and McClelland, “House and Yard.”

never widely popular in Georgia, with most of it being constructed for architects themselves.<sup>16</sup> However, the Ranch type, itself, did boom in the state, driven largely by the home-buying public's overwhelming preference for the new type of house.<sup>17</sup> Only instead of taking on a Modernist style, more traditional styles and layouts were often applied to the Ranch in Georgia, and often the type was built very plainly, with no discernible style at all. Like builders in other parts of the country, builders in Georgia, and the Atlanta region specifically, relied heavily on standard architectural plans for the Ranch designs used in their subdivisions. Stock plans were promoted in publications such as *House and Home*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Ladies Home Journal*. Other advertisements for plans appeared in community and neighborhood publications and in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*. In addition, plans were produced by Atlanta architect Leila Ross Wilburn and William D. Farmer, an Atlanta-area draftsman who had been providing plans for houses since 1948, including those houses constructed in the Long Acres Subdivision. Plan books were also available from companies like the Home Builders Plan Service and Home Planners, Inc. In fact, some of the plans in these books were named for local builders including the Roy D. Warren Company<sup>18</sup>, who originally subdivided the pastureland for the Long Acres Subdivision.

Regional characteristics of the Georgia Ranch include the use of varying exterior materials (but especially red brick veneer siding), less 'open' interior floor plans, screened porches, picture windows flanked by smaller windows that open, and jalousie/awning windows. Also common are breezeways, carports, and storage 'sheds' built at the back of the carport to accommodate washing machines and dryers. The Ranch houses within the Long Acres Subdivision in many ways exemplify the Georgia variant of Ranch house design. The one-story forms are typically long and low, many with slight projections corresponding to various interior spaces. The vast majority have hipped roofs with gabled or hipped projections. Generally, their floor plans are uniform from house to house and exhibit zoned public/private spaces comprised of a cluster of three bedrooms in an "L" shaped arrangement on one side of the house, often with the bedroom nearest the kitchen serving as a den or office (see Figure 6 for a generalized floor plan and Appendix A for actual floor plans of displaced properties). Bathrooms are most often situated between the bedroom/den and the adjacent bedroom. Some houses have a second bathroom creating a master suite. An "L" shaped public zone mirrors the private zone and usually consists of a kitchen and a combined living room/dining room. Fireplaces are present in all but three of the houses and are either located in the living room or bedroom/den. From house to house, the interlocking "L" plan can be flipped from the left to right or from front to back (i.e. the kitchen can be oriented toward the back yard or the front yard). While the dining rooms and living rooms

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<sup>16</sup> Leigh Burns et al., "Section Three: Architecture" in *Atlanta Housing 1944 to 1965*, Georgia State University, Case Studies in Historic Preservation, (Spring 2001)

<sup>17</sup> King.

<sup>18</sup> Burns et al., 106.

are open, integrated spaces, the kitchens are not integrated into a larger space. Carports are always located adjacent to the cluster of public spaces and do not contain outdoor utility rooms. The exterior characteristics of the Long Acres Ranches are fairly typical for Georgia. Exterior materials consist mainly of brick veneer; however, four houses are comprised of a combination of brick veneer and wood siding, and five houses are brick with a stone veneer foundation. Fenestration consists of single, paired, and ribbons of 2/2 wooden sash windows and fixed picture windows flanked by sash windows. Apart from the occasional picture window, these houses do not otherwise integrate interior and exterior spaces.

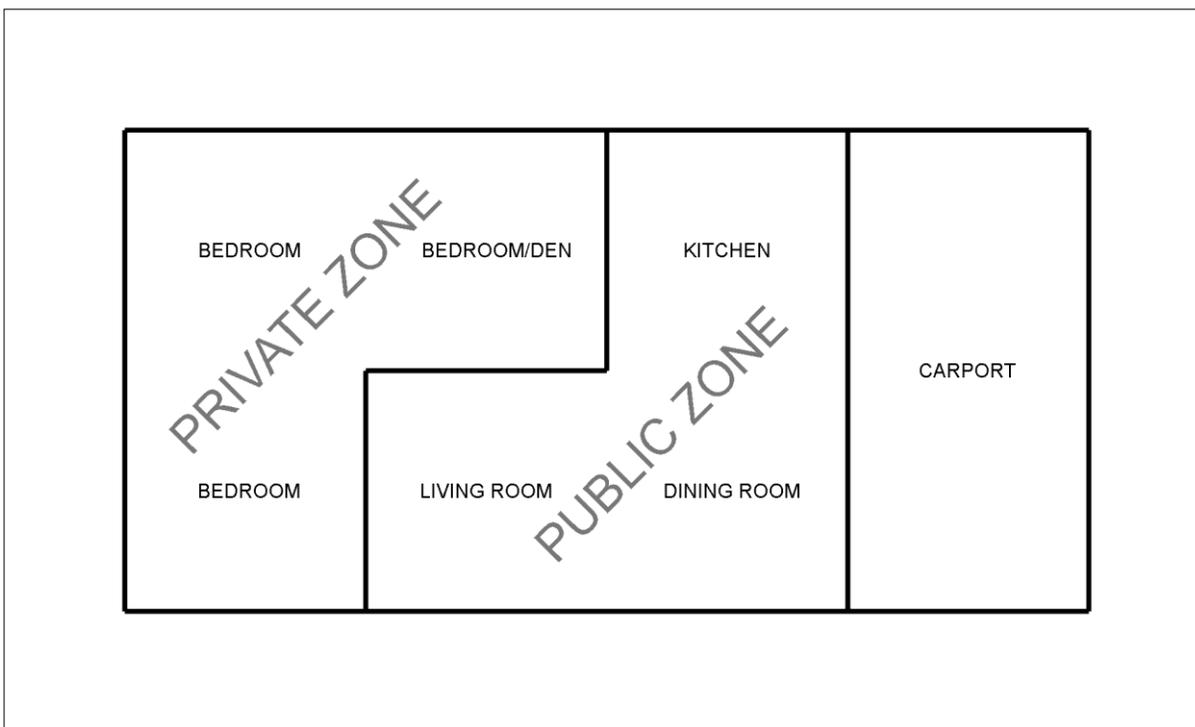


Figure 6 - Generalized Representation of the Long Acre’s Floor Plan

One interesting anomaly within the subdivision is a Contemporary style house at 49 Abernathy Road (see Appendix B, Photographs 10-13). This house was constructed in 1958, only three years after the last Ranches were constructed in the neighborhood, but light-years away from them in form. The one-story house is comprised of two shed-roofed masses attached by a breezeway that is enclosed by jalousie window walls. The eastern massing contains the larger, main living area, which has an unexpectedly closed floor plan (see Appendix A, page A-8). The western section appears to have housed a garage, which was enclosed to provide additional living space. The placement of the two masses and breezeway form a private courtyard, which exemplifies the emphasis on a leisurely, outdoor lifestyle promoted during the post-World War II Ranch house frenzy in America, but that is otherwise not exhibited by the Ranch houses in the Long Acres Subdivision.

## Post-World War II Residential Landscape Design

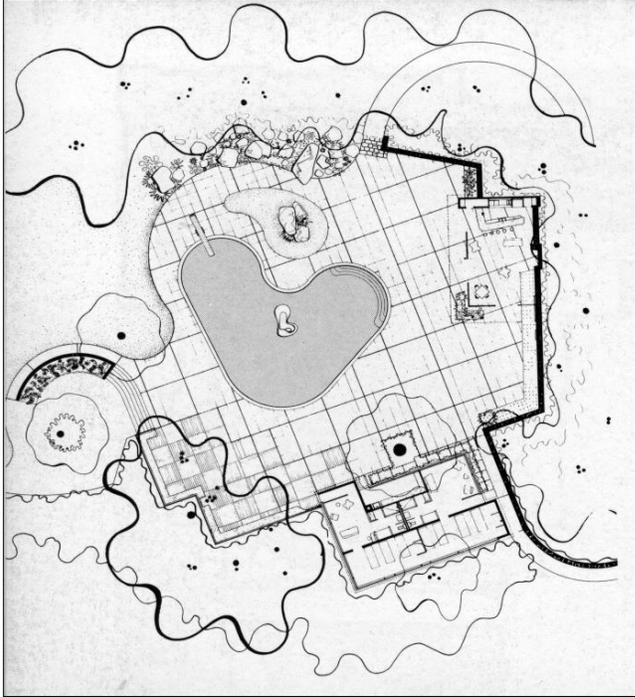


Figure 7 - Landscape Design by Thomas Church, 1948

With the Ranch house's emphasis on the integration of indoor and outdoor spaces, residential landscape design was transformed in the years following World War II. Like Ranch architecture, modern landscape design was brought to the nation's attention through popular publications such as *House Beautiful* and *Sunset Magazine*, which popularized landscape design principles of designers like Thomas Church. Church espoused the ideas that a designed landscape should complement the existing natural features of a property, reduce the amount of landscape maintenance needed, accommodate an automobile, and provide privacy for a family's outdoor living activities.<sup>19</sup> A feature such as a patio, courtyard, or terrace

became an extension of a house's interior living space and the focal point for suburban leisure activities. Sunshades and trellises were often incorporated to provide some shelter, and privacy was provided by screens of decorative concrete block, pierced brick, fencing, or vegetation.<sup>20</sup> The orientation of a house on its lot could also provide some privacy; by orienting the house length-wise on the lot, the rear outdoor living spaces were further shielded from the street. This orientation could also give the impression that the house sat on a much larger lot, which coupled with a deep setback could call to mind the open landscapes of nineteenth century Ranches.<sup>21</sup> However, not all suburbanites had the luxury to site their house deep on their lot. For those on a relatively small lot, a house could be built closer to the road in order to maximize the size of the back yard, resulting in a smaller front yard/public space. In addition to providing privacy, landscape features such as shrubbery, beds of low-growing plants, and hedges could be arranged in abstract geometric

<sup>19</sup> Leigh Burns et al., "Section Four: Landscape Design" in *Atlanta Housing 1944 to 1965*, Georgia State University, Case Studies in Historic Preservation, (Spring 2001)

<sup>20</sup> Ames and McClelland, "House and Yard."

<sup>21</sup> Hess, 12.

patterns to pick up the horizontality and verticality of a modern house.<sup>22</sup> The yard could also be organized into a series of domestic spaces such as lawn areas for recreation and sports, informal garden ‘rooms,’ and service areas. Finally, the driveway, a fairly dominant element of the suburban front yard, could be softened by curving its alignment and integrating it into the contours of the yard and by masking it with groupings of trees and shrubs.

Post-World War II suburban residential landscapes in Georgia were fairly uniform throughout each subdivision. This is mainly due to the assembly line nature of subdivision development and the fact that a typical landscape within a modern subdivision was often established in a short period of time by the builder/developer, sometimes according to an overall plan. The result was a landscape that was initially uniform from house to house, which could be modified by individual residents over time.<sup>23</sup> Residential landscapes in Georgia during this time could be quite simple, consisting of a small front yard with a grassed lawn, a driveway, and a large back yard containing a patio and a few plantings. Some residential landscapes in Georgia were more characteristic of the Modern movement through the incorporation groupings of pine trees in a large front lawn and including foundation plantings that allow a house to be more integrated with its surrounding natural setting.<sup>24</sup> These more Modern type landscapes were often set on irregular lots where the natural topography and vegetation were retained. Unsuitable building lots were sometimes retained within a subdivision as natural open spaces or as wooded lots. Also, uniform setbacks were used to create broad, deep front yards that contained open lawns, trees, and shrubs.

The Long Acres Subdivision was designed with a uniform setback of 60 feet, which provided a moderate setback for the houses. The lots are deep, irregularly shaped, and often partially wooded. The natural topography of the area was retained when the houses were built, as many of the houses were constructed on a slope, which resulted in a rear elevation that is higher than the front. Consequently, the living levels of many houses are perched above the grade of the backyard, making it difficult to integrate interior and exterior spaces. Rear doorways in some cases provide access to wood decks, but other houses have no flow between the rear of the house and the back yard at all. Otherwise, backyards are characterized by small and moderately sized lawns with trees and understory vegetation extending deep into the back of the lot, which provides a considerable amount of privacy. Front yards are characterized by mostly straight driveways that lead to carports; however, there are occasional curvilinear driveways. In many cases, the original driveway has been augmented with concrete parking areas and curvilinear drives. Walkways often connect the

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<sup>22</sup> Ames and McClelland, “House and Yard.”

<sup>23</sup> Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, *Georgia’s Living Places: Historic Houses in Their Landscaped Settings* (February 1991), I-46.

<sup>24</sup> Leigh Burns et al., “Section Four: Landscape Design,” 137-138, 148-150.

driveway to the front entrance of a house. However, in no case does a walkway extend directly from the entrance to the street, and there are no sidewalks in the subdivision, which underscores the reliance on the automobile in mid-twentieth-century suburbs. Interviews with current residents of the subdivision and Quinton S. King, who built the houses and established the initial landscapes, indicate that residents have modified and augmented their landscapes over time and that little landscaping had been installed when the houses were constructed. According to a resident who moved to Long Acres in the early 1970s, none of the current landscaping was present then, except for an abundance of pine trees, which dominate many front yards currently. According to Mr. King, trees were not planted by his company when the houses were constructed; rather, the site of the subdivision was pasture with some young pines coming up on their own. Once a house was constructed, shrubs were planted around the foundations of the houses and grassed lawns were seeded. Many of the pines that eventually grew up in the subdivision succumbed to the pine bark beetle in the 1980s. Currently, those front yards without an abundance of mature trees usually contain much larger areas of grassed lawn when compared to other properties. Front yards are otherwise characterized by groups of planting beds along foundations and throughout the yard, often surrounding large trees. The beds are edged with brick, cobbles, or monkey grass and contain deciduous and evergreen shrubs and flowers, and they are almost always mulched with pine straw. Some yards contain large amounts of English ivy, while others have extensive, well-kept grassed lawns. In all cases, the residential landscapes can be characterized as informal, with irregularly shaped planting beds, curved walkways, shrubs left unsculpted, and an overall relaxed, natural feel.

## **Summary & Conclusions**

Platted in 1952, the Long Acres Subdivision was constructed at a time when the Atlanta area was beginning to experience dramatic outward growth, like many American cities at the time. Initially spurred by war-time federal investments in military bases, support facilities, and industry, the growth of the Atlanta area continued as soldiers returned home after the war and as industrial and commercial development expanded. The resulting increase in population and the need for new housing coupled with the state's investment in Atlanta-area highways provided favorable conditions for the rapid growth of suburban Atlanta.

During this period, merchant builders and real estate speculators began to transform the areas surrounding American cities by buying up large tracts of rural land, subdividing it, and constructing large numbers of new houses and commercial developments. The development of the Long Acres Subdivision followed this trend, as a product of a real estate speculator who purchased and subdivided a previously rural tract of land and a

merchant builder who built out the lots and sold them to buyers looking for a new Ranch house. The layout of the subdivision followed some of the principles of subdivision design that were promoted by the FHA and Atlanta's Metropolitan Planning Commission, including the curvilinear alignment of Long Acres Drive, the use of a standard 60-foot building setback, the use of irregularly shaped lots, and the retention of the natural topography of the area. These traits helped create a somewhat picturesque quality for the subdivision and were typical of modern subdivision design.

Landscaping on the lots follows a pattern typical of properties from this period, where an initially sparse landscape developed and evolved over time as residents modified plantings and hardscapes to suit their tastes and needs. The result is a casual landscape throughout the subdivision that is typified by irregular planting beds, sections of grassed lawn, walkways connecting entrances to driveways, and an abundance of trees.

The houses themselves do not exemplify the Ranch type as it was promoted nation-wide. There is little integration of interior and exterior spaces, the floor plans are not open (except between dining rooms and living rooms), there is not a variety of window types, and the kitchens are not integrated into other interior spaces; however, houses do possess some Ranch-like qualities including a generally long and low form, zoned or clustered spaces, chimneys/fireplaces, and integrated carports, and a few houses in the subdivision exhibit a variety of exterior material types. While the Long Acres houses do not typify an idealized Ranch standard, they do possess characteristics that are typical of the Ranch house variant in Georgia. The floor plans are less 'open,' they are all brick sided or partially brick sided, and many have a fixed picture window that is flanked by smaller operable windows. As a result, the houses within the Long Acres Subdivision in many ways typify Ranch design in Georgia.

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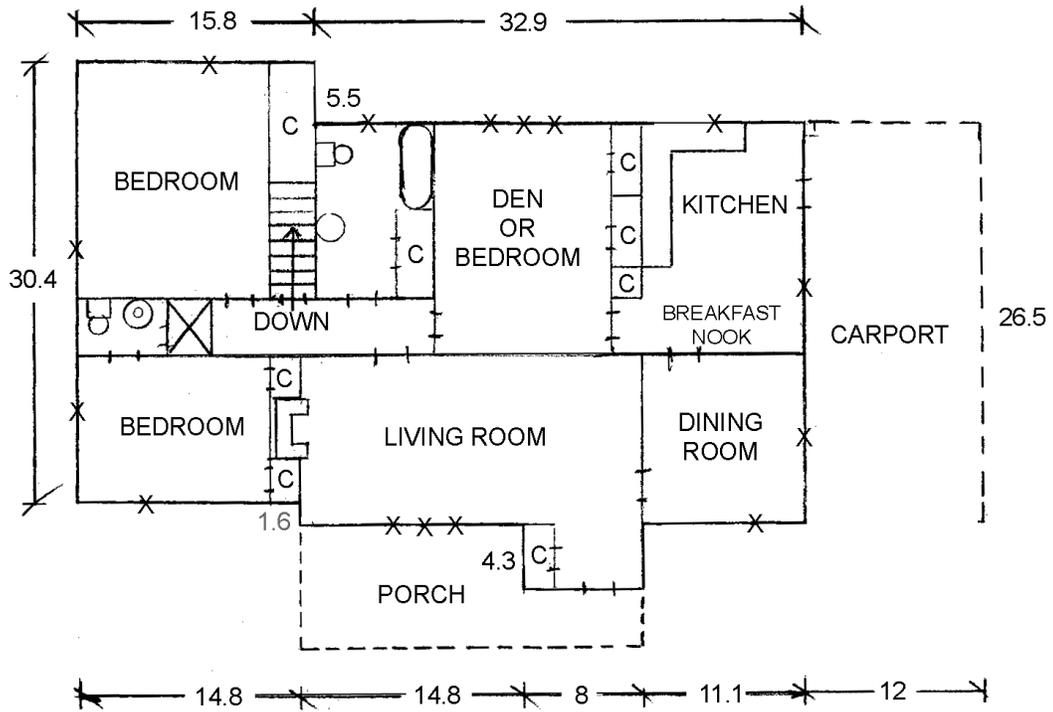
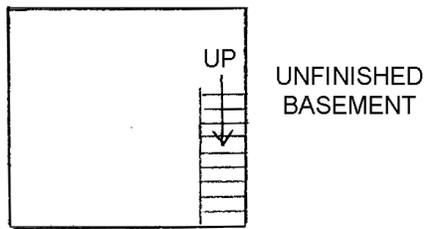
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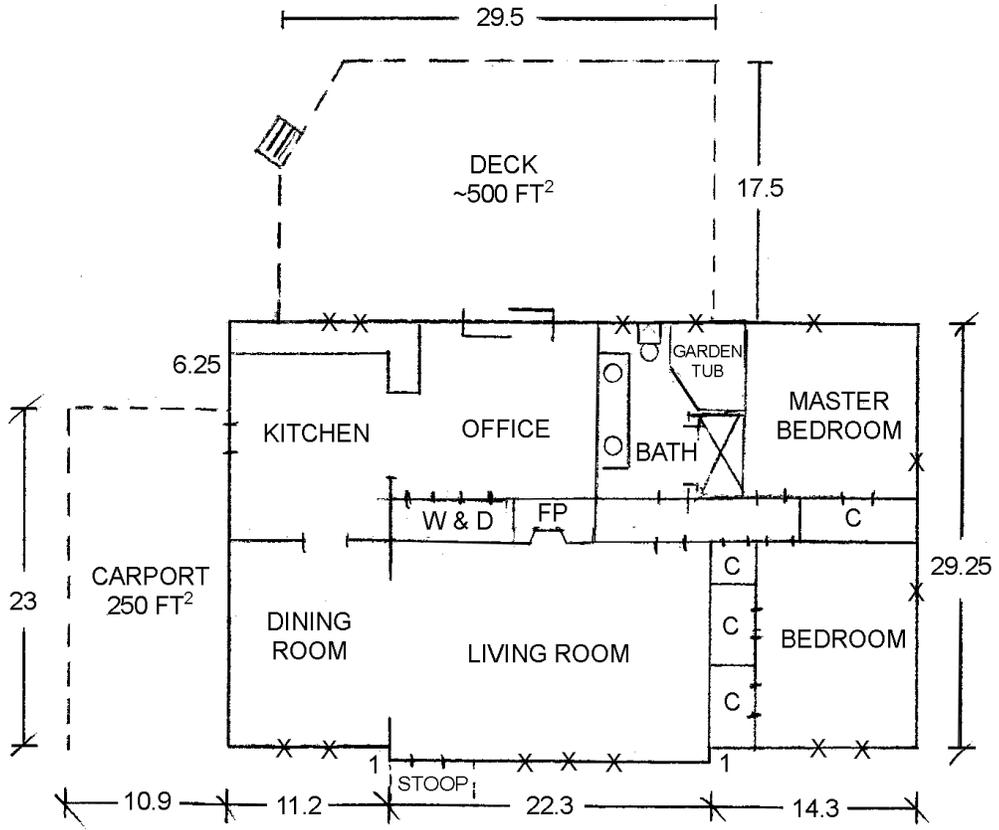
## **Appendix A: Floor Plans of Displaced Properties**

201 JOHNSON FERRY RD.  
SANDY SPRINGS, GA  
1389 SQ. FT.



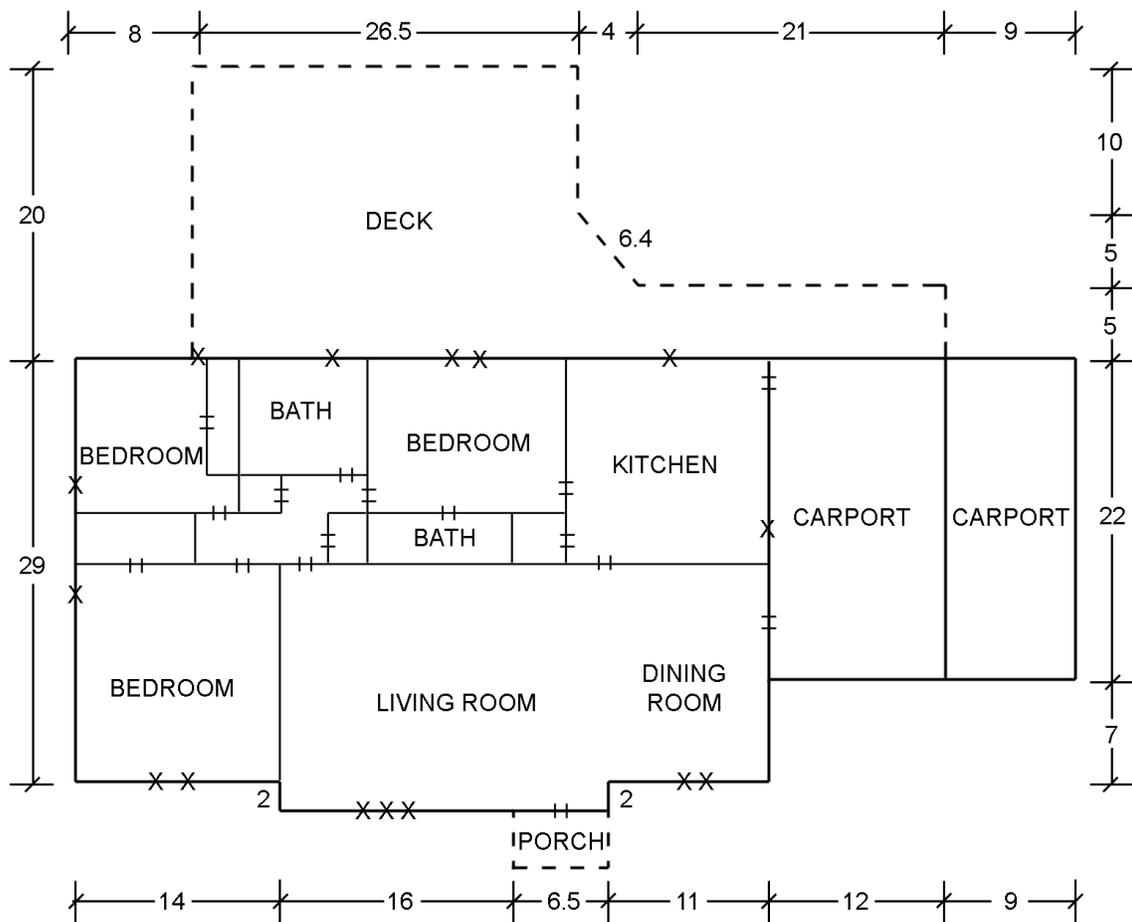
See also Appendix B, Photograph 3

215 JOHNSON FERRY RD.  
SANDY DPRINGS, GA  
1420 SQ. FT.



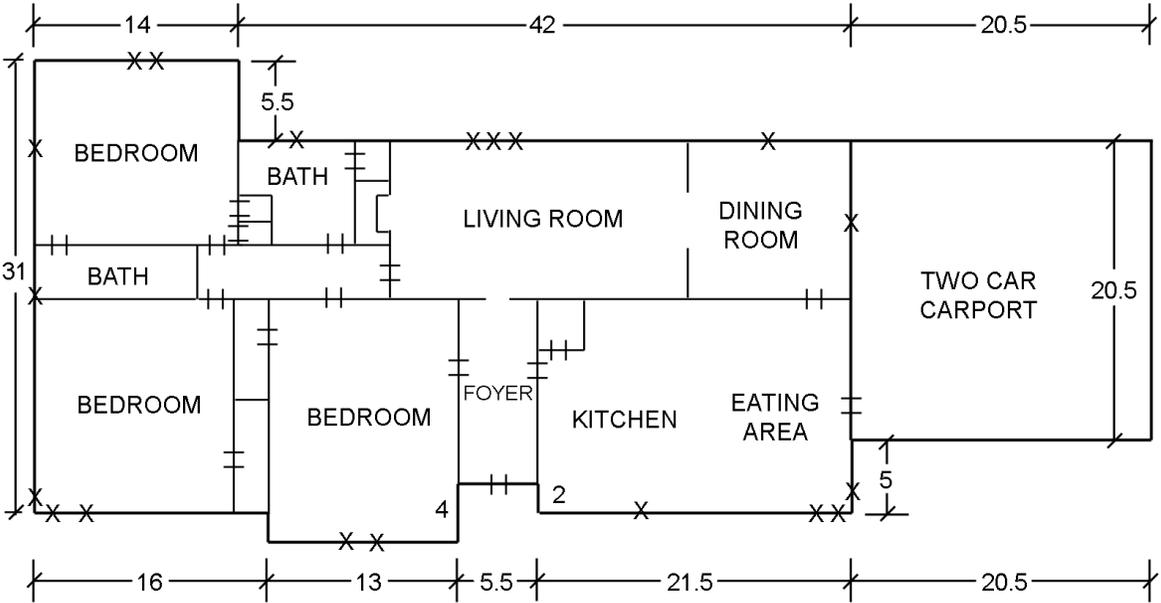
See also Appendix B, Photograph 4

223 JOHNSON FERRY ROAD  
 SANDY SPRINGS, GA  
 1423 SQ. FT.



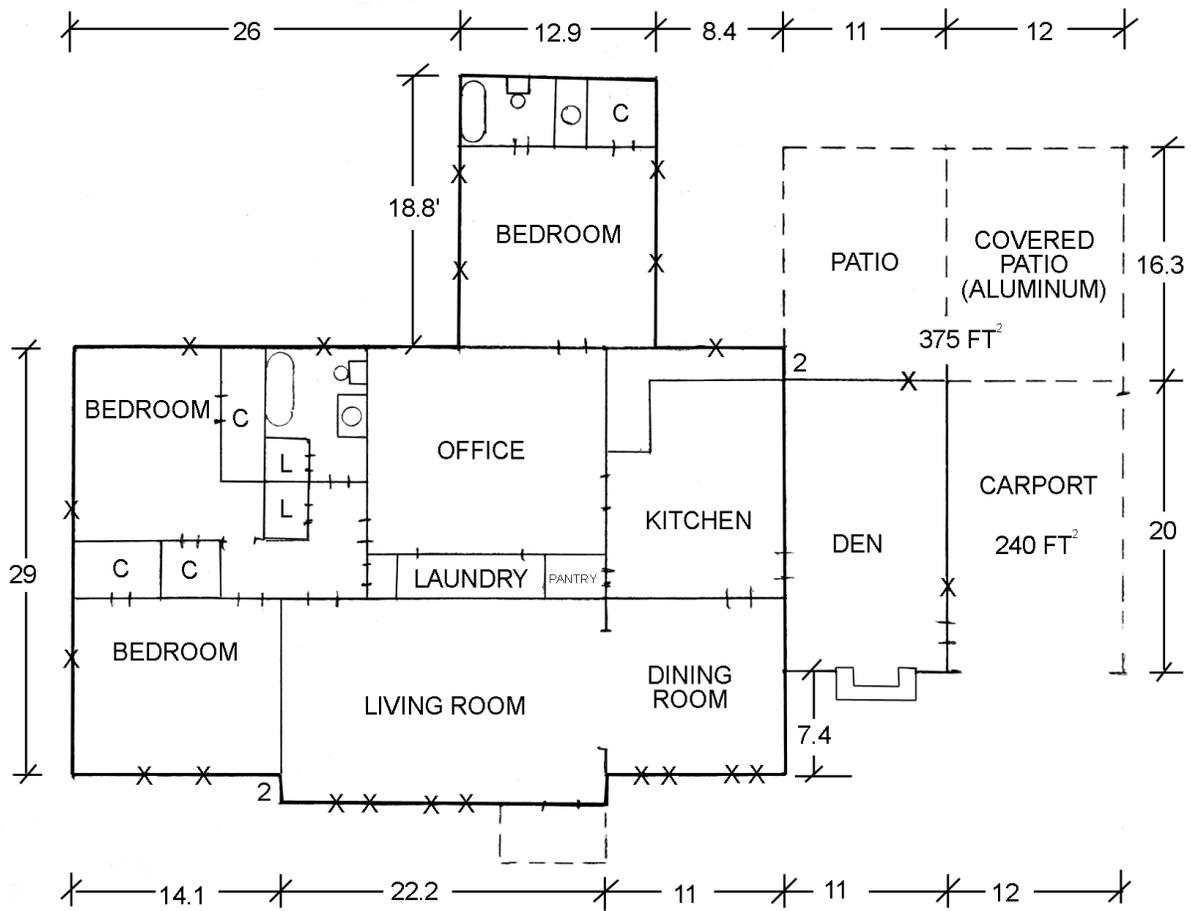
See also Appendix B, Photograph 5

7 ABERNATHY RD.  
SANDY SPRINGS, GA  
1520 SQ. FT.



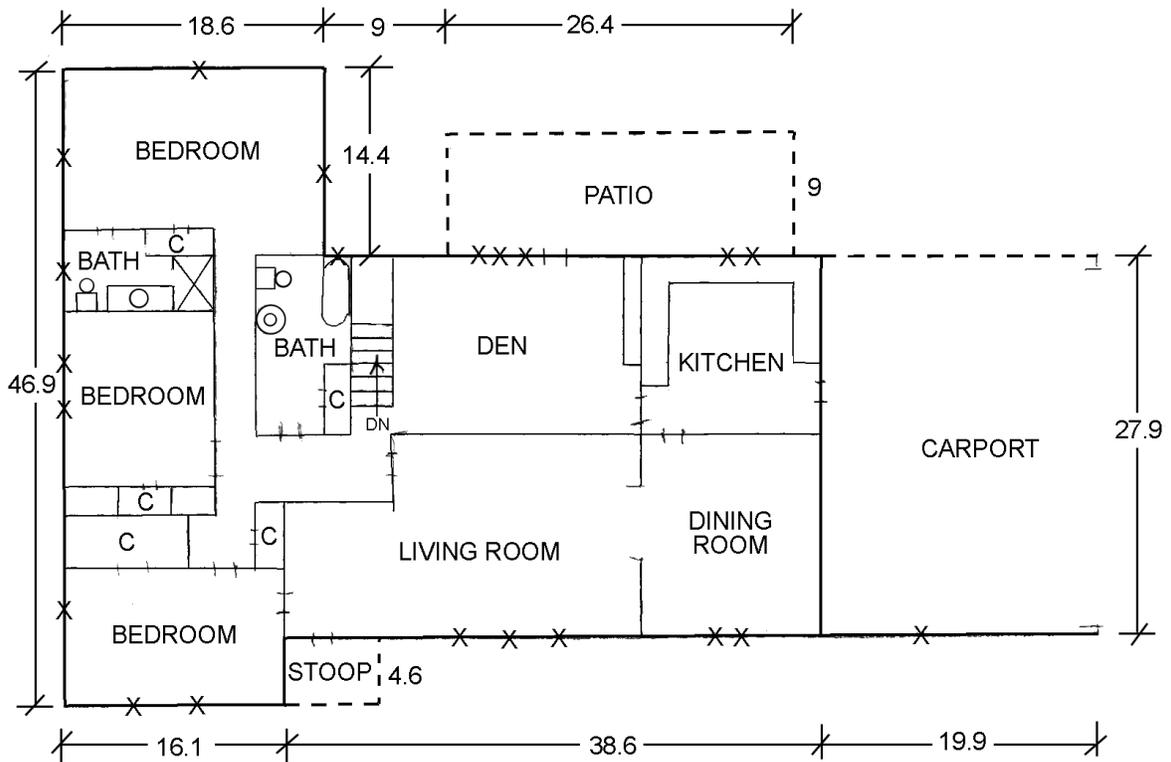
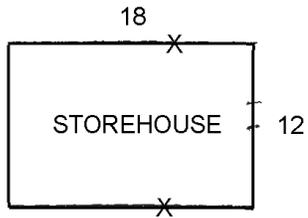
See also Appendix B, Photograph 6

19 ABERNATHY RD.  
SANDY SPRINGS, GA  
1879 SQ. FT



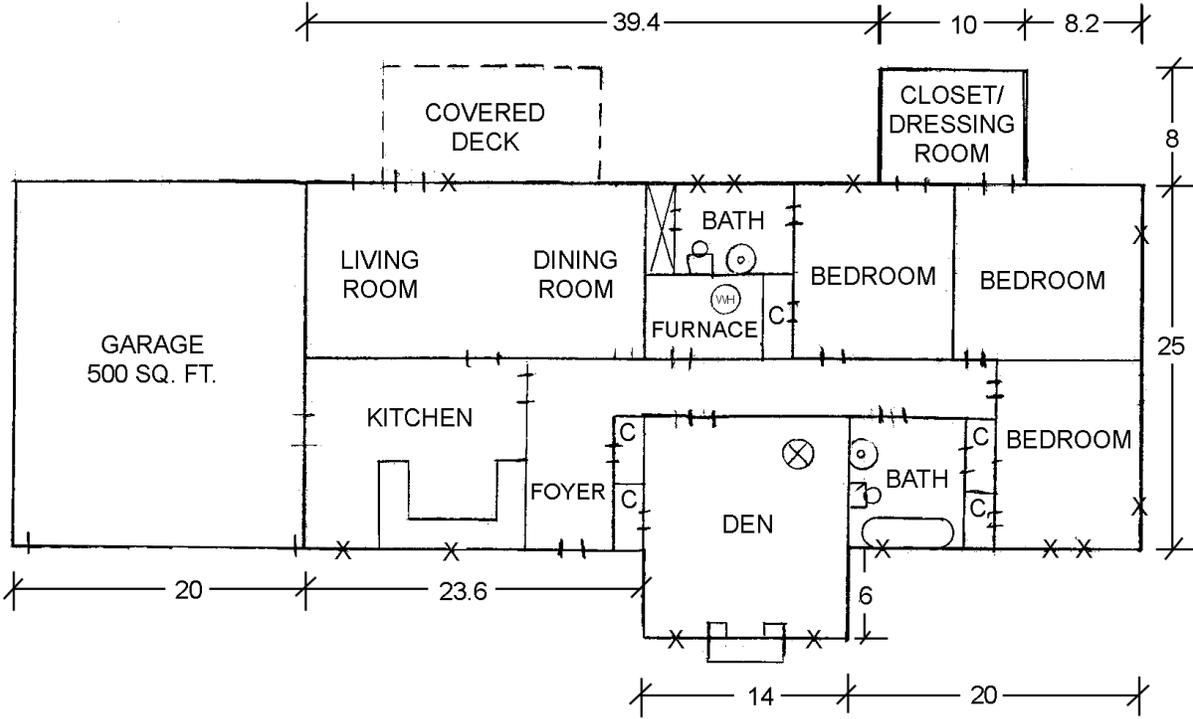
See also Appendix B, Photograph 7

23 ABERNATHY RD.  
SANDY SPRINGS, GA  
1868 SQ. FT.



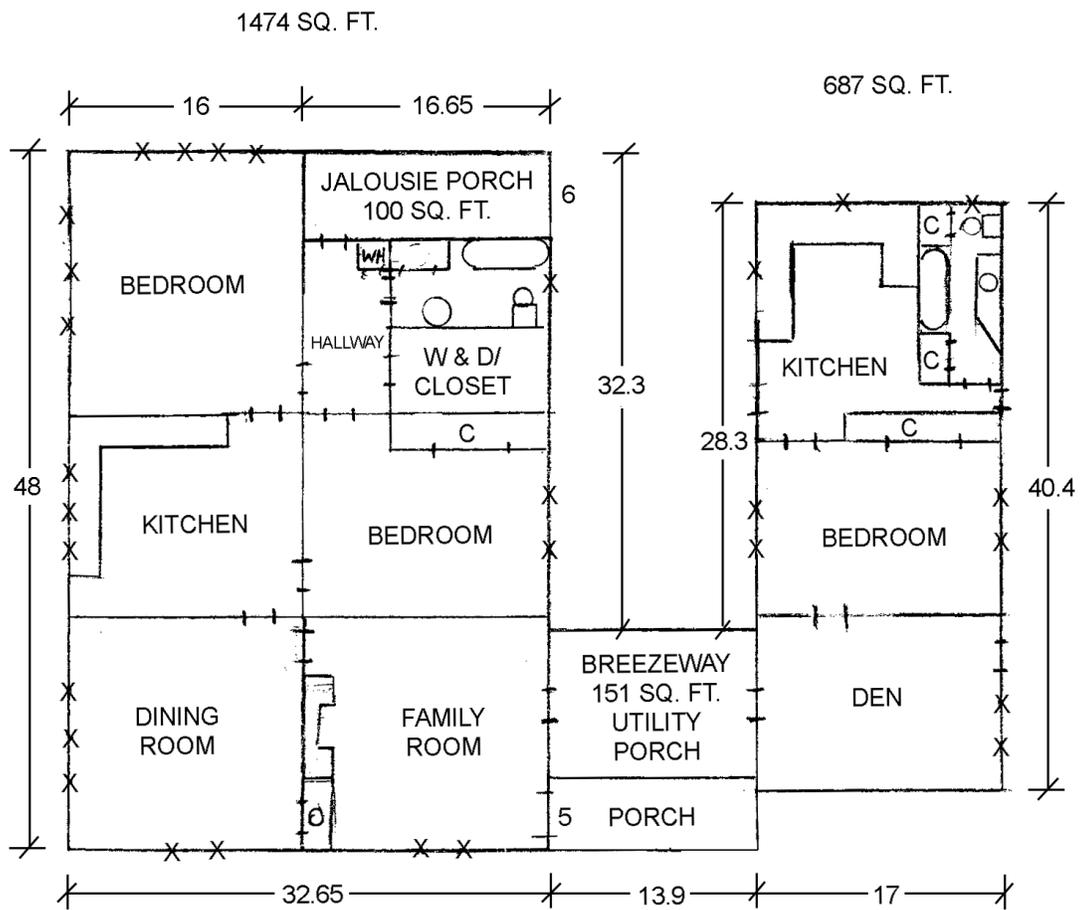
See also Appendix B, Photograph 8

33 ABERNATHY RD.  
SANDY SPRINGS, GA  
1610 SQ. FT.



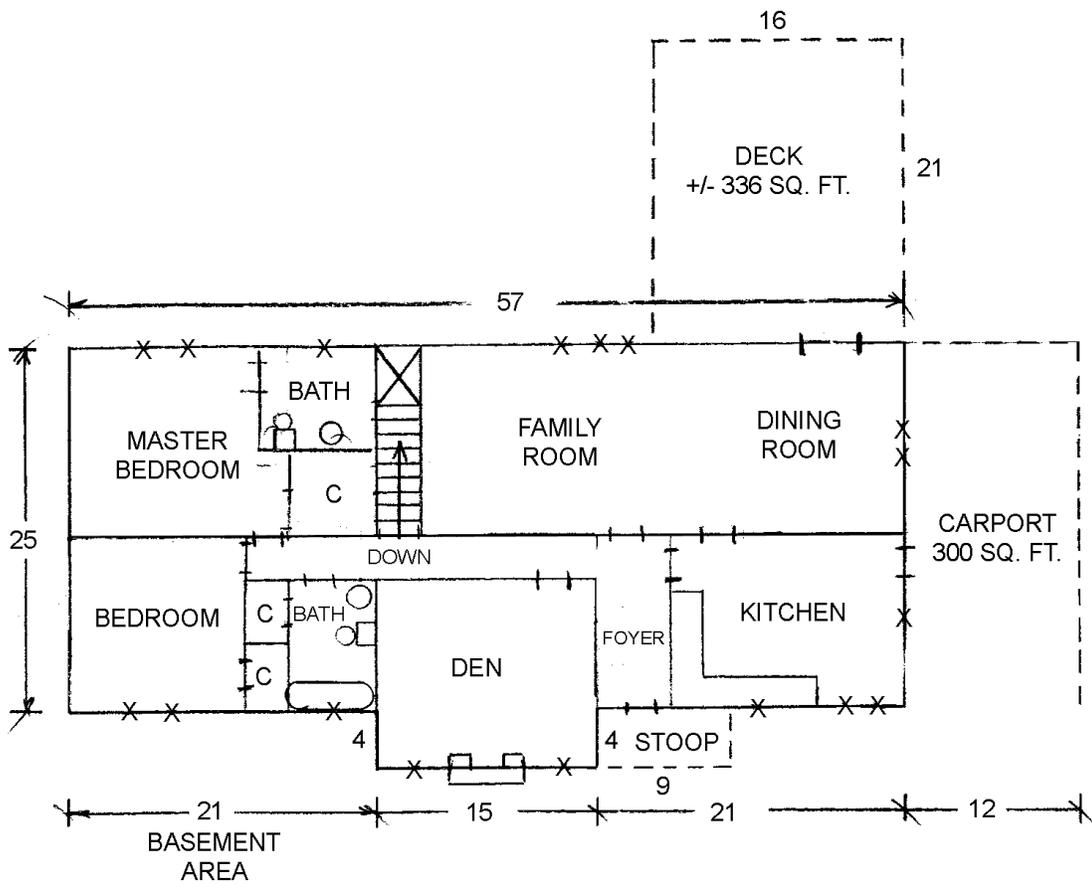
See also Appendix B, Photograph 9

49 ABERNATHY RD.  
SANDY SPRINGS, GA  
2161 SQ. FT.



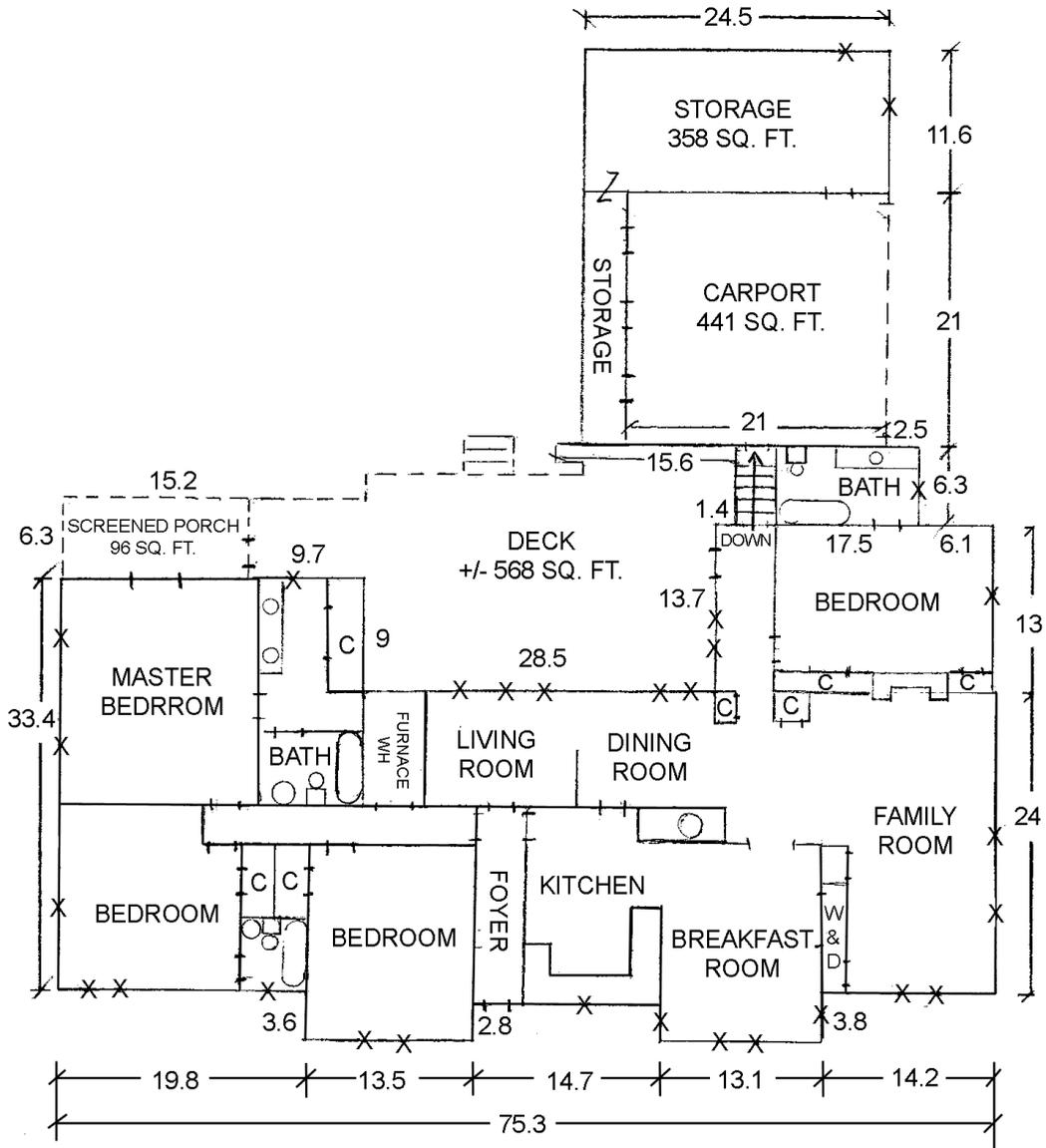
See also Appendix B, Photographs 10-13

65 ABERNATHY RD.  
SANDY SPRINGS, GA  
1485 SQ. FT.  
+/- 525



See also Appendix B, Photograph 14

73 ABERNATHY RD.  
 SANDY SPRINGS, GA  
 +/- 2500 SQ. FT.



See also Appendix B, Photograph 15

## **Appendix B: Photographs**



Site Sketch/Photo Key



1. Long Acres Drive, east-facing view from Johnson Ferry Road



2. Long Acres Drive, west-facing view



3. 201 Johnson Ferry Road, built 1953



4. 215 Johnson Ferry Road, built 1954



5. 223 Johnson Ferry Road, built 1955



6. 7 Abernathy Road, built 1953



7. 19 Abernathy Road, built 1953



8. 23 Abernathy Road, built 1954



9. 33 Abernathy Road, built 1954



10. 49 Abernathy Road, southwest-facing view, built 1958



11. 49 Abernathy Road, south-facing view



12. 49 Abernathy Road, northeast-facing view of rear



13. 49 Abernathy Road, north-facing view of rear courtyard



14. 65 Abernathy Road, built 1955



15. 73 Abernathy Road, built 1952



16. 6600 Long Acres Drive, built 1953



17. 6597 Long Acres Drive, built 1954



18. 6590 Long Acres Drive, built 1953



19. 6589 Long Acres Drive, built 1952



20. 6577 Long Acres Drive, built 1953



21. 6569 Long Acres Drive, built 1953



22. 6563 Long Acres Drive, built 1953



23. 6564 Long Acres Drive, built 1953



24. 6552 Long Acres Drive, built 1954



25. 6551 Long Acres Drive, built 1953



26. 6540 Long Acres Drive, built 1952



27. 6531 Long Acres Drive, built 1952