
8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):

Architecture
Landscape Architecture
Community Planning and Development

Period of Significance:

1928-1948.

Significant Dates:

1928 - Druid Hills High School built.
1939 - Neal Smith develops Princeton Way.
1941 - Neal Smith develops Westminster Way and Edinburgh Terrace.
1948 - Emory Presbyterian Church is completed.

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

Ivey and Crook, architect.
Robert and Company, engineer.
Sayward and Logan, architect.

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Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)

The Emory Grove Historic District is a small, intact historic residential area that developed in suburban DeKalb County beginning with the construction of Druid Hills High School in 1928 and ending with the completion of Emory Presbyterian Church in 1948. Most of the houses in the historic district were constructed between 1939 and 1946. The district is significant under National Register Criteria A and C in the areas of architecture, landscape architecture, and community planning and development.

The historic district is significant in the area of architecture for its intact collection of residential and community landmark buildings constructed from 1928 to 1948. The majority of buildings within the historic district were built in one basic residential type with several variations. This type is a one-story, or one-and-a-half story, rectangular-shaped house with a low-pitched, side-gabled roof, interior or central chimney on the ridge line, and smaller side-gabled wings. Variations include front-gabled porches, dormer windows, slightly projecting front-gabled wings, and various chimney placements. Decorative trim and moldings are flat and not highly detailed. Screen porches are customarily located on the front side. The houses are not high style but represent a minimal traditional version of the Colonial Revival style. That is, elements of the style were applied to buildings whose forms are vaguely reminiscent of the Colonial Revival because the style was still very much popular in Georgia. Stylistic details applied to a single house type represents the broader building trend in suburban Georgia in which ornament was sacrificed by builders to save costs.

Like the neighboring University Park-Emory Highlands-Emory Estates Historic District to the west, the houses in Emory Grove were designed for middle-income families, especially faculty and staff at nearby Emory University. The houses at Emory Grove, however, are even smaller than those at University-Park-Emory Highlands-Emory-Estates because of building supply shortages associated with World War II and because the builder, Neal Smith, chose to sell more houses on smaller lots rather than fewer houses on larger lots.

Emory Grove Historic District is also significant for its community landmark buildings. The Colonial Revival-style Druid Hills High School, built in 1928, was designed by the Atlanta architectural firm of Ivey and Crook. The architect, Lewis "Buck" Crook, had served as head draftsman for Need Reid and later designed many of the buildings at Emory University. Sayward and Logan, another prominent Atlanta architectural firm, designed the Emory Presbyterian Church. Crook had designed a substantial Gothic Revival-style complex that included a larger church with a side tower, a smaller chapel, and an educational building. The chapel, the only building that was constructed, is an outstanding mid-20th-century example of the Gothic Revival style in Georgia.

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The Emory Grove Historic District is significant in the area of landscape architecture and community planning and development because its plan, developed in two phases from 1939 to 1946, features many design elements that are characteristic of neighboring University Park-Emory Highlands-Emory Estates Historic District and Druid Hills, which was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and the Olmsted Brothers. The roads were laid out with broad curves and landscaped traffic islands, which indicate the influence of the Druid Hills plan. Moreover, the neighborhood was planned with three recreational parks for the enjoyment of the residents. Built in the tradition of Olmsted, these parks continue to serve the community. Emory Grove Park, in the northeast corner of the historic district, retains a significant number of historic plantings.

In addition, the historic district is significant because its smaller lot sizes and uniform layout reflect the increased demand for moderate housing at the middle of the 20th century. West DeKalb County experienced an increase in the construction of housing to support not only those who worked four miles to the west in downtown Atlanta but also residents that worked in nearby Decatur. Emory University grew significantly during the first half of the 20th century, further establishing a need for moderately priced houses for its faculty and staff. The historic district represents the emergence of west DeKalb County and Emory University as an economic center in suburban Atlanta.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

Contributing resources in the historic district are those constructed between 1928 and 1948 that are architecturally significant, represent a historic theme associated with the historic district, and retain historic integrity. Noncontributing resources are those constructed after 1948 and those that have lost their historic integrity. The contributing structure identified in the historic district is the plan of the development. The three landscaped parks and the overall landscaping of the district are counted as contributing sites. The many historic garages throughout the district are not counted because of their small size but they nevertheless contribute.

Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

The Emory Grove Historic District was platted in two sections: Princeton Way, south of North Decatur Road in 1939; and Westminster Way and Edinburgh Terrace, north of North Decatur Road in 1941. The Emory Grove subdivision was built to provide an affordable neighborhood to attract families of the Emory University faculty and staff. The dense, early 1940s developmental pattern was conceived by Neal Smith, an Emory University facilities manager, and laid out by Robert and Company, an Atlanta-based engineering firm. The scale and style of the neighborhood reflected the early 20th-century movement toward period revival styles such as the English Vernacular Cottage, Colonial Revival, Dutch Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival. The inclusion of driveways and

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garages with most houses reflects the rise of the automobile and the preference for private mobility over public transportation.

In 1934, Asa Candler, the founder of the Coca-Cola Company, owned most of the area now known as Emory Grove, according to Kauffman's Map of Atlanta. Dr. Sam Guy, head of the Chemistry Department at Emory, wanted to build houses near the university. Having married into the wealthy Candler family, he had the means to proceed with his plan. Guy hired Neal Smith, who was the head of maintenance at Emory, to build the houses. The plat maps indicate that Neal Smith was the owner and developer. Neal Smith had his office on North Decatur Road according to the 1942 Atlanta City Directory. DeKalb County plat maps indicate that the Princeton Way section was platted in 1939 and Edinburgh Terrace and Westminster Way in 1941. Both sections were platted by Robert and Company. Dr. Guy wanted the streets named after famous universities. Another contractor, Ed Gilliam, also built houses on some of the streets. It was not until just after World War II that the neighborhood was built out. The typical home cost \$7,500.

Among the most distinctive features of the subdivision are the common park areas behind the houses. The playground areas in the historic district were under the homeowners' care initially, with individual landscape responsibility falling to each neighborhood. The area garden clubs provided guidance and labor in establishing the plantings which have now matured. A victory garden was grown during the war years in the large park area in the center of Princeton Way, while post-war landscaping included playground equipment, trees, and flowering bulbs. Currently, the parks are maintained by DeKalb County.

An educational institution that later became Druid Hills High School was established in 1919 for children of Emory University personnel. There were no paved roads leading to the campus at that time, and getting children to school in Atlanta was not possible. The school was originally called the Emory Elementary School and was located in a wooden chapel on the Emory University campus. A new three-story brick school building opened as the Druid Hills School in 1928 on Haygood Drive, accommodating kindergarten through the eleventh grade. The architect for the building was the firm of Ivey and Crook, whose classical design is reflected in the traditional form of the school.

As the population of the area grew, an addition was built on the rear of the main school building in 1941 to house the gym and machine shop. Architects for the 1941 gymnasium were Bodin and Lamberson who designed many school buildings and gymnasiums in Atlanta. Later additions to the school are noncontributing. The school operated independently of the DeKalb County School System until 1947. By the mid-1950s, a neighborhood kindergarten was established in one of the homes. From there, the children went on to the Druid Hills School. With the boom in the population during the post-war years, it became clear that the school was no longer adequate. Children were

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taught in various churches and community buildings until Fernbank Elementary School was completed in 1958. Druid Hills School then became Druid Hills High School.

In 1940, Emory Presbyterian Church began holding services and purchased the property where it now stands at the intersection of North Druid Hills Road and Haygood Drive. Ground breaking for the new church, designed by architects Sayward and Logan, was held in 1946. Sayward and Logan continued the leading Atlanta architectural firm of Edwards and Sayward, which had formed in 1912. Their best-known project was University Homes, an urban redevelopment project in Atlanta. The firm specialized in educational buildings, including Decatur projects at Agnes Scott College, Columbia Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and Decatur High School.