

# Revival VERNACULAR

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*Creating Beautiful Homes and Lasting Relationships*

## *Georgia Governors' Mansions*

Many Atlantans take time each July to remember the anniversaries of the Civil War battles of Peachtree Creek and Atlanta. This year Robert Jenkins spoke to the Buckhead Heritage Society about the Battle of Peachtree Creek, and I was amazed at the depth of his knowledge about even the minutest details of the conflict. Again I was reminded that most of us know such cursory information about our past and how exciting it is to hear from someone so knowledgeable.

Unfortunately information was not so forthcoming on my latest research project: Georgia's Governors' Mansions. While military scholars can speculate 145 years later about what division fired a cannon ball that was found in a back yard on West Wesley Road, after weeks of research I could not determine the architects of or find much information about two of our state's governor's mansions, both built and torn down after the Civil War. Of Georgia's four official governors' mansions, only the antebellum and current structures still remain. The two intermediate residences were demolished and have largely vanished from our cultural memory. Additionally, the current Governor's Mansion stands where another impressive home once stood. Despite their claims to the contrary, Georgians have adopted some of Sherman's bad habits in the name of progress.

In 1835 the Georgia legislature enacted legislation to build the first official residence for the governor in Milledgeville and engaged Charles Cluskey for the design. Cluskey was born in Ireland but moved to Savannah in 1829 after working in

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New York; he designed some of Savannah's most impressive homes as well as other buildings in Milledgeville and Augusta. The construction began in 1836 and was completed in 1839. Timothy Porter of Farmington, Connecticut, was the builder. The mansion is a nationally recognized example of the Greek Revival style and is noted as one of Cluskey's finest works.

### ***Old Governor's Mansion, Milledgeville***

General Sherman briefly occupied the mansion in 1864 on his March to the Sea. After the war the home was abandoned until Middle Georgia Military and Agricultural College, chartered in 1879, converted the building into cadet barracks. In 1891 the



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new Georgia Normal and Industrial College, now Georgia College and State University, converted the building into its president's home, and it served that function until 1987. Carefully restored in the 1960s and again in 2001, the Old Governor's Mansion was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1973 and is open for tours.

When the state capitol moved north to Atlanta in 1868, the governor took up residence in a three-story building owned by Charles Carenden on Ellis and Baker Streets. This house was never considered an official Governor's Mansion although it served that purpose until 1870 when the State of Georgia purchased the first official Governor's Mansion in Atlanta from John H. James. The James home stood at the intersection of Cain Street, now International Boulevard, and Peachtree Street. John James was one of the more colorful characters in Atlanta's history. James was a self-made man who came to Atlanta as a whiskey salesman and became one of the city's most prominent bankers. Although James would eventually fall on hard times, his home was described by *The Atlanta Constitution* as "one of the best-equipped and most magnificent homes in the city."

### ***First Atlanta Governor's Mansion***



In 1870 the General Assembly purchased James' home and its furnishings for an impressive sum of \$100,000. James lived in the house for just one year before selling it. Many would consider the large red brick home and its sixty foot tall tower of the Victorian style. However, this elaborate residence almost defies description with its Italianate details, a Dutch gable, and hints of both the Gothic and Romanesque Revivals. After selling this home to the state, James built another grand home on Peachtree that would later be purchased by the Capital City Club.

Seventeen governors occupied this large residence, but the once grand mansion became increasingly neglected to the point that it was described as dilapidated and dangerous. Governor Dorsey moved to his personal residence in 1921. This mansion was demolished in 1923, and the Henry Grady Hotel was built on the site. That hotel was also torn down, and the Westin Peachtree Plaza now stands at that location. According to local historian Anne Taylor Boutwell, governors lived in either the Georgian Terrace Hotel or a rented home from 1921 until 1925, when the next Governor's Mansion was purchased.

### ***Ansley Governor's Mansion, Photo Courtesy of Atlanta History Center***



The Governor's Mansion moved north to The Prado in 1925 when the state acquired the former estate of Edwin Ansley, the developer of Ansley Park. The large granite home sat impressively on three hilltop acres, but the scale of the house was not considered large enough for many state functions. The grandness of the house was also not enhanced, as Boutwell noted, by the goats and cows that were kept on site during the terms of both Eugene Talmadge and Herman, his son and later governor. The unusual Atlanta estate housed Georgia's governors until 1968 and was later demolished when the land was subdivided.

The migration north continued to West Paces Ferry Road when the current Governor's Mansion officially opened on January 1, 1968. Lester Maddox was the first governor to occupy the current Governor's Mansion. This Greek Revival home was designed by Atlanta architect Thomas Bradbury. The house covers approximately 24,000 square feet and has a total of 30 Doric columns. The entire first floor is used for official entertaining, and the governor's family occupies the second level. The Governor's Mansion stands on approximately eighteen acres that once belonged to Robert Maddox, a prominent banker and Atlanta's mayor from 1909 to 1910. Maddox's home, Woodhaven, and the surrounding property were sold to the state in 1963. A fire damaged parts of the house, and the elaborate country home was demolished. The carriage house and the gardens were saved.

It is hard to deny the importance of each governor's mansion to Georgia's history. Unfortunately, preservation has rarely trumped financial concerns. When describing the desertion of the former James residence in 1921, *The Atlanta Constitution* provided an eloquent argument that "the historic mansion is linked indissolubly with the political and social history of Georgia for half a century. Within its historic walls, the destinies of a people have been shaped." Unfortunately, this bit of Georgia's history cannot be blamed on the carpetbaggers.

# Cottage *Living*

Revival Construction recently completed a whole-house renovation in Collier Hills for John Lanigan, Revival's insurance agent. John purchased the "fixer-upper" in October 2008 after a lengthy search and was drawn to the 1940's cottage because he could see the house's potential. John involved Wright during his search, and both of them agreed that this home felt right. Lanigan was continually disappointed with the other available properties on the market and determined that "the most logical choice was to create something that I liked. Wright and I were able to accomplish this objective."

The home's potential was hidden behind years of neglect, but Wright felt that the entire house would not need to be changed to make a dramatic improvement. Previous additions and poorly built kitchen and bath renovations would need to be rebuilt to match the feel of the original house, but only a few small design changes were needed to make a big impact. After formulating the basic plan and developing a feasible budget, Wright enlisted the help of architect Rodolfo Castro and interior designer Emy Riley to help complete the design. The team created a new entry and small family room addition, renovated the kitchen and existing bath, and reconfigured a previous addition to create mud and laundry rooms. The existing master suite addition was altered to provide a generous bath and closet. By adding only 21 square feet, these changes created features that many smaller homes lack.

*Lanigan Exterior Before*



*Lanigan Exterior After*



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*Lanigan says he "was most impressed about the professionalism of the crew that was on site. All of Revival's team members had their hearts in this job, and you could see the passion everyday."*

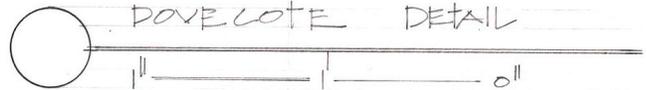
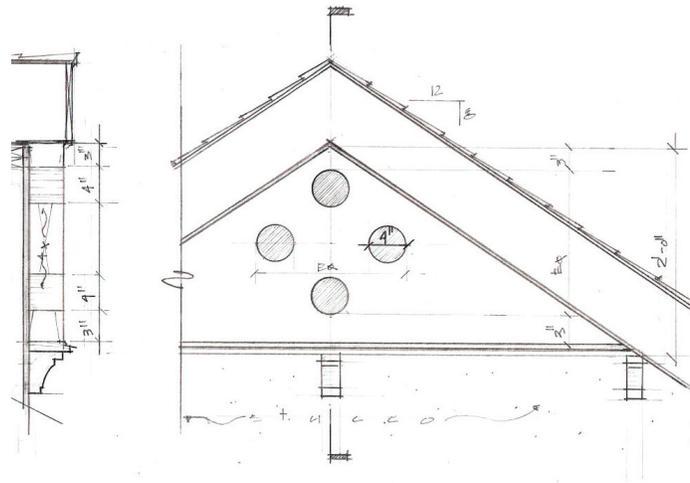
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The family room addition measured only three by seven feet but had a much larger impact. Designed to accommodate Lanigan's favorite couch, this small addition helped create a comfortable family room for five. As a bachelor who likes to entertain, this part of the renovation was a must. This room has become Lanigan's favorite area of the house.

Given his established business relationship with Revival, Lanigan had confidence in Wright and his team to make the project happen, and the entire process, from putting the house under contract to moving into the renovated space, took only five months. To move so quickly, Lanigan had to trust Revival's team and let it drive the process. As the design took shape, the production team took over, and Lanigan says he "was most impressed about the professionalism of the crew that was on site. All of Revival's team members had their hearts in this job, and you could see the passion everyday."



*Lanigan Renovated Kitchen*



## Vernacular Terms

### Dovecote

*A dovecote was historically a building intended to house pigeons and doves which were not only important food sources but also status symbols. The French used the term pigeonier which is also used in Louisiana. In Medieval Europe and Colonial America, dovecotes were frequently freestanding structures that resembled towers, but they have commonly been incorporated into the eaves and gable ends of traditional American architecture.*



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