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New life for Dupree House

■ Relocation, restoration plans come to fruition after years of work

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By Raquel Willis

Dupree's house relocated

Historic preservation icon Celeste Dupree's house was relocated to Magnolia Manor grounds off North Cherokee Road in Social Circle on Tuesday.

historic turn-of-the-century homes within the city during the 1960s. She left behind a legacy as the founder of the HPSSC.

"She owned a number of properties in Social Circle to either live in for a while or restore. She saved 15 homes, but the one that really is attributed to her and her family is the one we saved because her mother lived there," said Tom Brown, chairman of the SCHPC. "That's the one that is really anchored with her name on it. That's why we especially wanted to do everything we could to save that house."

After her death in 2005, a scramble emerged for what to do with the house that served an important role in the city — but stood in the way of efforts for First Baptist Church of Social Circle to expand and utilize the land they had acquired. Without a plan, many were worried the house would be demolished and its importance lost forever.

"She did too much to let the house go," Brown said. "I think she'd be honored and happy that all of the work she did will be recognized. The community leaders, the church and the city — all of us have worked together — to protect what she has done to organize efforts for historic preservation in Social Circle."

The journey was long and difficult with years of fundraising for the effort to move the house. The last few weeks have served as a mere blip on the time frame for the project.

"In reality, we've been working on the move for about three weeks and tearing off the portions of the house that need to be removed and taking off the pieces of the original foundation that we were going to use. But it goes back

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By Raquel Willis | 0 comments

SOCIAL CIRCLE — After years of planning, negotiations and fundraising between the Historic Preservation Society of Social Circle, the Social Circle Historic Preservation Committee and First Baptist Church, the long-awaited preservation and restoration of the former home of Celeste Dupree culminated in its relocation behind Magnolia Manor off North Cherokee Road on Tuesday.

"I feel good that we finally had the house moved and we have the house on our lot and we'll be able to start the restoration process on it, but I think a key to a part of this for us was to try and find a purpose for the house because then we could find a reason to move it," said Mike Owens, owner of Magnolia Manor. "Folks worked on this for such a long time. It was a community effort to get it accomplished."

Dupree's work has bolstered historic preservation efforts in the community for more than 50 years, having ushered in the movement to restore and maintain

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farther than that," Owens said. "We've been planning for it for over a year and I know some folks have been working on this between five and seven years. I feel like the last couple of weeks have been a lot of manual work, but that's somewhat smaller than the work that's been going on the last several years as far as the negotiations and trying to find this place a home."

Owens describes the task of moving the house as small, but admits he and the movers did encounter some complications during the process.

"We got here about 6:30 a.m. this morning and we started at the same time yesterday and ended about 9:45 p.m. An hour and a half move turned into about nine hours because we ran into a lot of issues," Owens said. "Some of the issues were we had to cross over a basement and over a root cellar and wheels got caught in there. It was just kind of difficult to get it moved out of the original location."

"We had to get the house down to 36 feet to get it out of the space we had. We took off three rooms in the back that were later built on to the building and we did have to take of a portion of the kitchen, but it was really water and termite damaged."

Though it is a work in progress, the house has already made a name for itself.

Having been featured in This Old House and on www.historic

properties.com, it has become a rich part of the fabric of Social Circle and Georgia. It's fame is only expected to increase once it is restored as a guest suite at Magnolia Manor and it is in the talks to be featured on the television version of "This Old House."

"I think we'll be doing restoration for about 18-26 months," Owens said. "There's potential and we've actually talked with the 'This Old House' folks from the TV show and we'll see if there's some traction with that. They've expressed some interest."

Owens is glad to have some moving experts on hand to help him with the task, for now. Adrian Bishop, of Adrian Bishop House Movers from Madison, has played an instrumental part in the process this week.

"I've enjoyed working with Mike Owens and Tom Brown and I like to preserve old houses and stuff and see this stuff happen, especially in a small town in Georgia," Bishop said. "A lot of these houses are going down and they're building new houses and all of the history is leaving the town. I've enjoyed doing it."

In many ways, Dupree's work has come full circle and in turn saved her legacy, as well as her pride and joy.

"From all of her work, time and money – the community leaders wanted to do something to preserve that and the testament to her work is her home. That is the most physical testament to her name. We just could not let it be demolished," Brown said.

Relocation, restoration plans come to fruition after years of work

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