

DESOTO HOMES, BUILDING NO. E1
(Charles Hight Homes)
708 North Fourth Avenue
Rome
Floyd County
Georgia

HABS GA-2403-F
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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

DESOTO HOMES, BUILDING NO. E-1,
(Charles Hight Homes)

HABS No. GA-2403-F

Location: 708 North Fifth Avenue, Rome, Floyd County,
Georgia

USGS Rome South Quadrangle, Universal
Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 16S 667791
3792625
Corrected to 34.260949, -85.177124 on 21
October 2013 using Google Earth, WGS84 datum
by HABS Collections Manager Anne Mason. The
coordinate represents the approximate center
of the roof the building. There is no
restriction on its release to the public.

Present Owner: Northwest Georgia Housing Authority
800 North Fifth Avenue
Rome, Georgia 30162-1428

Present Occupants: Vacant

Present Use: Public housing to be redeveloped

Significance: Built in 1940 under the United States Housing
Authority, DeSoto Homes is significant as the
first federally funded public housing project
in Rome, Georgia. Building Number E-1 is the
only example of a Type E Plan Building in the
DeSoto Homes housing project. The Type E
Plan Building is a two-story, nine-unit row
house with seven, two-bedroom units and a
one-bedroom unit on each floor at the western
end of the building.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1939-1940.
2. Architects: The associated firms of Cooper and Cooper and Odis Clay Poundstone.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Housing Authority of the City of Rome, 1939 to 2004; Northwest Georgia Housing Authority, 2004 to present.
4. Original and subsequent uses: Public housing units for the Housing Authority of the City of Rome and Northwest Georgia Housing Authority.
5. Builder, Contractor, Suppliers:

Contractor: Griffin Construction Company, Inc.,
Atlanta, Georgia
Landscape Architect: William C. Pauley, Atlanta,
Georgia
Structural Engineer: W.H. Armstrong,
Mechanical Engineer: A.L. Lindstrom,
Electrical Engineer: L.R. Bush,
Civil Engineer: Jere Dodd
6. Original Plans and construction: The Commission of the Housing Authority of the City of Rome approved the working drawings submitted for DeSoto Homes on June 12, 1939. The project contractors, Griffin Construction Company, Inc., won the base bid contract of \$427,759. Site clearance and construction of DeSoto Homes began in early September 1939 and was completed in October 1940. Aside from the replacement of the original doors and windows, Building Number E-1 retains its original appearance and interior plan.
7. Alterations and additions: The exterior stucco finish on Building Number E-1 was repaired and repainted in 1960 and again in 1995-96. As part of Phase I of the Rome Housing Authority's building modernization plans during the early 1970s, aluminum screen doors were replaced and rear canopies and gutters were also changed. During the larger CIAP modernization program in the early 1980s, new bathroom fixtures, tile floors, and sheetrock were installed, as were new kitchen cabinets. The original steel casement windows in each building were replaced with double and tripartite

anodized aluminum sash windows. Original gas heaters were replaced with the existing wall furnaces and water heaters were upgraded and relocated to utility closets within the kitchens. Subsequent renovation work completed during the 1990s included interior improvements (painting, new bathroom tiling) and additional gutter and appliance replacements.

B. Historical Context

The Housing Authority of the City of Rome developed DeSoto Homes as a segregated, federally subsidized low-rent housing project for white residents. DeSoto Homes, along with Altoview Terrace, which was built for African-American tenants, were two of the earliest housing projects built in Georgia following the passage of the Federal United States Housing Act in 1937 and enactment of state enabling legislation for the creation of local public housing authorities in 1938. Located in the Fourth Ward section of Rome, the project was designed in a Spanish Colonial Revival style by the associated Atlanta firms of Cooper and Cooper and Odis Clay Poundstone. The Griffin Construction Company, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia was awarded the construction contract for the project with a low bid of \$427,759. Site clearance and development began in September 1939 and was completed by October 1940. Tenants began moving into the new units by November 11th of that year.

The twenty-eight building Desoto Homes project is located within an urban setting and contains 148 residential units and a public Administrative Building. The one- and two-story buildings are symmetrically arranged to create multiple vistas. The landscaped site plan, designed by landscape architect William C. Pauley, is laced with concrete walkways, small lawns of green space, and a central open playground area.

Building Number E-1 is the only Type E Plan Building in DeSoto Homes. It was constructed as part of the original housing project. Two stories in height, E-1 is transversely sited on North Fourth Avenue at the southeast end of the complex. Building Number E-1 has eight two-story, two-bedroom units and one upper level, one-bedroom unit. It was renovated as part of the modernization plans of the 1970s and 1980s, which resulted in the replacement of much of the interior fabric in the building's units, removal of the original steel casement fenestration, and installation of metal front doors, screen doors, and rear canopies.

Between 1940 and the 1980s, lower working class families and individuals comprised most of the residents in DeSoto Homes. By the 1990s however, the majority of tenants were elderly. In

1986, the project was renamed 'Charles A. Hight Homes' in honor of the businessman and longstanding commission chairman of the Housing Authority of the City of Rome. By 2006, Charles Hight Homes was determined to be functionally obsolete and was designated for potential redevelopment by the Northwest Georgia Housing Authority (formerly the Housing Authority of the City of Rome). The complex currently stands vacant.

Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character:

Building Number E-1 is the only Type E Plan Building located with the DeSoto Homes project. It was built in 1939-1940 as two-story, nine-unit dwelling with Spanish Colonial Revival style architectural detailing. In the Type E Plan Building, seven apartments have a four-and-a-half room standardized floor plan featuring a combined kitchen and dining room with a utility closet, a living room, two bedrooms, and a full bathroom. Two, three-room units located at the western end of the building have a kitchen with a utility closet, a living room, one bedroom, and a full bathroom.

2. Condition of fabric:

Building Number E-1 is in good structural condition. Despite the replacement of the historic windows and doors and renovation of much of the interior fabric, the original appearances and floor plans of the building are intact.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions:

The Type E Plan Building is two stories in height with an asymmetrical facade. It measures 132'2" in length and has an overall depth of 26'4". Refer to plans for detailed measurements.

2. Foundations:

The foundation of Building Number E-1 is composed of 8" thick concrete block wall footings supporting a reinforced 8" concrete slab.

3. Walls:

Walls are 8" thick structural terra cotta block, also known as hollow tile block, and covered with a grayish blue painted stucco finish. A belt course delineates the building's first and second stories.

4. Structural Systems, framing:

The Type E Plan Building is constructed of structural terra cotta block masonry with a 2" x 6" trussed frame roof.

5. Porches, stoops:

The front elevation of Building Number E-1 has four shared, flat canopy porches with concrete slab foundations and two 4" metal pipe column roof supports. Five smaller concrete slab porches with cantilevered metal canopies are located over the back doorways on the rear elevation.

6. Chimneys:

Building Number E-1 has four interior ridge chimneys with four flues each and one interior end, double flue chimney located at the eastern elevation. All are transversely placed and coated with a stucco finish.

7. Openings

a. Doorways and doors:

There are eight doors on the front elevation and rear elevations that provide access to each two-story, four-and-a-half room apartment and the one-story, three-room unit. A small flight of concrete steps leads to a single exterior door on the west side of the building that accesses the interior stairway to the upstairs three-room unit. All existing exterior doors are flat metal replacements with aluminum screen doors.

b. Windows and shutters:

There are nine window openings of varying sizes on each story of the Type E Plan Building façade. The building's rear elevation has nine windows on the second story and seven on the first. A single window is present on each story west elevation. The east elevation has two vertical windows centrally located on

the building's second story and two larger windows on the first.

Although Building Number E-1 retains the sizes and locations of the original fenestration, all current windows are two-over-two, anodized aluminum sash replacements of the historic steel casement multi-light windows.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering:

Building Number E-1 is covered with a medium-pitched, side-gable roof with wood louvered vents at the gable ends. The roof is covered with original red slate tile shingles.

b. Cornice, eaves:

The Type E Plan Building roof has a slight eave overhang that is boxed with continuous brick dentil molding of alternating stretcher and header courses along the cornice.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

Building Number E-1 has a linear-massed plan that is eight units wide and two units deep. It contains nine residential units. There are seven, two-story, four-and-a-half room plan apartments with a kitchen, dining room area, and living room on the first floor and a central hall opening to two bedrooms and one bathroom on the second story. The two, single-story, three-room apartments located on the western end the building have a living room, kitchen, bath, and bedroom.

2. Stairways:

Each two-story, four-and-a-half room apartment has a straight stairway with an open "wing wall" leading from the living room to the upstairs hall. The "wing wall" rail is capped with sheet metal and has a black painted finish. The twelve stair treads have rubber coverings and the risers have been painted black. The original wood handrails have a dark painted finish.

An interior stairway on the west elevation side entrance of Building Number E-1 leads to the living room area of the second story, three-room apartment. The eight stair treads have rubber coverings and risers have been painted black. The original wood handrails have a dark painted finish.

3. Flooring:

Apartments in the Type E Plan Building have asphalt tile flooring applied over concrete slab throughout, save for the bathrooms, which have replacement square ceramic tile.

4. Wall and ceiling finish:

All remaining original walls retain a plaster finish; however, due to the extensive renovations made to the DeSoto Homes housing project during the mid 1980s, many of the walls and ceilings in Building Number E-1 are sheetrock with a painted finish.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors:

The apartment units in Building Number E-1 appear to retain their original interior two-panel wood doors. Interior closet doors were added as part of the modernization work in the 1970s. Doorways have 3 1/2" wide, plain wood casing with a painted finish.

b. Windows:

Interior window surrounds are generally devoid of casing and detailing save for unadorned, blocked stools and aprons with sheet metal capping and a painted finish.

6. Decorative features and trim:

The apartment interiors of the Type E Plan Building are minimally ornamented. All interior partitions and doors are painted a uniform off-white. One of the few distinctive features is painted black clay tile base molding found in each room save for the bathroom.

7. Hardware:

Most interior doors retain their original brass doorknob and mortis lockset hardware although examples

of cylindrical lock metal door sets on closet doors installed in the 1970s or 1980s are also present.

8. Mechanical Equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:

Apartment units in Building Number E-1 have been updated to include modern central HVAC and wall furnace heating systems. The original water heaters have been replaced and relocated within utility closets next to the kitchen.

b. Lighting:

Apartment units in Building Number E-1 have been updated to include adequate electrical wiring systems with modern breaker panels, wall outlets, and overhead lighting fixtures in the kitchen, living room, and hallway areas.

c. Plumbing:

Apartment units in Building Number E-1 have plumbing systems installed as part of the original development. Kitchen sinks and bathroom fixtures have been updated over time during the 1970s and 1980s. The original water heaters have been replaced and relocated within utility closets next to the kitchen.

D. Site:

1. Historic landscape design:

Building Number E-1 is oriented to the south with the back of the building forming a rear courtyard with Building Number C-2. It is located in the southeast corner of the DeSoto Homes complex. The west elevation end of the building faces North Fourth Avenue.

Angled automobile parking areas for the residents are located at north and south ends of North Fourth Avenue and Keelway Drive. A semi-circular lot is also located in the area of the former spray pool behind the Administration Building.

Part III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Existing architectural and engineering drawings, historic views, documents and records, and interviews were used to compile this

information. Much of the material was located at the Authority's Archives or within the Maintenance Department's files. For a full bibliography, please refer to Part III Sources of Information for DeSoto Homes, HABS No. GA-2403.

Part IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation was prepared to assist the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Northwest Georgia Housing Authority in meeting their Section 106 responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act as amended. After consultation with the Georgia Historic Preservation Division (HPD), the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) considers the housing to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places based on Criterion A, namely, events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. The Authority, as administrator of federal funds allocated for this purpose, wishes to redevelop the site and its plans will have an adverse effect on the eligible property. Thus HUD, the Authority, and HPD entered into a Memorandum of Agreement in 2007 to complete a HABS Level II documentation of the DeSoto Homes. In addition, the Authority has elected to complete a second recordation project that documents the historically-associated Altoview Terrace. DeSoto Homes is documented in HABS No. GA-2403, while Altoview Terrace's number is HABS GA-2419, but the documentation has not been submitted to HABS as of 30 September 2013.