

Lawrenceville Female Seminary Historical Marker

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The following paper was prepared under the direction of Dr. Jennifer Dickey at Kennesaw State University for an Introduction to Public History course.

The Lawrenceville Female Seminary historical marker refers to the historic building built in July of 1838, which originally served as a female seminary and has housed many other tenants throughout the years. The building remains at its original location, and the marker is posted in front of the building, facing Perry Street in Lawrenceville. The first structure on the site was erected in 1838 and burned in 1850. The current building was completed in 1855 in conjunction with the Masons of Lawrenceville Masonic Lodge #131. The building first served as the female seminary, which occupied the top floor, and was later shared with Lodge #131, which used the bottom floor of the building. Its final use as a female seminary was in 1886. The “Hi- Hope School for Retarded Children” used the first floor until the early 1900s. It was used for most of the twentieth century for local civic meetings.ⁱ

Restoration of the building began in the 1970s around the time it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The building’s restoration saved about 70 percent of its original windows and pine floors.ⁱⁱ The listing of the Lawrenceville Female Seminary on the National Register of Historic Places saved the building from being sold to a Dairy Queen franchise. The building is one of the oldest in Gwinnett County and is described in the nomination as “the most imposing early building in the county.”ⁱⁱⁱ Since its restoration in 1974, it has served as the Gwinnett History Museum. In 2017 the site, including the Isaac Adair House that has been relocated to grounds of the museum, was renovated to accommodate visitors with disabilities. This included the addition of wheelchair ramps, a path to connect the sites, new

restrooms, drainage improvements, an overlook deck, a front plaza to the seminary building, and more.^{iv}

The marker was erected by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources in 1974. According to the *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, the Georgia Historical Commission, who originally ran the state's historical marker program, was the earliest force for historic preservation in Georgia where commissions came from the state government rather than private organizations.^v The Lawrenceville Female Seminary historical marker was fabricated post-agency, after Jimmy Carter abolished the project's commissions. The Department of Natural Resources then took over its functions and the Georgia Historical Society took over the marker program in 1998. The marker's erection during the 1970s speaks for the state's progress in historic preservation with the addition of the Lawrenceville Female Seminary to the National Register of Historic Places and the changes in the government's involvement with historic preservation.

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ⁱⁱ Reetz, J. (1974, Sep 08). Old building becomes museum for gwinnett. *The Atlanta Constitution* (1946-1984) Retrieved from <https://login.proxy.kennesaw.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxy.kennesaw.edu/docview/1616090836?accountid=11824>

ⁱⁱⁱ United States Department of the Interior National Park Service. (1970). *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form* (Entry No. 70.12.13.0054) Atlanta, GA.

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^{iv} Yeomans, C. (2017). Accessibility, comfort key to Isaac Adair House, Female Seminary renovations. [online] Gwinnett Daily Post. Available at:

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