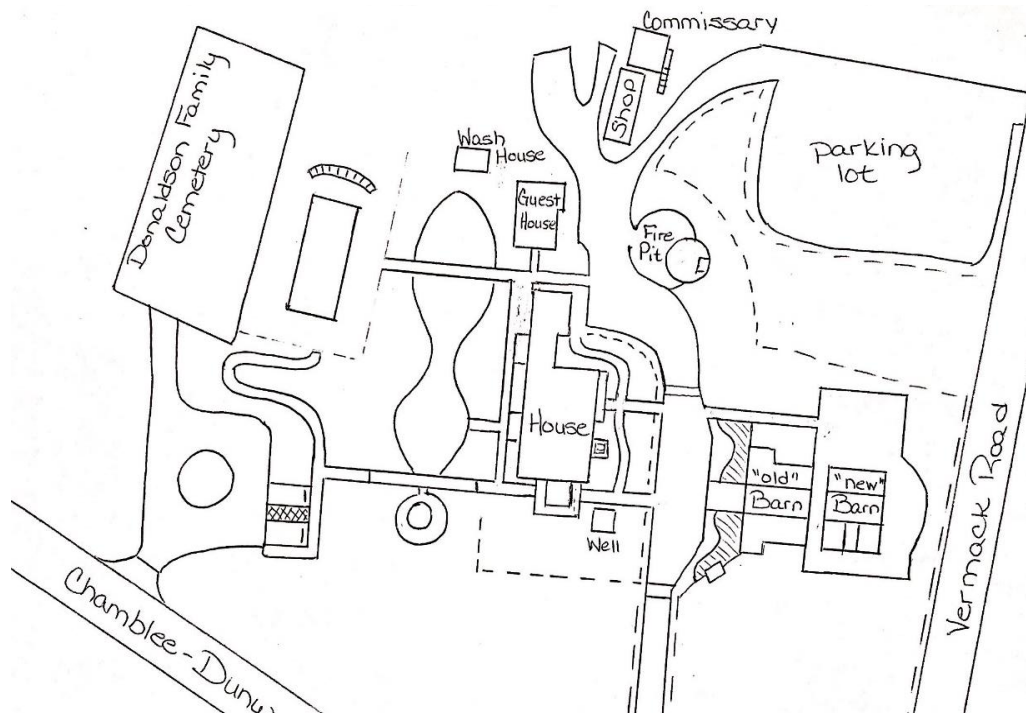


# Donaldson-Bannister Farm Self-Guided Tour



1. ***Start between the Well and the Main House*** – The Donaldson-Bannister house was built in 1870 by William James (WJ) Donaldson. He married Millie Adams when he returned from the Civil War and bought the land from Millie's father, Jesse Adams. The home was a two-story Plantation Plain style, typical for a farm during the time. The house was unpainted with a porch across the front.

The well is original and was used by the Donaldson family and by the next owner, Lois Pattillo, who bought the house in 1932. She married Leland Bannister who lived nearby on Chamblee-Dunwoody Road in 1937. The property was placed on the National Register of Historic Places by Lynne Byrd in 2009. (The plaque is next to the front door.) The history was particularly significant for women because Millie Donaldson continued to run the farm for an additional thirty years after her husband died and Lois Pattillo bought and renovated the home as a widow. Six families have lived at the farm: the Donaldsons, Bannisters, Roberts, Ogdens, Smiths and Chesnuts.

2. ***Stroll to the Arbor near the Fountain*** – The total property today is 2.89 acres but has been much larger. WJ Donaldson used to say he could walk from the house all the way to Chamblee and never leave his property.

From 1880 until 1920, the Roswell Railroad passed in front of the home. It traveled from Chamblee, through Dunwoody, to Roswell round trip twice each day. There was no place to turn around in Roswell, so the train travelled backwards from there. Roberts Drive is named for the engineer, Ike Roberts. Passengers could flag the train down from the front of the property and "hop a ride".

The fountain that is located here on the property today was donated by Marie & Dennis Creane and the New Dawn roses climbing the arbor were donated by Adrian Bonser.

3. ***Continue and go up the ADA ramp to the "Pool" Area*** – When the original owners, the Donaldson's, lived here this was all farmland. After Lois Pattillo Bannister purchased the property, she built elaborate gardens in this area, with boxwoods, peonies and walking paths. The brick wall had a fountain with a goldfish pond underneath. Beginning with Lois Bannister, the home and property was known as Boxwood Farms. The last owners, Linda and David Chesnut, put a pool in this area which has now been filled in.

The Donaldson family cemetery to the left has 27 graves with the first burial in 1883. The tall obelisk marks WJ Donaldson's grave. His wife Millie is to the right. The cemetery is privately owned by the Donaldson family.

4. ***Walk down the steps from the "Pool" area towards the Caretaker's Cottage*** – A small wash house is to the left that was built by Lois Bannister. There used to be a fire ring and large iron pot outside where clothes were washed. Also, in this area were muscadine vines and pear trees when the Frank Smith family lived here in the '50s. Frank Smith had greenhouses on the property where he would start plants for his nursery business.

The next building on the left, the Caretaker's Cottage or Guesthouse, was also built by Lois Bannister. Linda and David Chesnut were the last family to live in the home and Linda used it for her office. Thanks to a donation by Marie Creane and Danny & Queenie Ross, Dunwoody Preservation Trust (DPT) and the city have been able to renovate the cottage and it is now home to DPT's offices.

5. ***Follow the sidewalk/ramp between the Caretaker's Cottage and the back of the house to the driveway*** – The round area in front of you contains a BBQ pit. When the Donaldson family lived here, they had a smokehouse and corn crib in this area. To your left, the furthest building with the steps is the commissary, added by Lois Pattillo Bannister. Supplies were sold from here to local farmers. The Frank Smith family used the commissary building to set up model trains. He owned a nursery business that operated mainly in Buckhead which took care of the grounds at the Governor's Mansion. The building that is a bit closer has been used through the years as a blacksmith shop, tool shed and woodshed.
6. ***Turn right and walk up the driveway to the sidewalk between the terrace and house*** - Fred Donaldson was the last child born in the home. He lived here until he was about 7 years old with his mother, father (WJ & Millie's son), grandmother Millie and siblings until Millie passed away. The house and land were auctioned off in 1932 when Lois Pattillo purchased it. The back portion of the house was added by Lois Pattillo (Bannister). It includes a dining room, paneled den, kitchen, upstairs master bedroom and garage.
7. ***Follow the sidewalk towards the pavillian, turn right and walk towards the barns*** – The "old" barn to your right was built by Lois Pattillo Bannister. Each family living here had farm animals. Frank Smith, owner of the property between 1954-1975, had a workshop in the one of the "stalls". There used to be plaques next to each horse's stall with their name dating back to Lois Bannister's ownership. Where the "new" barn is now, there was an additional barn built by the Chesnut family. However, it was in bad shape and was replaced with the current structure in order to provide public restrooms and a multi-purpose room for the park.

Be sure to look for "Millie", our *Play Me Again* piano as you walk between the barns. She was a joint effort by the Dunwoody Fine Art Association and DPT. She is named after Millie Donaldson and is available for anyone to play when the park is open.

8. ***Return to the "feeding trough"/kiosk*** – Many current Dunwoody residents remember the days when the Chesnuts lived at the farm. They kept horses and mules which were often seen in the meadow as a reminder of days gone by. The two mules were named Peaches and Ashford.

In 2005, the Chesnuts sold the property to Dekalb County to be turned into a historical site. However, the county let it sit unused. When Dunwoody became a city in 2009, the property became part of the city's Parks Department. Dunwoody Preservation Trust stepped in to work with the City to renovate the property and the Donaldson Bannister Farm opened officially to the public on May 1, 2018. Today, it is a City of Dunwoody park open dawn to dusk each day. The property is used for Education through events such as Camp Flashback, school tours & History Alive programs, Community Events such as Flick 'n Chick & Apple Cider Days and Private Events such as reunions, weddings, galas, corporate events, etc. Please visit us at [DunwoodyPreservationTrust.org](http://DunwoodyPreservationTrust.org) if you would like to help us continue to preserve this and other historical treasures in Dunwoody.

