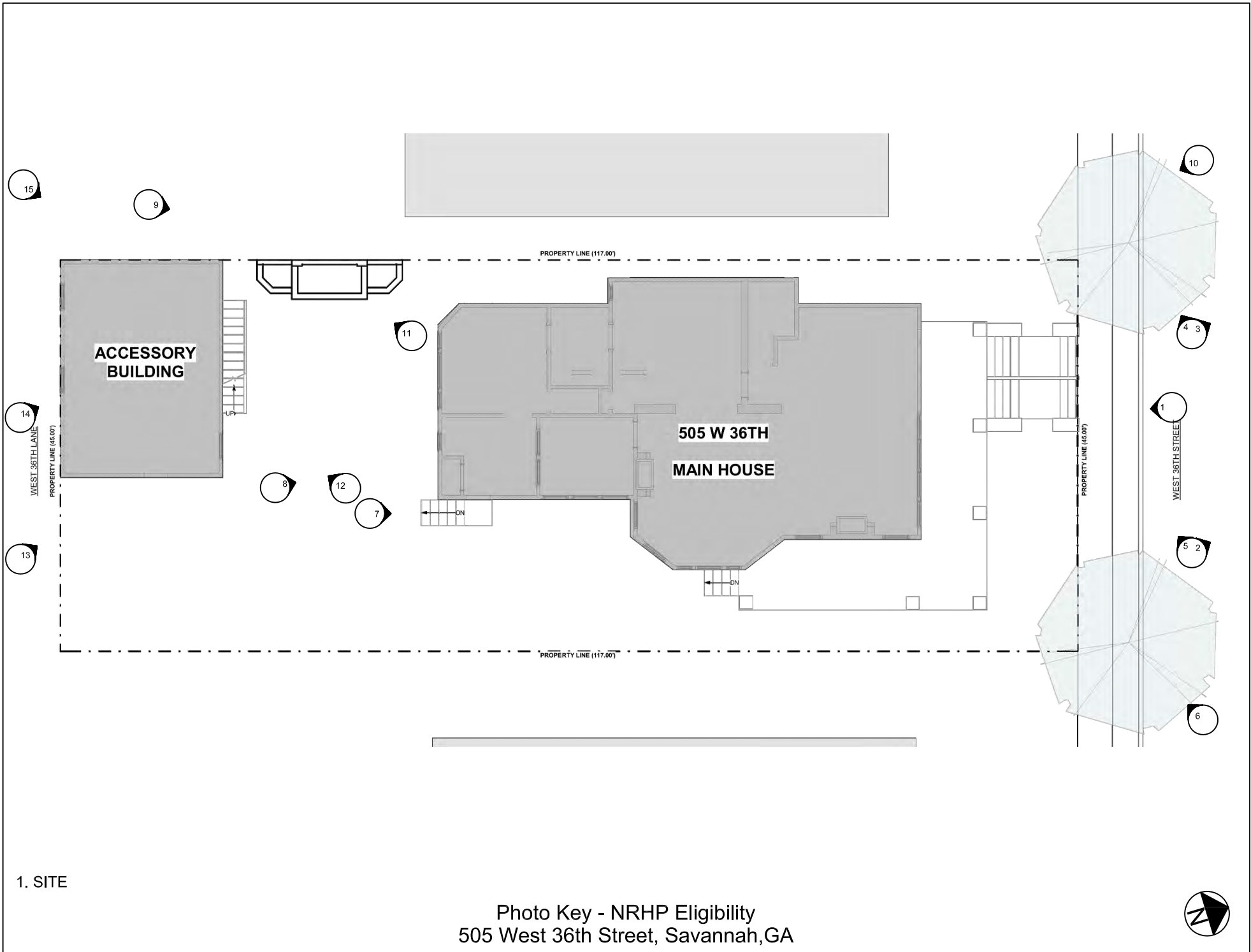
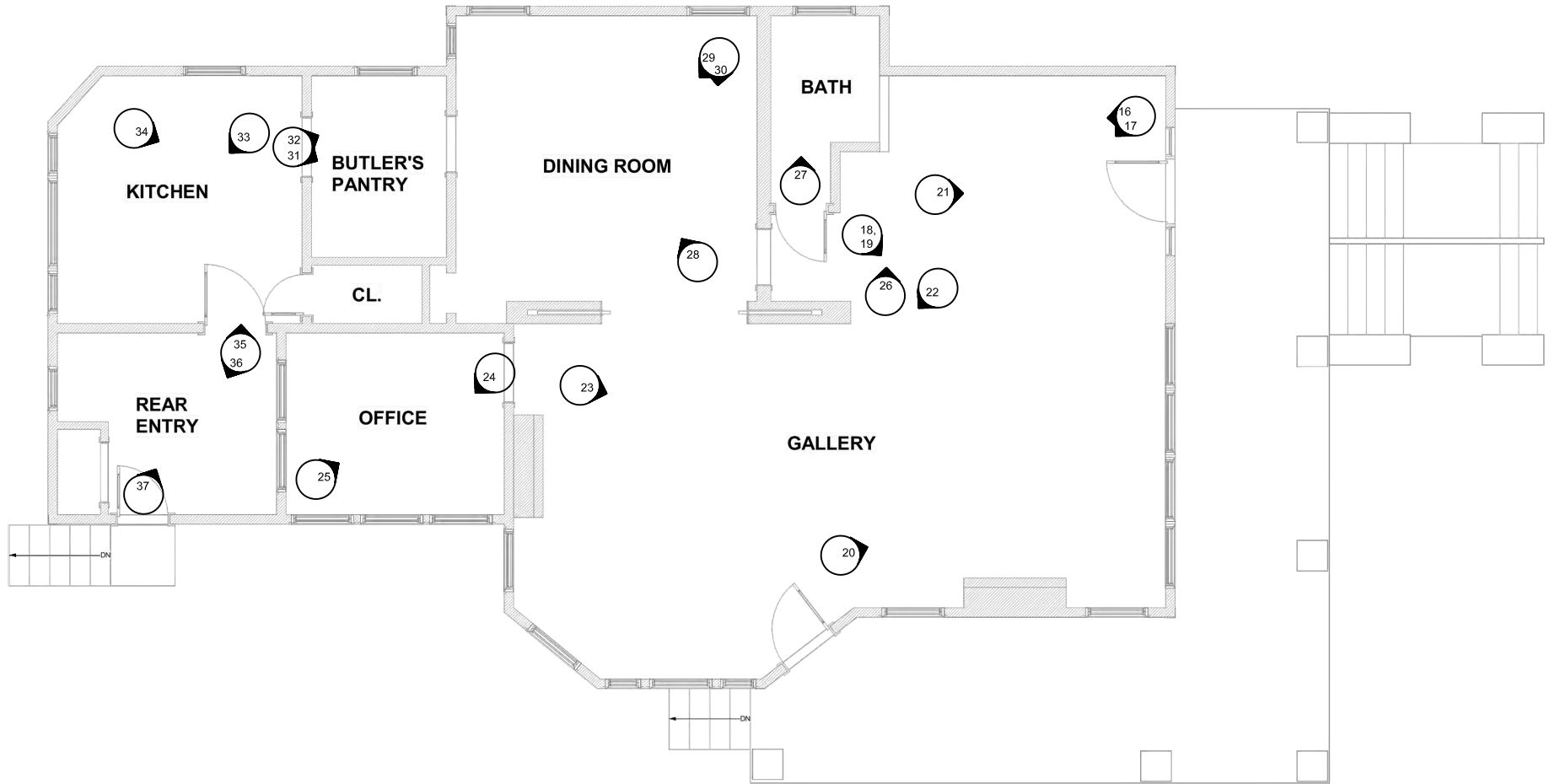


**PRELIMINARY NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY APPLICATION**  
**Kiah Museum, 505 West 36<sup>th</sup> Street**  
**Chatham County, Savannah, Georgia**

**List of Supporting Documentation:**

- Recent Color Photographs
- Current Site Plan, Floor Plan, Photo Key
- Parcel Location Map, Site Aerial Map
- Cuyler-Brownville NRHP Historic District Map
- Chatham County Board of Assessors Property Record Card
- Illustrated History, including details of Cadastral Survey and 1916 (updated through 1953) and 1955 (updated through 1966) Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps
- Historic Photographs
- History and Significance
- Physical Description

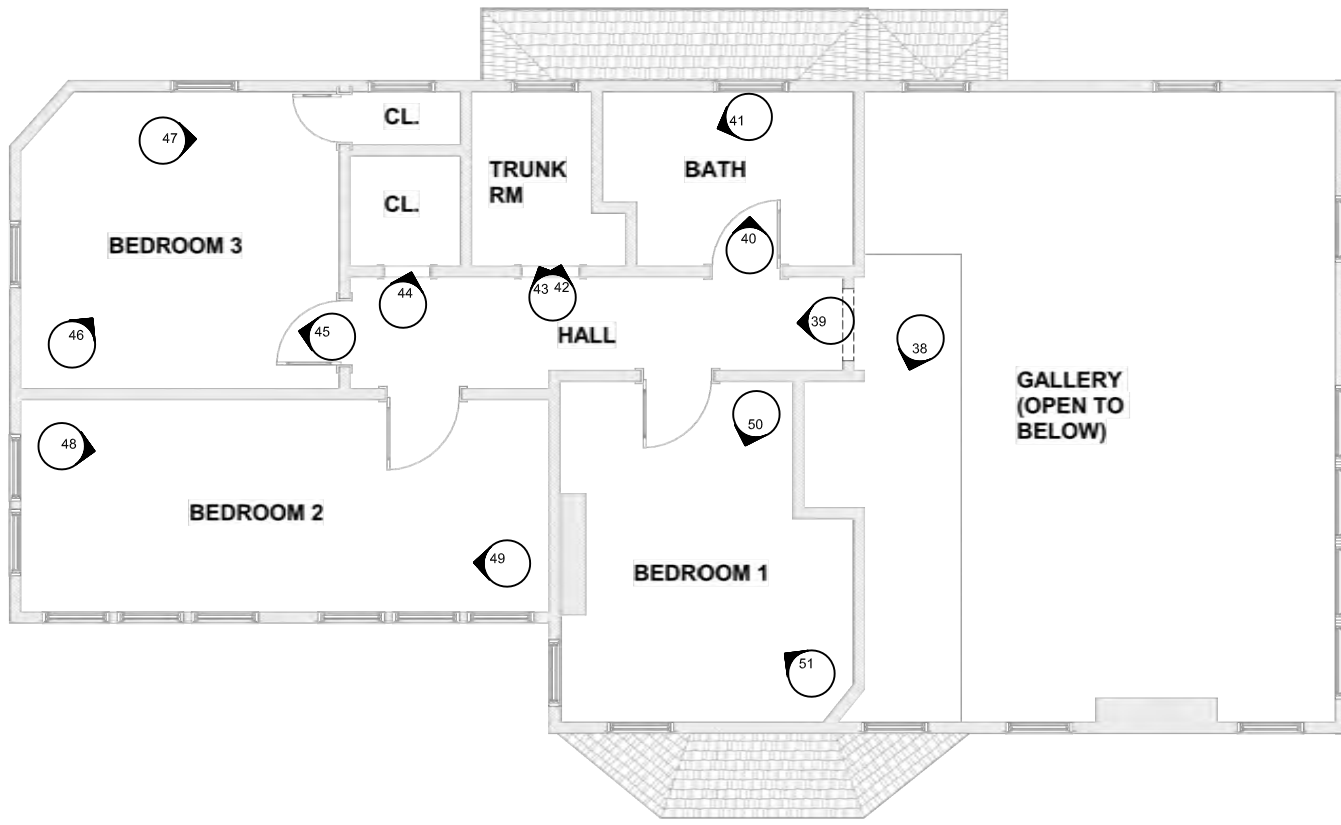




1. FIRST FLOOR

Photo Key - NRHP Eligibility  
505 West 36th Street, Savannah, GA



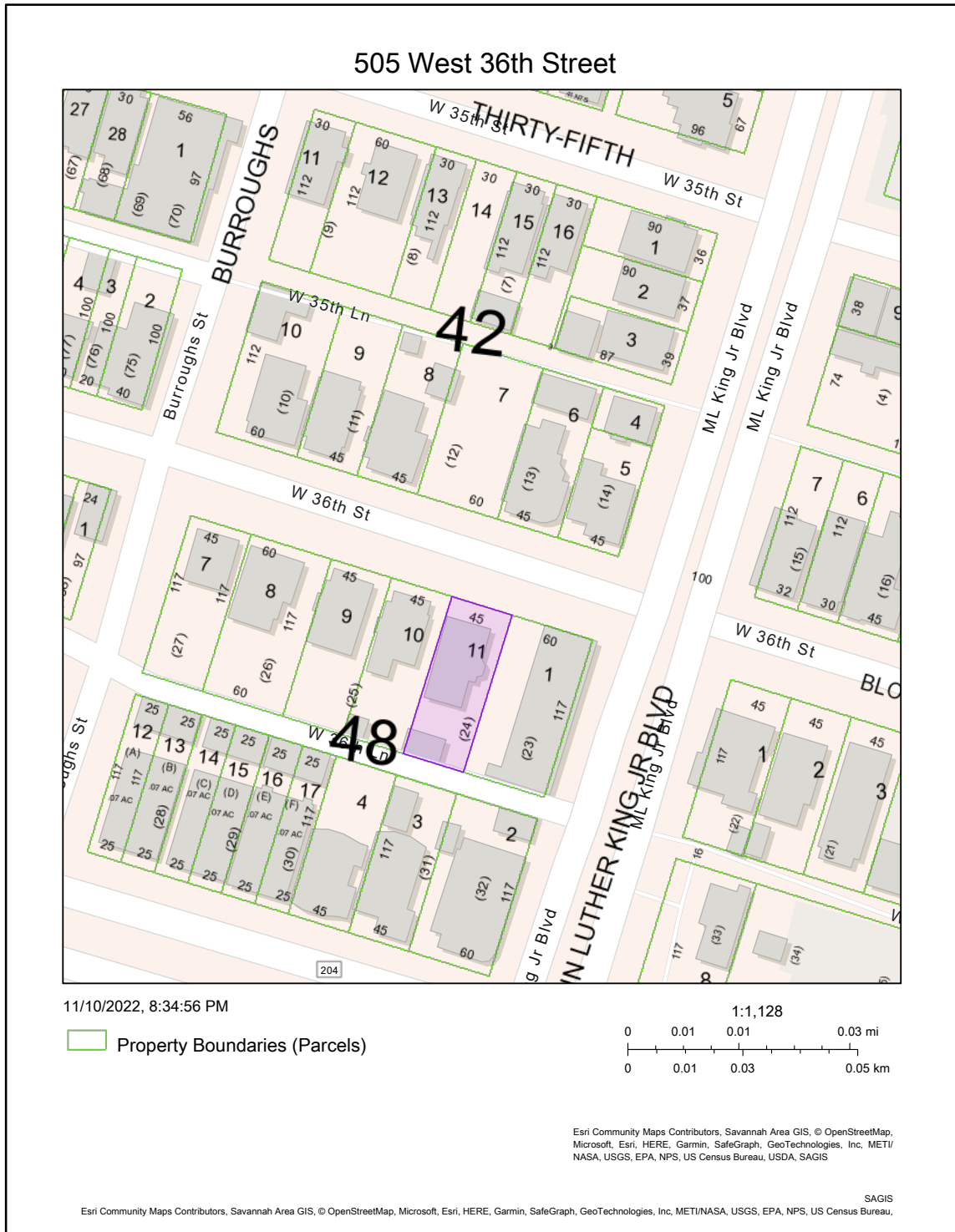


1. SECOND FLOOR

Photo Key - NRHP Eligibility  
 505 West 36th Street, Savannah, GA

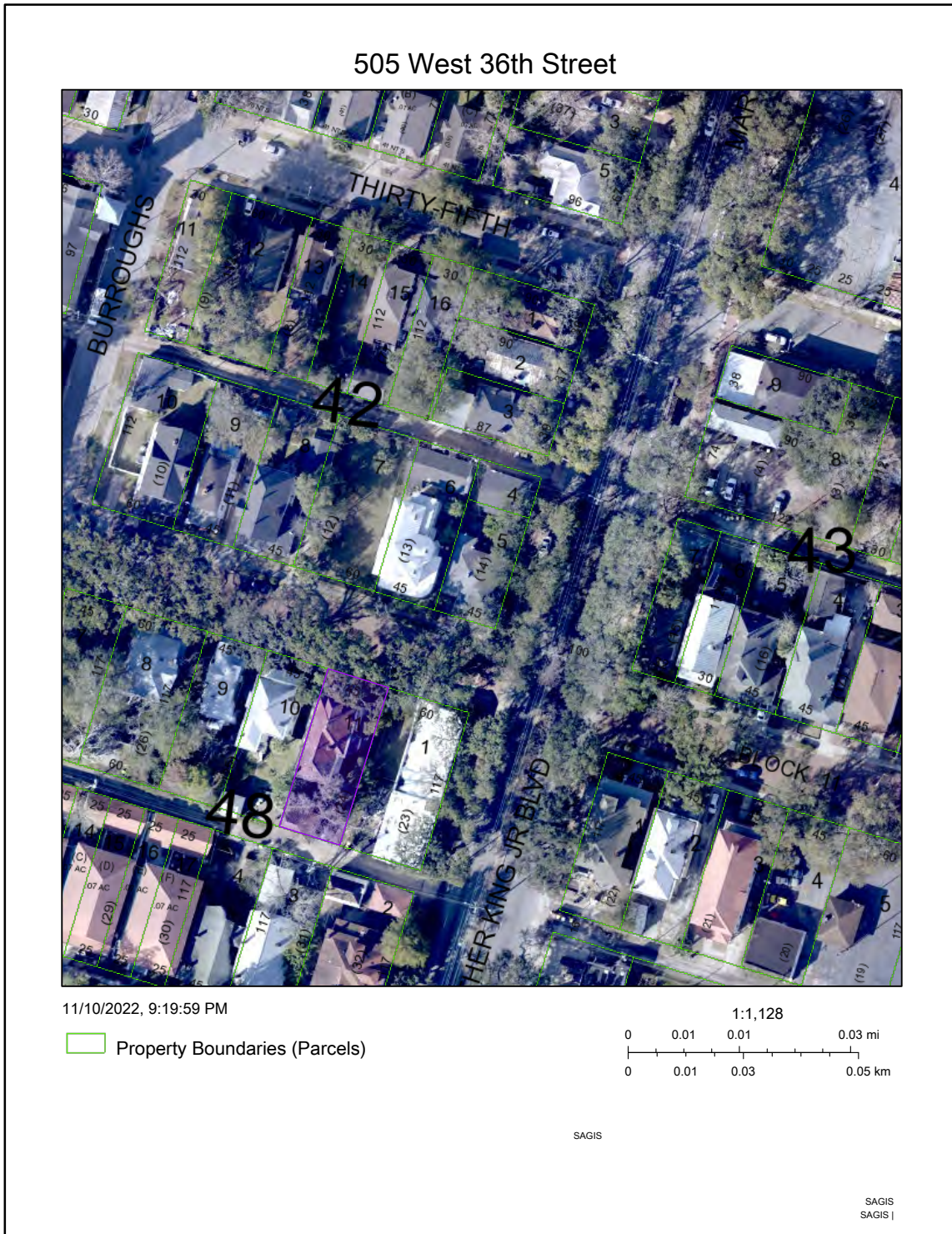


**CHATHAM COUNTY TAX ASSESSOR PARCEL LOCATION MAP**



Chatham County Tax Assessor Parcel Map detail showing the Kiah House Museum at 505 West 35<sup>th</sup> Street, Savannah, Georgia

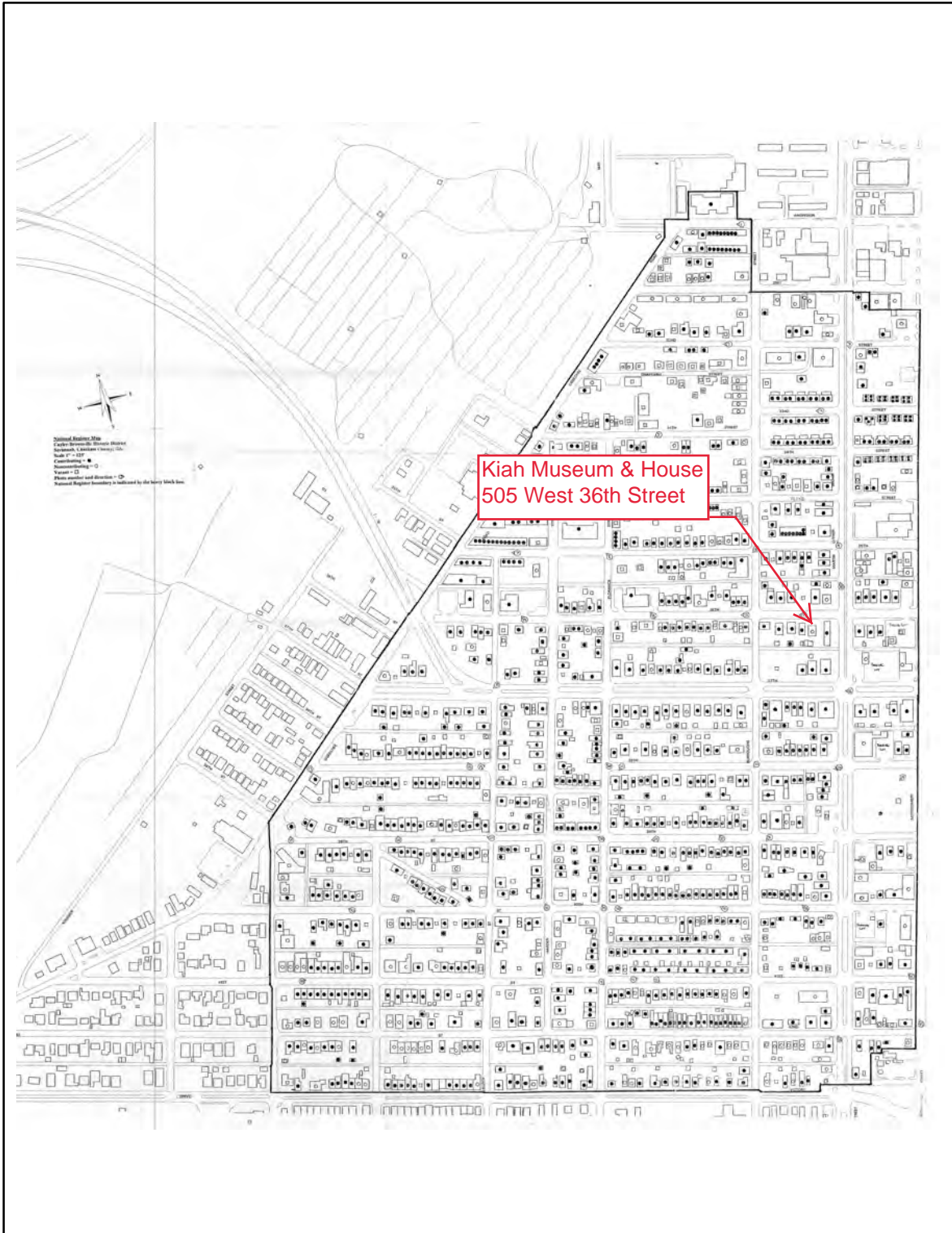
**CHATHAM COUNTY TAX ASSESSOR AERIAL LOCATION MAP**



Chatham County Tax Assessor Aerial Location Map detail showing the Kiah House Museum at 505 West 35<sup>th</sup> Street, Savannah, Georgia



NRHP Preliminary Eligibility Application  
Kiah Museum, Chatham County  
Savannah, Georgia

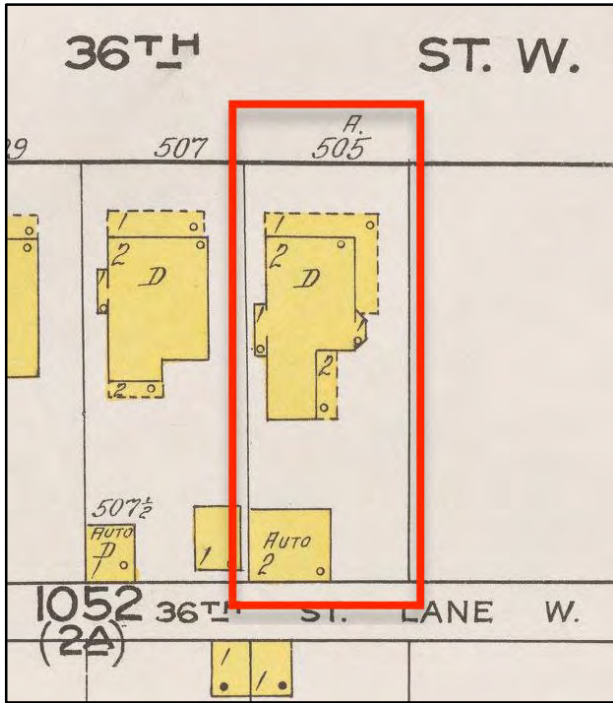


|   |   |  |                             |                               |                      |           |   |
|---|---|--|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|---|
| <b>2018 Chatham County Board of Assessors</b> |   |  |                             | <b>2-0066-48-011</b>          |                      |           |   |
| <b>Property Record Card</b>                   |   |  |                             | <b>505 W 36TH ST SAVANNAH</b> |                      |           |   |
| APPRaiser                                     | EPORTER                                     | EAST THREE FOURTHS OF LOT 24 DUNCAN WARD | KIAH VIRGINIA JACKSON TRUST | CAMA                          | ASMT                 |           |   |
| LAST INSP                                     | 01/08/2018                                  |  | C/O LESTER B JOHNSON III    | 9,000                         | 9,000                | LAND      | 1   |
| APPR ZONE                                     | 000004                                      |  | PO BOX 8285                 | 33,500                        | 33,500               | BLDG      | 2   |
|   |   |  | SAVANNAH GA 31412-8285      |                               |                      | OBXF      | 0   |
|   |   |  |                             | 42,500                        | 42,500               | Cost - MS |   |
| <b>SALES</b>                                  |   |  | <b>CODES</b>                |                               |                      |           |   |
| BOOK / PAGE                                   | INS VI QU RSN PRICE                         |  | PROPERTY USE                | 0006                          | RESIDENTIAL          |           |   |
| 10 Jan 1995                                   | 172Y 0573 NA I U U5                         |  | UTA                         | 0002                          | Savannah             |           |   |
| GRANTOR: KIAH VIRGINIA J                      |   |  | NBHD                        | 008133.00                     | H133 HOPKINS-FLORENC |           |   |
| GRANTEE: KIAH VIRGINIA J TRUST                |   |  | <b>EXEMPTIONS</b>           |                               |                      |           |   |
| <b>COMMENTS:</b>                              |   |  | <b>HISTORY</b>              |                               |                      |           |   |
| 26 Nov 2014                                   | TY15 HS REMVD/HS                            |  | 2017                        | 6,600                         | 33,300               | 39,900    | Cama  |
|   | BOARDED UPSINCE 2001                        |  | 2016                        | 6,600                         | 32,400               | 39,000    | Cama  |
| 08 Dec 2000                                   | ADD CHG PER P/OFF 12-8-00/BS                |  | 2015                        | 6,600                         | 32,400               | 39,000    | Cama  |
| 21 Nov 2000                                   | TY96 ADEV/D 173Y270 8-7-95; 2000 BOE APPEAL |  | 2014                        | 13,200                        | 39,500               | 52,700    | Cama  |
|   |   |  | 2013                        | 13,200                        | 40,200               | 53,400    | Cama  |
|   |   |  | 2012                        | 13,200                        | 36,300               | 49,500    | Cama  |
|   |   |  | 2011                        | 13,200                        | 41,700               | 54,900    | Cama  |
|   |   |  | 2010                        | 21,000                        | 43,500               | 64,500    | MAV   |
|   |   |  | 2009                        | 21,000                        | 43,500               | 64,500    | Over  |
|   |   |  | 2008                        | 52,000                        | 51,000               | 103,000   | Cama  |
|   |   |  | 2007                        | 29,000                        | 51,000               | 80,000    | Cama  |
|   |   |  | 2006                        | 10,500                        | 52,000               | 62,500    | Cama  |
|   |   |  | 2005                        | 10,500                        | 54,500               | 65,000    | Cama  |
|   |   |  | 2004                        | 10,500                        | 58,500               | 69,000    | Cama  |
|   |   |  | 2003                        | 10,500                        | 58,500               | 69,000    | Cama  |
|   |   |  | 2002                        | 26,500                        | 15,850               | 42,350    | Over  |
|   |   |  | 2001                        | 26,500                        | 15,850               | 42,350    | Over  |
|   |   |  | 2000                        |                               |                      | 42,350    | A/C   |
|   |   |  | 1999                        | 13,160                        | 29,190               | 42,350    | Over  |
|   |   |  | 1998                        | 13,160                        | 29,190               | 42,350    | Over  |
|   |   |  | 1997                        | 13,160                        | 29,190               | 42,350    | Over  |
|   |   |  | 1996                        | 13,160                        | 29,190               | 42,350    | Over  |
|   |   |  | 1995                        | 13,160                        | 29,190               | 42,350    | Over  |
|   |   |  | 1994                        | 13,160                        | 29,190               | 42,350    | Over  |
|   |   |  | 1993                        | 13,160                        | 29,190               | 42,350    | Over  |
|   |   |  | 1992                        | 13,160                        | 29,190               | 42,350    | Over  |
| <b>LAND</b>                                   |   |  |                             |                               |                      |           |   |
| ID#   | USE DESC                                    | FRONT                                    | DEPTH                       | UNITS / TYPE                  | PRICE                | ZONING    | LCTN TOPO OTHER ADJ1 ADJ2 ADJ3 ADJ4 MKT VALUE |
| 62321   | SINGLE FAMILY RES                           | 45                                       | 117                         | 1.00-LT                       | 9000.00              | RB        |   |





**ILLUSTRATED HISTORY.** North at top.

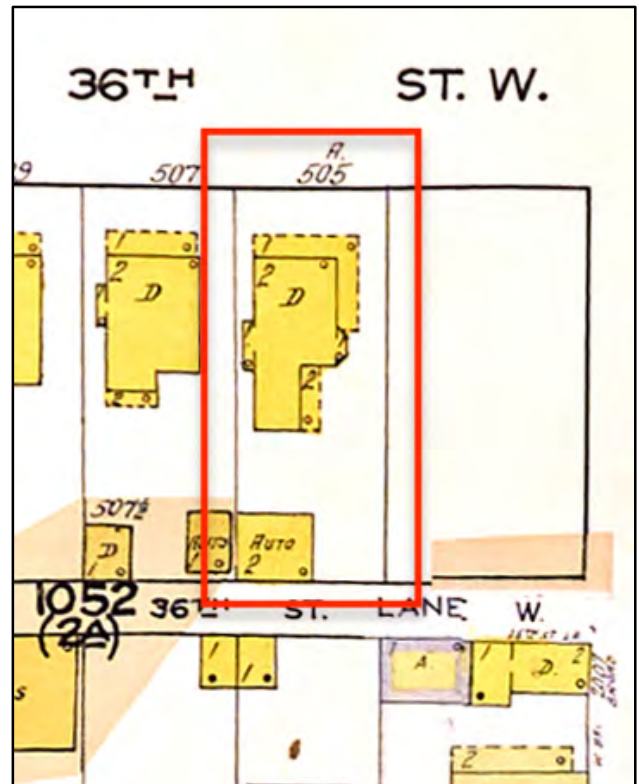


**1916**

This detail from the 1916 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows the subject property outlined in red. The now demolished first story wraparound porch is clearly visible, along with the two-story porch at the southwest corner of the lot and the two-story accessory at the lane. Source: Digital Library of Georgia: [http://dlg.usg.edu/collection/dlg\\_sanb](http://dlg.usg.edu/collection/dlg_sanb)

**1953**

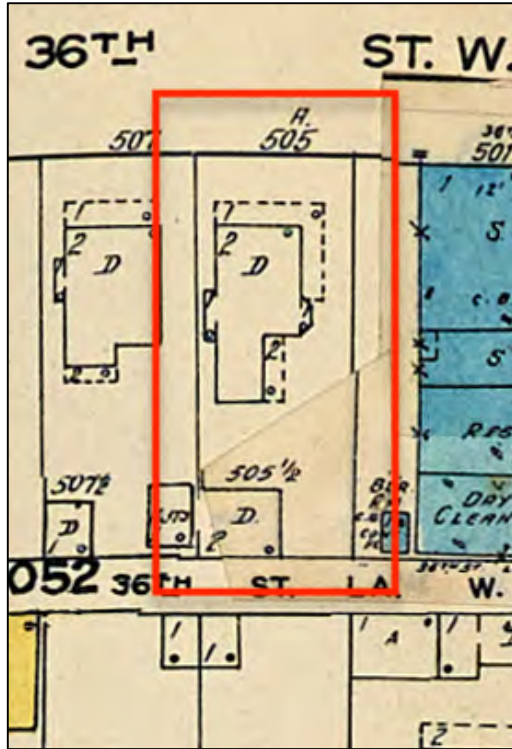
The Savannah 1916 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps were updated in 1953 with paste-ins for properties that underwent physical changes during that period. This detail of the subject property clearly shows that no major changes occurred during this period. Source: City of Savannah Municipal Archives: <http://www.savannahga.gov/3291/Sanborn-Fire-Insurance-Maps-for-Savannah>



**Cadastral Survey, 1937**

This plan view from the Chatham County Cadastral Survey shows the now-demolished wraparound front porch, hipped roof and open porch at the southeast corner. *Source: Chatham County Courthouse Clerk of Superior Court.*

|   |                     |   |                       |  |                          |
|---|---------------------|---|-----------------------|--|--------------------------|
| WARD..... <u>DUNCAN</u> .....                                 |                     | <b>SAVANNAH CADASTRAL SURVEY</b>                |                       | SURVEYED BY..... <u>TORRENSE</u> ..... |                          |
| LOT No.'s..... <u>2457</u> .....                              |                     | HOUSE No..... <u>505</u> .....                  |                       | DATE..... <u>1-19-37</u> .....         |                          |
| ADDRESS..... <u>505 W. 36th St.</u> .....                     |                     | <b>W.P.A. OF GA.</b>                            |                       | CHECKED BY.....                        |                          |
|   |                     | <b>CHATHAM COUNTY</b>                           |                       |  |                          |
| <u>Block # 3.</u>   |                     |   |                       |  |                          |
| TYPE <u>RES.</u> STORIES <u>2</u> CONDITION <u>G</u> USE Base |                     | <b>FIELD SKETCH</b><br>Improvements <u>46.3</u> |                       |  |                          |
| OCCUPANTS: W <u>X</u> C..... <u>0</u> .....                   |                     |   |                       |  |                          |
| FOUNDATION  | Stone.....          | EXT. TRIM                                       | Unpainted.....        | WINDOWS                                | Wd. Frame..... <u>X</u>  |
|   | Conc.....           |   | Painted..... <u>X</u> |  | Met. Frame.....          |
|   | Conc. Blk.....      |   | Plain.....            |  | Ord. Glass..... <u>X</u> |
|   | Brick..... <u>X</u> |   | Ornamental.....       |  | Plate Glass.....         |
| Wood.....   | Wood..... <u>X</u>  | Brick.....                                      | Attic                 | Yes.....                               | ATTIC                    |
| Piers..... <u>X</u>   | Stone.....          | Stone.....                                      | No..... <u>X</u>      |  |                          |
| Walls..... <u>X</u>   |                     |   |                       |  |                          |
| BASE  | None..... <u>X</u>  | ROOF  | Gable.....            | INTERIOR                               | Plumbing.....            |
|   | Part.....           |   | Hip..... <u>X</u>     |  | Lighting.....            |
|   | Full.....           |   | Mansard.....          |  | Heating.....             |
|   | Conc. Floor.....    |   | Flat.....             |  | Rooms.....               |
| EXT. WALLS  | Frame..... <u>X</u> | ROOF MATERIALS                                  | Gambrel.....          | TIN                                    | <u>X</u>                 |
|   | Com. Brick.....     |   | Shed.....             |  |                          |
|   | Com. Br. Ven.....   |   | Segment.....          |  |                          |
|   | Face Br. Ven.....   |   |                       |  |                          |
|   | Stucco Wd.....      |   |                       |  |                          |
|   | Stucco Met.....     |   |                       |  |                          |
|   | Kellastone.....     |   |                       |  |                          |
|   | Cut Stone.....      |   |                       |  |                          |
|   | Field Stone.....    |   |                       |  |                          |
|   | Iron Sheet.....     |   |                       |  |                          |
| Cor. Iron.....  |                     |   |                       |  |                          |
| Sheathing.....  |                     |   |                       |  |                          |
| Description of  |                     |   | Remarks:              |  |                          |
| Out Buildings:  |                     |   |                       |  |                          |
| <u>2 STORY CAR. BGR. HOUSE</u>                                |                     |   |                       |  |                          |
| <u>TIN ROOF</u>   |                     |   |                       |  |                          |
| <u>18.6 X 21 X ?</u>  |                     |   |                       |  |                          |



**1966**

This 1955 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map was revised through 1966. Although this detail of the subject property does not indicate changes from previous map years, many accounts record that the front porch had been removed by this time. Source: City of Savannah Municipal Archives:

<http://www.savannahga.gov/3291/Sanborn-Fire-Insurance-Maps-for-Savannah>



**Kiah Museum and House, Exterior View 1960s**

This exterior view is looking southwest from 36<sup>th</sup> Street. The 1959 alterations to the house are clearly visible in this view. Source: Courtesy of Dr. Deborah Johnson-Simon, African Diaspora Museology Institute Founder and CEO.





Staff Photos by Don Hardigree  
**MRS. KIAH SHOWS ANJANETTE YOUNG, 9, OLD INSTRUMENT**  
 House-Museum Has Varied Collection of Art and Artifacts

## Her Interest in Fine Art Created a New Museum

By **NANCY ANCRUM**  
 Staff Writer  
 Mrs. Virginia Kiah used to be a public school art teacher. She's still a teacher, but in a highly personal, unsponsored style that keeps her "students" tripping freely up the stairs of the Kiah Museum, where art and beauty take the place of books.

Back in 1936, Mrs. Kiah started collecting antiques, sculpture, her own paintings, paintings by others and the remains of well-known Savannah buildings.

She opened the museum in 1959 in the large home at 505 W. 36th which she shares with her husband, Dr. Calvin Kiah, dean of faculty at Savannah State College.

Neighborhood children flock there in the summer and during after-school hours to hear her animated comments on the art works and to amuse themselves in the company of a flaming feathered macaw from South America and an aquarium of sea creatures.

Materials from at least 10 Savannah buildings are exhibited at the museum. Hinges on the front door came from the old Pape School, and a ceiling plaster medallion is from the St. John the Divine Cathedral nun's school. Other odds and ends are from the Odeon and Bijou Theaters, Commercial Bank, the old DeSoto Hotel, the old Adler Department Store and from the Charles Ellis, Eppinger-Dunlap, Sheftell and Leopold Adler houses.

Among the gifts to the Kiah Museum are an African collection of original carved pieces and a rare William Johnson painting given by the Harmon Foundation of New York.

Mrs. Kiah is a graduate of the Philadelphia Museum and School of Art. She has also studied at the University of Pennsylvania, the New York Art Student's League and Columbia University.

**Frame**  
 Mrs. Kiah said that when she painted a prize-winning portrait of the actress Paulette Goddard, she and Mr. Kiah were both students and couldn't afford a proper frame for the oil.

"I just stuck four pieces of wood around the picture and there they are still," she said.

Paulette Goddard smiles as brightly as when the artist took fourth prize in a Columbia Motion Pictures Corp. contest, and doesn't seem to mind the frame.



**MACAW FASCINATES DAVID FAGGINS, 10**  
 Children Visit House Summers; After School

### Savannah Morning News Article, October 5, 1969

Source: Bull Street Library, Kaye Kole Genealogy and Local History Room, Vertical File: Savannah-Museums.





**Exterior View, 1970s**

This view looking south from 36<sup>th</sup> Street clearly shows the large front window added in 1959 and a Kiah Museum sign on the front porch. *Source: Courtesy of Dr. Deborah Johnson-Simon, African Diaspora Museology Institute Founder and CEO.*





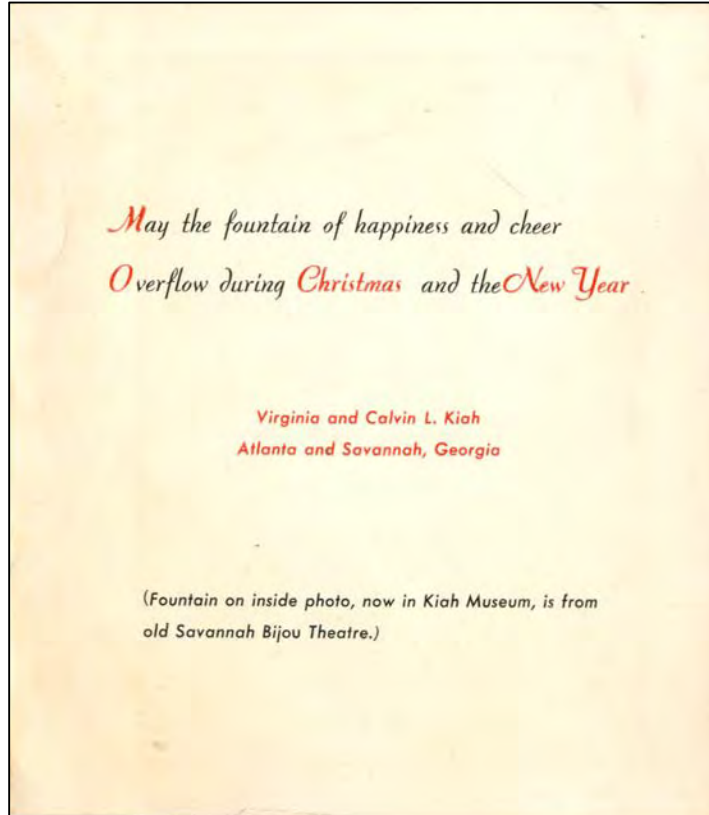
**Virginia Kiah and Dr. Calvin Kiah with Portrait of Dr. Calvin Kiah,  
Painted by Virginia Kiah**

*Source: Courtesy of Dr. Deborah Johnson-Simon, African Diaspora  
Museology Institute Founder and CEO.*



**Exterior View, 1970s**

*Source: Dr. Deborah Johnson-Simon, African Diaspora  
Museology Institute Founder and CEO.*



**Undated Christmas Card Front and Back from Virginia and Calvin L. Kiah**

Source: Courtesy of Dr. Deborah Johnson-Simon, African Diaspora Museology Institute  
Founder and CEO.



**1970s Interior View of Gallery**

This view shows the staircase in the Gallery, including the newel posts and railing that are now missing, and various works of art and objects on display in the Kiah Museum. *Courtesy of Dr. Deborah Johnson-Simon, African Diaspora Museology Institute Founder and CEO.*

**1970s Interior View of Gallery**

This view shows visitors to the Kiah Museum in the main Gallery space. *Courtesy of Dr. Deborah Johnson-Simon, African Diaspora Museology Institute Founder and CEO.*







**Savannah Morning News Article, February 15, 1973**

Source: Courtesy of Dr. Deborah Johnson-Simon, African Diaspora Museology Institute Founder and CEO.



**Photo of Virginia Kiah with Jimmy Carter, October 24, 1974**

Presentation of the award in recognition of outstanding cooperation - U.N. Day observance 1974 by the Georgia Committee for U.N. Day Observance, Leah Janus, chair. Left to right: Mr. [illegible] Jones, Ida Brittain Patterson, Leah Shapiro Janus, Virginia Jackson Kiah, Louise Gerrity Vollertsen, and Dr. Vivian Henderson, president of Clark College (now Clark Atlanta University). *Source: The Breman Museum. Courtesy of Dr. Deborah Johnson-Simon, African Diaspora Museology Institute Founder and CEO.*



Savannah - Museums *camp 10/8*

Savannah Public Library

*JUL 1 2 1977*  
**The  
Museum  
Association  
of  
Savannah**

*mailed questions to all*

- Cunningham Historic Center
- Davenport House
- Factors' Walk Military Museum
- First African Baptist Church Museum
- Fort Jackson Museum
- Fort King George Historic Site
- Fort McAllister
- Fort Pulaski National Monument
- The Georgia Salzburger Museum
- Juliette Gordon Low Girl Scout National Center
- Kiah Museum
- Midway Museum
- Museum of Antique Dolls
- Museum of Sunday School Heritage
- Oatland Island Education Center
- Owens-Thomas House
- Savannah Science Museum
- Savannah Volunteer Guards Museum
- Ships of the Sea Museum
- Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences, Inc.
- Tic-Toc Museum
- Tybee Museum
- United Daughters of the Confederacy Museum
- The University of Georgia
- Marine Resources Extension Center

*Museums of Savannah and the Coastal Area of Georgia provide a rich source of historic, artistic, and cultural experiences for their visitors.*

**Juliette Gordon Low  
Girl Scout National Center**  
142 Bull St. - Mail: 11 York Lane E. 31401  
(912) 233-4501

The Wayne-Gordon House (1818) at the Juliette Gordon Low Girl Scout National Center was the birthplace of Juliette Low, founder of Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. The English Regency house and its garden have been restored to the 1860's-1870's period of Juliette's girlhood. As a National Historic Landmark, the Center is of interest to Girl Scouts and the general public.

Special programs for visiting Girl Scout Troops BY RESERVATION ONLY.

Open daily 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and on Sunday 2:00 to 4:30 p.m. Closed Wednesday, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day, and Sundays in January.

Registered Girl Scouts: Adults, 75¢; Girls, 50¢.

Non-Girl Scouts: Adults, \$1.50; under 18, 75¢; under 6, free.



*mailed* **Kiah Museum**

505 West 36th Street  
(912) 236-8544

A museum to interest all ages. Exhibits include antique furniture, china, glass and silver, Indian artifacts, antebellum and Civil War items excavated in Savannah and Washington, D.C., art works from the 15th century, and the Harmon Foundation African Art collection. The Kiah Museum also features some personal effects of the actress Marie Dressler and the family scrap book (circa 1831) of Henry Ford.

Open on Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., first and third weeks each month, and other days by appointment. Closed July and August.  
No admission charge.

**The Museum Association of Savannah Guide, 1977**

Source: Bull Street Library, Kaye Kole Genealogy and Local History Room, Vertical File: Savannah-Museums.



ISLANDS BRANCH LIBRARY Pamphlet Savannah Museums

# Arts & Entertainment

Savannah News-Press ■ Sunday, February 16, 1986 Section G

## VIRGINIA JACKSON KIAH



Pencil Drawing, Left, and Oil Painting by Virginia Kiah

### Artist Realized Her Childhood Dream

By FRANK YOUNG  
Staff Writer

Enter the Kiah Museum on West 36th Street and you will encounter a little of everything — from a 15 million-year-old fossil to exquisite Nigerian sculpture. It's a world of its own, cluttered with historical, artistic and eccentric items. But as fascinating as the museum is, chances are you'll find its contents pale in the shadow of its founder and owner, Virginia Jackson Kiah.

Ms. Kiah, 74, opened her "museum for the masses" in 1959, fulfilling an ambition that stretched back to her childhood. "When I was very young I wanted to be an artist. I loved to draw and make carvings of people especially." As a black child living in a yet-to-be-integrated United States, she was disappointed to find that blacks were unable to visit and enjoy art galleries and museums. "My mother told me, 'Someday you will be an artist and you will also have your own museum.'"

She has made good on both counts. As a young child, she and the rest of the family traveled over 28 states, lecturing, singing and showing inspirational films.

Her mother, Dr. Lilly Mae Jackson, tiring of the bleak existence of life on the road, eventually insisted that the

See VIRGINIA, Page 9C

**Savannah Morning News Feature, February 16, 1986 (Front Page)**

Source: Bull Street Library, Kaye Kole Genealogy and Local History Room, Vertical File: Savannah-Museums.



...of the eighteenth century, is other attraction is the 1500s, Moorish citadel, the Alcazar. In the narrow streets of the Jewish section is a tiny synagogue - now being restored but still open - dating to the

painters. A 300-foot-high minaret, the Giralda, forms part of the cathedral. Santa Cruz, the former Jewish quarter, offers craft workshops near little squares shaded by trees. During the city's main event, the Feria, from April 15 to 20, there will

among its components. The visitor should also consider the 14th-century Generalife, the summer palace of kings noted for its terraced water gardens, and the Carthusian Monastery, which includes a sanctuary inlaid with multicolored marble.

bought in Europe and is valid in several countries?  
Answer: There is a pass called Rail Europe S (for women aged 60 and over and men 61 and over) that entitles the holder to travel at reduced rates in 19 countries, but it is only available to people who have

day. Senior Citizen Pass B, at \$45, brings 50 percent reductions every day. The cards can be used for first- and second-class travel. The Swiss Railroads has a Senior Half-Fare Travel Card allowing 50 percent reductions in first or second for a year. It costs \$37. France has a simi-

\*\*\*  
Readers are invited to send written questions about travel to Q&A, Travel Section, The New York Times, 229 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. Questions may be answered only through the column, not by mail or telephone.

# Virginia Kiah Realized Dream of Owning Museum

Continued From Page 1G

family settle down. It was then that Ms. Kiah began pursuing an artistic career in earnest. Studying at the Philadelphia Museum and School of Art, which she describes as "a place I really loved," she graduated in 1931, having won scholarships for two years of schooling.

After marrying Calvin Kiah in 1932, she went through several years of rough living as she and her husband struggled for recognition and dignity. "We were determined to be independent," she said.

Kiah was forced to take a low-paying job selling insurance as they both attempted to complete their college studies, he working toward a degree in education.

Studying at the Art Students' League in New York City, Ms. Kiah fell under the temporary influences of her instructors. "I was the only black woman artist who specialized in portraiture," she said, "and I was very determined to make a name for myself. I also wanted to study under famous, established artists." Among her instructors were Herbert Brackman, Vincent Drummond and Reginald Marsh.

One of the paintings in her museum, "Old Man," dates from the Art Students' League period. "I had been in Robert Brackman's advanced class for some weeks, but had received no criticism of my work. I began to wonder, 'What is this all about? No criticism yet!'"

"While I was working at the easel, putting the finishing touches on the portrait, the voice of Brackman rang out behind me in the stillness of the room - 'NOW THAT'S A PAINTING!'"

Despite such encouragement, Ms. Kiah soon chafed under the tutelage of her instructors. "I was making progress, but I felt that my work wasn't really original. I switched from instructor to instructor, but found myself emulating their styles. I felt that maybe I could merge many styles into one that would be mine."



VIRGINIA KIAH: In Her Museum

something in them - impressions of their personalities, or of their vigor - and I would be moved to paint accordingly."

Through this artistic approach, Ms. Kiah managed to vividly capture the soul of her subjects. Besides portraits, she delved into scenes of street life, including "Feeding the Pigeons at Columbus Square, New York City," which cap-

tures the fluttering, excited quality of incoming birds through an exultant arc of crisp, impressionistic brush strokes.

Ms. Kiah soon became a noted portrait painter, despite some initial misgivings on the part of galleries. "There was this feeling like, 'We don't want to exhibit black work because it's not quality work.' I felt I really had to prove myself."

Her works were entered in shows in Philadelphia and New York as early as 1929, and she had her first solo exhibit at the New York Baptist Ministers' Conference in 1936.

In 1937, she won fourth prize in a national competition sponsored by Columbia Pictures for one of their films, "Anna Lucasta." "They didn't offer any sort of cash prize for fourth place, but I suppose the recognition was worth something."

By 1939, her works had been exhibited nationally, but the Kiahs were still struggling financially. When her husband was drafted during World War II, Ms. Kiah rented a chicken farm near Petersburg, Va., spending an exhausting summer raising 1,500 chicks to selling size.

Despite myriad setbacks, she continued painting, propping uncompleted canvases on chair backs when she was too poor to afford an easel. Her subjects included many of Maryland's prominent black patriots, Carl Murphy, president of the black newspaper Afro-American, NAACP pioneer George Murphy and Mary McLeod Bethune, co-founder of the Bethune-Cookman college in Daytona Beach, Fla.

Perhaps her most famous subject was President Dwight D. Eisenhower, whom she painted with the help of a friend of hers, L. E. Toomer, a black treasury officer. "It was my way of thanking the President for hiring an Afro-American in a nationally responsible position. It was a great honor to paint the President and to be recognized for my effort."

By 1951, Kiah had completed his studies, graduating from Columbia University with a doctorate and accepting a position as associate professor and chairman of Savannah State College's education department. Ms. Kiah had completed her education with a B.A. and M.A. from Columbia. Teaching in Savannah's public schools from 1951 to 1963, she began collecting the art-

works and artifacts that would eventually comprise her museum, which opened Nov. 28, 1999.

Ms. Kiah had a definite concept for the museum. It was to be a "museum for the masses" - one that would cater to all conceivable tastes and interests. There is little white on the displays. Items are not categorically grouped, but displayed as individual objects. If one thing doesn't hold your interest, there's certainly something right beside it that will.

"This museum is a teaching museum. What I've learned in my art and my teaching of art I have applied to the museum. Everything here is me - the results of my experiences, my way of looking at things."

There is a proliferation of art works, ranging from a small engraving by Albrecht Durer to elegant Haitian and Tanganyikan carvings, early American primitive paintings and many of Ms. Kiah's own works, including a self-portrait done in a painstaking pointillist style.

There are beautiful examples of antique furniture and such decidedly offbeat exhibits as a collection of memorabilia from 1936 movie fa-

vorite Marie ("Toughest Annie") Dressler, donated by the actress' traveling companion and butler, who lives in Savannah.

The museum is open by appointment only Tuesdays and Thursdays. In recent years, Ms. Kiah has developed several programs to aid young black artists, including the International Student Artists Collection, a nationally circulated exhibit of student works from all parts of the world.

Ms. Kiah has won many awards, including seven nominations for the National Conference of Artists' Distinguished Merit Award from 1968 to 1972, a YMCA achievement award for creating and promoting a national art history show in 1955, the Links Distinguished Merit Award in 1970, a 1978 Rockefeller Community Service Award from Princeton University in 1978 and the sponsoring of a Virginia Kiah Merit Award by the National Conference of Artists in 1977.

As ever, she is supportive of aspiring creative minds and offers this advice: "Don't let anything discourage you. Stick to it, even if you don't get the breaks at first."

## Savannah Morning News Feature, February 16, 1986 (Continued from Front Page)

Source: Bull Street Library, Kaye Kole Genealogy and Local History Room, Vertical File: Savannah Museums.



**Exterior View, 2013**

Note that the side porch was still intact as late as 2013. *Source: Courtesy of Dr. Deborah Johnson-Simon, African Diaspora Museology Institute Founder and CEO.*

**Exterior View, Ca. 2020**

This view features a painting by local artist, Scott Stanton (aka Panhandle Slim), mounted to the building. *Courtesy of Dr. Deborah Johnson-Simon, African Diaspora Museology Institute Founder and CEO.*







**Photograph of Unveiling of New Historical Marker for Kiah House Museum, 2022**

*Source: Savannah Morning News, May 09, 2022. Photo by Rich Burkhardt.*



## HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

*Provide a brief chronological history of the property including its usage, past owners, and development over time. Why is the property important? When was it important? Why do you think that the property meets the National Register Criteria that you checked on page 1?*

The Kiah Museum at 505 West 36<sup>th</sup> Street appears eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) at the local level under Criterion A for Social History and Black Ethnic Heritage as the first African American museum in Savannah and under Criterion B in the areas of Art, and Education, for its association with Virginia West Jackson Kiah and Dr. Calvin Lycurgus Kiah, “pioneers in the Black cultural and museum movement” and the founders of the Kiah Museum (ADMI 2021). Constructed in 1913, the large two-story Queen Anne residential building was remodeled in 1959 into a combined residence and museum for the community by its owners, Virginia and Dr. Calvin Kiah. Located within the historically Black West Savannah neighborhood of Cuyler-Brownville, the nationally-recognized Kiah Museum was the first African American museum in Savannah. The informal museum offered local youth the opportunity to visit a public and admission-free museum within a familiar and comfortable context during a significant period of racial segregation and discrimination in the United States. A skilled and nationally-recognized portrait painter, Virginia Kiah was inspired to open a “museum for the masses” based upon her own experience of being excluded from visiting museums as a Black child during the era of Jim Crow in Baltimore, Maryland. Virginia and Calvin Kiah were passionate community activists who used art and education as their contribution to local civil rights efforts, opening up their own home to give “African American youth a window into a world of imagination and artistic acceptance that was not allowed anywhere else in the city (ADMI).” The museum featured paintings, sculptures, furniture, china, fossils, architectural elements, and other diverse collections appealing to a broad range of interests (Ethos research paper). The Kiah Museum served the local community until Virginia’s death in 2001 and remains a revered community landmark that many Black Savannahians credit with having a significant impact on their lives as young people (ADMI).

Occupying the eastern three-quarters of Lot 24, Duncan Ward, the building is currently a non-contributing building within the Cuyler-Brownville National Register Historic District, designated in 1998 (NRHP 1998). The building was significantly altered in 1959 during its conversion to a museum, and some of its exterior character-defining features fall outside of the district’s period of significance (1867-1937). Despite the loss of some of its original interior and exterior features during the 1959 alternations, it maintains a high level of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association as the Kiah Museum from this time through the historic period, 1973. In fact, the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century alterations are themselves significant and character-defining as they were crucial to creating the museum space and may represent the beginning date for the property’s proposed period of significance. Exterior alterations include the removal of a large first-floor porch, the addition of brick porch columns with wrought iron railings, a large two-story window opening at the east side of the north façade, and the enclosure of a small porch at the southeast corner of the building. The surrounding neighborhood is comprised of similarly-sized single-family two-story homes whose early-to-mid-20<sup>th</sup> century occupants were primarily middle-class Black families (Seifert), and the property is adjacent to the vibrant Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard commercial corridor and one block north of 37<sup>th</sup> Street, a major east-west thoroughfare.

The Cuyler-Brownville neighborhood and historic district consists of historic residential, commercial, and institutional buildings and is one of Savannah’s oldest Black communities. Bordered by Ogeechee Road and Hopkins Street to its west, Montgomery Street on the east, Anderson Street to its north, and Victory Drive to its south, the district’s name is based upon the Cuyler School District and the Brownsville Community. While historic maps refer to the early community as “Brownsville” the resulting NRHP

nomination identified the area as Cuyler-Brownville which is used in this application for consistency with the NRHP. The early development of the area arose from the movement of former enslaved people from rural areas into the more urban area of Savannah after the Civil War. The area maintains a variety of sizes, types, and styles dating from the 1880s through the 1930s, including one and two-story rowhouses for laborers in the Folk Victorian style and one and two-story single-family middle-class detached residences in the Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, Neoclassical Revival, and Folk Victorian styles (NRHP 1998). The side hallway house at 505 West 36<sup>th</sup> Street is representative of the section of the district dating from its peak period of development between 1910-1920 and originally features elements of the Queen Anne and Prairie styles (NRHP).

While Cuyler-Brownville is currently and historically a predominantly a Black neighborhood, the first several residents and owners of the house were notably white, some of whom were members of the Jewish community. In fact, the 1940 census records the entire 500 block of West 36<sup>th</sup> as having entirely white residents, but with Black residents occupying the next block (Seifert 2018). The first owners of the home were Elliot and Kittie Parrish, who owned and occupied the home between 1913 and 1921. Mr. Parrish worked as an accountant and bookkeeper. Phillip and Frances Kandel purchased the house from the Parrish family in 1921 and the Kandel family occupied the home until 1949. Mr. Kandel worked as a hatter and died in 1923, shortly after moving into the home. Mrs. Kandel continued to live in the home after her husband's death, working as an insurance agent and taking on boarders in the house for extra income. Between 1937 and 1940, city directories list the house as the Sunshine Inn, and Mrs. Kandel continued to live in the house until her death in 1949. The Kandel's sold the home to Joe Rabinowitz in 1949, who owned the house for only a year, apparently as a rental property. In 1951, Henry and Lessie Edenfield purchased the house and lived there until 1955, when Marie F. Kelson purchased the home as a rental property. A series of short-term renters lived in the house during Kelson's ownership, including the home's first Black residents, Tony and Maggie Everhart. The Everharts rented the home between 1955-58, and city directories record that occupants were also renting the carriage house (505 ½) during this period. In 1959, Calvin and Virginia Kiah purchased the home. The first listing for the Kiahs in the city directories record Calvin's occupation as a "Chairman" at Savannah State College, tenants Paul and Cornelia Stevens are listed as occupants in the carriage house. It does not appear the house was altered from its original construction until 1959. Ms. Lavinia Jenkins, a neighbor who lives directly across the street at 504 West 36<sup>th</sup> street, reported to researchers that the house at 505 West 36<sup>th</sup> Street had a very similar style and configuration as her home prior to the 1959 renovations. Some apparent missing elements of the Queen Anne style house are a wraparound porch at the first floor and original windows on the north façade (Chatham County; Seifert).

Virginia West Jackson was born in 1911 in East St. Louis, Missouri to Kieffer and Lillie May Jackson and grew up in Baltimore, Maryland (FindAGrave). Her parents were both very active and well-known leaders in the civil rights movement in Baltimore and both held degrees from historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs): Lillie May from Morgan State and Kieffer from Alcorn College. Her mother, locally known as "Ma Jackson" in Baltimore, served as president of the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for 34 years (Chico), and her daughters Virginia and Juanita led the first NAACP youth division (ADMI) Her mother instilled the importance of education as paramount to overcoming segregation, with one of her mottos being "one must judge people by their actions, not by the way they look (Chico)." She advanced quickly through school and was a natural artist at a very young age, often drawing her classmates in pencil. As a child, she was extremely frustrated that she was not allowed to visit museums in Baltimore because of her race, and asked her mother to promise her that she would have a museum one day "where everyone could go (YouTube 2016)." Her mother helped her collect items for her museum beginning in 1936 (Chico), and many of those items went on to be displayed in the Kiah Museum many years later (YouTube 2016). Virginia attended the Philadelphia Museum School of Art as its only Black female student, studying portraiture and graduating in 1931 with a bachelor's degree.

Having no formal art training prior to attending the prestigious art school, she struggled early on due to her limited experience. She persevered, however, earning a scholarship in her second year and prizes for drawing in her third year (Chico). After graduation, she obtained a teaching certification from the State of Pennsylvania. From 1936 through 1937, she studied under artists at the Art Students League in New York City and won fourth prize for a portrait of actress Paulette Goddard in a national contest sponsored by Columbia Motion Pictures (Chico). Virginia was most passionate about portraiture painting and this became the discipline for which she is most well-known. She married Calvin Lycurgus Kiah in 1932 (Chico).

Virginia's career as a portrait artist blossomed in the early 1930s when she traveled to New York City to paint portraits of Black ministers and pastors of churches, many of which she had visited as a child with her parents. She worked prolifically through the 1930s and 1940s, painting numerous church and civil rights leaders as commissions in New York and Maryland, including Carl Murphy, the President of the Afro-American Newspaper in Baltimore, and Mrs. Susie Love, the first woman graduate of HBCU, Morgan State College. Author Beverly Berghaus Chico interviewed Virginia in 1977 for the book *Notable Maryland Women*, capturing Virginia's artistic ethos and process in this passage: "...Virginia would show samples of her work, and point out the importance of paintings as contributions to the community. She would also point out that paintings, if treated properly, could be guaranteed to last much longer than photographs. She also explained that a painting allowed the character of the subject to be depicted. Further, she indicated that the artist first completes research on the life of the individual to be painted, and then on canvas the dominant qualities which distinguish this person from all others are brought out. She explained that a face is worked to show kindness, intellectual power or maybe concern for others; while the hands can express strength or weakness. (Chico 203). Virginia did not sign some of her portraits during this period because she disliked the tedium of painting her name in small letters. It is possible that many of her works remain unattributed to her because of this. During this prolific time in her professional life, she also earned a B.A. and an M.A. from Columbia University (1951). She continued painting throughout her life, and her portraiture work has been exhibited at many institutions and galleries, including the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Eisenhower Museum (Independence, Kansas); the SCAD Museum of Art; Baltimore Women's Civic League; The Carnegie Institute; Eggleston Galleries (New York City); and the National Council of Negro Women's Conference (Chico; SCAD).

Dr. Calvin Lycurgus Kiah was born in 1910 (findagrave.com) in Princess Anne, Maryland. Like Virginia, Calvin was also raised with a strong emphasis on education, and his father, Dr. Thomas H. Kiah, served as the President of the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore. Following his marriage to Virginia in 1932, the couple moved to the Eastern Shore of Maryland where Calvin taught high school science. He became the Principal at F. D. St. Clair High School in Cambridge in the mid-1930s, and received a master's degree in Education from Columbia University in 1937. The couple lived in Cambridge, Maryland during the 1940s where Calvin's occupation is recorded in the 1940 US Census as a high school principal and Virginia's occupation is listed as a hobby artist (Seifert). Calvin served in the US Army between 1943 and 1945, but it is unclear in what capacity he served or if he served overseas. Calvin received a PhD from Columbia University in 1951, and the couple moved to Savannah the same year when Dr. Kiah was hired as the Chairman of the Education Division at Savannah State College (now Savannah State University). Between 1951 and 1963, Virginia taught art at Beach High School in Savannah and dedicated herself to helping young artists develop their skills and find opportunities through scholarships and exhibits. Virginia held on to her dream of having her own museum one day, recalling that "my husband had promised me that the next time we moved, we'd get a house large enough for me to have a museum for little children to come and enjoy. It would be a learning museum, my kind of museum, with animals, Indian artifacts, Civil War relics, antique furniture, and artwork. And it should be free for everyone. This all came about, with Calvin paying all expenses (Smith 1974)."

In 1959, the Kiahs purchased the house at 505 West 36<sup>th</sup> Street and immediately began converting it into a combination museum and residence. The couple intentionally chose the traditionally Black neighborhood of Cuyler-Brownville as the location so that the museum would serve as a community landmark and beacon of pride for the neighborhood (ADMI). Virginia designed the renovation plans herself and she and Dr. Kiah oversaw the construction (COS). Neighbor Lavinia Jenkins recalled in a video interview about the museum how, as a child, she watched the activity from her house across the street. She was “intrigued” by what they were going to do with the house after watching workers remove the porch and front two bedrooms (YouTube 2017). In addition to the removal of the porch, the Kiahs removed windows from the eastern side of the front façade and cut a large two-story window with divided lights into the wall, presumably to make the front façade look more modern. On the interior, the front two bedrooms on the second floor were removed to open up the front interior space into an open, two-story space lit by the large window. The wood balusters and handrails were removed from the stairs, and were replaced with modern wrought iron railings that extended to a catwalk balcony overlooking the open two-story space. The bathrooms were remodeled, including the second floor master bathroom which included an aquarium in the shower/bathtub. The alterations allowed the museum space to occupy the first floor, stairwell, and balcony, reserving the second floor spaces for the Kiah’s private residence. Her eclectic collections included architectural elements from the “remains of old savannah buildings,” including a cast iron bracket from the City Market, a ceiling medallion from the Nurses Chapel of the Cathedral of Saint John the Devine, a tile fountain from the Bijou Theatre, and items from the Pape School, the old DeSoto Hotel, and other pieces from private homes (YouTube 2017; Chico; COS). Other notable items included African carvings, Native American artifacts, the Howard J. Morrison, Jr. Osteological exhibit, sea life specimens, a 15 million-year-old fossil, paintings by Harlem Renaissance painter, William Johnson, Louis XV and XVI period chairs, and an original wood block print by Albrecht Dürer (COS).

The Kiah Museum opened on November 28, 1959 with guests including Louis B. Toomer, the Register of the U.S. Treasury and founder of the first African American bank in Savannah, Carver State Bank (COS). In an undated video interview, Dr. Kiah describes the museum: “This museum has been a teaching museum. All of these different pieces of artwork that you see on the walls are not segregated as they are in most museums. Oil paintings together, graphics together, sculpture together. You may see a painting and then beside it, a graphic piece of work, which could be pen and ink, or it could be a gouache drawing. It could be a watercolor (YouTube 2016). Neighbor Lavinia Jenkins described the museum as a “bit of sunshine” in the neighborhood, recalling fond memories of the fish aquarium in the bathroom, paintings on every wall surface, and tropical plants outside (YouTube 2017). A piano was located on the balcony above the main gallery and neighbors recall Virginia playing the piano and singing often (Johnson-Simon 2022). The museum was listed in the Museum Association of Savannah guides during the 1970s and she was one of the first members of color of the association, now known as the Coastal Museums Association (CMA). Virginia and the museum were also listed in the African American Museums Association’s (AAMA) first directory (Bull Street; ADMI). In the early 1970s, Reader’s Digest included the museum in its *Treasures of America* book, giving the museum national recognition through a ubiquitous American publication known to all Americans (ADMI). The creation and success of the museum enabled the Kiahs to provide a tangible and invaluable contribution to the community through their own unique form of activism. As described in the recent application for a historical marker for the museum, “Public historians Mack and Welch noted, ‘In creating their own organizations and institutions, African Americans historically have developed ways to address both needs and aspiration that fostered values of community, service, and mutual support. In this vein, museums were among the institutions established to both serve Black communities and serve as vehicles for social change. (ADMI).’”

While operating the museum, Virginia helped found the National Conference of Artists in 1959 with other Black artists from around the country to bring recognition and organizational support to Black art students

and established artists. Virginia served as the national director of student artists for the group, also leading the Savannah chapter of the group (ADMI). Students from the group, led by Virginia, embarked on a project to beautify Chatham Square in Savannah in 1963. They designed landscape beds, planted new flowers and plants, and installed a sundial dedicated to Louis B. Toomer. Their efforts were not welcomed by some white Savannahians who destroyed their work in the dark of night. Virginia and the students were not deterred and completed the project, receiving praise and recognition from Savannah Mayor Malcolm McLean in a ceremony on the square on January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1964 (YouTube 2016). Virginia also established international art exchanges for student art with the United Nations and schools in Hawaii and Ghana, where artwork would travel between nations all over the world, exposing students to different cultures and expressions (Chico). Dr. Calvin Kiah moved to Atlanta in 1967 when he accepted the position of Vice President of Academic Affairs at Georgia State College (now Georgia State University), desegregating the university's academic staff (FindAGrave). Virginia commuted between Savannah, Atlanta, and Baltimore, where she established the Lillie Carroll Jackson Civil Rights Museum in 1978. Her mother willed the family home to Virginia with the direction that she converted the home into a museum dedicated to the Baltimore civil rights movement with a focus on the contribution of women (ADMI).

The success of the museum was made possible by the strong partnership between Virginia and Calvin, who supported each other throughout their education and careers, often traveling between New York City, Maryland, Atlanta, and Savannah during their marriage. The museum they established to deliver their special form of activism through education and inspiration was funded by Calvin's salary, proceeds from the sale of Virginia's artwork, and income from several rental properties in Savannah owned by the Kiahs (Johnson-Simon). The acquisition of property for the purposes of creating a steady rental income was likely learned by Virginia from her mother, who also had several rental properties in Baltimore that enabled her to dedicate her life to service. The Kiahs were staunch community activists and used their positions to support local preservation activities and establish advocacy groups like the 36<sup>th</sup> Street Neighborhood Improvement Association. For example, neighbor Lavinia Jenkins recalled in a video interview that the Kiahs were responsible for successfully encouraging the City of Savannah to leave the brick surface of the 36<sup>th</sup> Street road bed instead of paving it over (YouTube 2017). Virginia served as a Trustee at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD 2021) in the 1980s and formed a close relationship with the college. SCAD holds a large collection of her artwork and named one of its campus buildings Kiah Hall in honor of her. In 1986, SCAD conferred an Honorary Doctor of Humanities degree on Virginia (Johnson-Simon).

Dr. Calvin Kiah passed away in 1994, leaving a legacy of a lifelong dedication to education and community service. Dr. Kiah served in World War II, was a 33<sup>rd</sup> degree Mason, served as Secretary and Treasurer of the Toomer Realty Company's Board of Directors, the Carver State Bank Board of Directors, and was an active member of Asbury United Methodist Church (ADMI). Following his passing, Virginia's health declined she moved into a nursing home in 1999, leaving the museum property and its contents vacant. Virginia passed away on December 28, 2001. The property, its contents, and her estate were the subject of legal disputes for many years until the Historic Savannah Foundation (HSF) purchased the property through its Revolving Fund in 2022. The fund enables HSF to save threatened historic properties and offer potential buyers incentives to purchase and restore the buildings. The Friends of the Kiah Museum was formed in 2014 by the Center for the Study of African and African Diaspora Museums and Communities (CFSAADMC), now known as the African Diaspora Museology Institute (ADMI), and is dedicated to leading "a coordinated strategy to secure and preserve the Kiah House Museum, strengthen and advance the Cuyler Brownsville [sic]. Neighborhood through long term economic development and community revitalization (Seifert)." In 2021, the Kiah Museum was included in that year's Georgia Trust Places in Peril list (ADMI). In 2022, the ADMI led the effort to raise funds to fabricate and place a historical marker at the museum site, aided by the Friends of the Kiah Museum, Ethos Preservation, and the Savannah Archeological Alliance (ADMI).



The legacy of Dr. Calvin and Virginia Kiah lives on in the memories of many Savannahians who visited the museum or worked with Virginia Kiah as art students. The Kiah Museum that they created as a partnership embodies their unique contribution to the civil rights movement through education and the arts. It maintains a high level of historic integrity through the retention of its floor plan as configured during its time as a museum, and maintains many of its historic features and materials. The Historic Savannah Foundation recognizes the importance of the structure to both the local community and at the national level and seeks to submit the property for placement in the National Register of Historic Places.

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## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

### Site and Context

Located at 505 West 36<sup>th</sup> Street, the two-story side hall residence occupies the eastern three-quarters of Lot 24 in Duncan Ward and maintains a slight setback from a sidewalk and tree-lawn. The surrounding context is characterized by early 20<sup>th</sup> century middle-class African American residential neighborhoods featuring one and two-story detached houses and early-to-mid-20<sup>th</sup> century commercial, institutional, and religious buildings along the Martin Luther King, Junior, Boulevard immediately to its east. The home is situated on a rectangular lot and features a two-story small accessory building at the southeast corner of the lot along the lane.

### Kiah Museum, 505 West 36<sup>th</sup> Street

The two-story building is raised roughly three feet above grade, supported by a foundation of square brick piers and is wood-frame construction with narrow wood clapboard siding. The building is currently in a deteriorated state and its window and door openings are obscured by plywood coverings. The house was significantly altered in 1959 when it was converted from a home into a combination home and museum and is missing its original porch and windows at the east end of the north (front) facade. Lavinia Jenkins, resident at 504 West 36<sup>th</sup> Street, reports that the house originally featured a curved, one-story wraparound porch similar to its existing porch. Its architectural style does not follow a single formal precedent, but includes elements of Prairie and Queen Anne styles. Prairie elements include wide, overhanging eaves with a flat soffit, hipped roof, and centralized attic dormer. Queen Anne elements include a bay window at the first floor of the east facade, side-lights and transom at the primary entrance, and the no longer extant one-story curved porch with Doric round columns that formerly extended along the north and east facades. The building's form is asymmetrical and features an offset primary entrance, characteristic of the Queen Anne style. The two-story accessory building features similar siding to that on the main house, has a hipped roof, and wide, overhanging eaves with exposed rafters. The current roofing material is painted metal and is in poor condition.

The primary entrance of the building is offset and lies at the west side of the north (front) facade and features sidelights with wide, vertically-ribbed glass panels and a leaded-glass transom featuring a floral motif. The door panel appears to be a modern solid-panel wood door with no decoration. Concrete steps lead from the sidewalk to a concrete slab porch with concrete-capped brick posts and decorative wrought iron railing, wrapping around the side of the building to the east. The majority of the original windows appear to be one-over-one double hung wood sash. A very large two-story window opening created in 1959 features at the east side of the north (front) facade and has 24 square lights, four across and six high. A single one-over-one (1/1) double-hung wood sash frame window features above the primary entrance. A dormer roof projection features at the center of the attic and has three leaded-glass window panels. At the east facade, one-over-one (1/1) double-hung wood sash frame windows feature at the first and second floors in the front and rear rooms, while a one-story bay window with a three-panel window projects from the facade at the first floor. A door opening with transom provides access to the interior at the northern bay of the bay window. At the rear of the building, a previously open porch on the first floor has been enclosed and features a concrete step with wrought iron railing leading to a rear door. At the south (rear) facade, one-over-one (1/1) double hung sash wood frame windows feature at the second floor, while a small square window opening serves the room located at the southeast corner of the building. A large three-panel fixed sash window is located at the southwest room (kitchen) of the first floor. It is clear that a two-story porch formerly featured at the southeast corner of the building, which was later enclosed and clad with lap siding to match the rest of the house. The east facade has one-over-one (1/1) double-hung sash wood frame

windows at the majority of openings on the first and second floors, with the exception of a rectangular stained glass fixed panel with a pond-themed botanical motif in the center of a projecting rectangular bay at the first floor dining room. The roof is mainly hipped, with two small cross-hipped areas where the attic dormer and bay window feature. The exterior of the house is in poor condition, with large portions of the soffit missing due to moisture intrusion at the roof level. The accessory building at the rear of the building is not currently accessible, but appears to have a garage at the first floor and living space at the second floor. A metal staircase leads to the upstairs space which features similarly-sized window openings to the main house. The window and door openings at both floors are obscured by plywood coverings. An ornate fountain with colorful glazed tiles is situated in the rear yard between the main house and accessory building. The fountain was saved by Virginia Kiah from the Bijou Theatre on Broughton Street in downtown Savannah when it was demolished. Some tiles are deteriorated and spalling, but the overall structure of the fountain appears intact.

The primary entrance of the museum and house opens into a large two-story gallery space. A formal wood staircase with a landing leads to the second floor where a narrow catwalk balcony featuring the same decorative wrought iron panels found on the front porch overlooks the gallery. Virginia Kiah's upright piano sits in a recessed area along the balcony's wall. The newel posts, railings and balusters are missing from the stairs. An exposed brick firebox is all that remains of a fireplace that formerly featured at the east wall of the gallery. The walls and ceilings throughout the first floor are plaster and the floors are narrow tongue-and-groove wood. The plaster and wood floors are in poor condition, and a large hole has formed in the northeast corner of the room where water has clearly entered from the roof. Most doors throughout the first floor are simple solid two-panel wood doors, and the window and door trim and baseboards are of a simple design, typical of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century period of construction. A large plaster ceiling medallion lies at the center of the room and is likely one of the architectural elements Virginia Kiah saved from demolished buildings in Savannah and incorporated in her redesign of the house and museum. To the south of the gallery is another open space that was likely an extension of the gallery during the operation of the museum. A fireplace with glazed ceramic tile features along the south wall of this room, and an Art Deco glass chandelier, likely another salvaged architectural element, hangs from the center of the ceiling. To its south lies an office room with wall-to-wall shelving on its west and north walls. Wood pocket doors lead west from the gallery extension into a formal dining room. A butler's pantry to the south of the dining room leads to the kitchen featuring a mixture of original built-in cabinetry and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century décor, appliances, and fixtures, along with a small storage closet. A small room with a clothes closet lies to the east of the kitchen and is only accessible on the interior from the kitchen via a wood screen door. The screen door may be a vestige of the open porch prior to its enclosure. An exterior door provides egress along the east wall of the small room. A small bathroom lies under the staircase and features mid-20<sup>th</sup> century pink corner pedestal sink, toilet, and bath fixtures that were likely added during the 1959 renovations.

The second floor features a central hallway at the top of the stairs flanked by a bathroom, closets, and three bedrooms. The bathroom is the larger of the two and likely was privately used by the Kiahs in their upstairs residence. The bathroom features mid-20<sup>th</sup> century finishes and fixtures and includes an opening with a rectangular aquarium in the back wall of the bath. The aquarium sits on a platform in the closet space to the south of the bathroom. A large linen closet with shelving lies at the right side of the end of the hallway and another bedroom with small closet features at the southwest corner of the second floor. Another, larger bedroom is at the southeast corner of the second floor and appears to have originally been a porch that was enclosed at some point in the past. This bedroom features a small pedestal sink in its northeast corner, a small closet, and the attic stairs are accessible in this room. A third bedroom located at the east side of the north end of the hall near the balcony features a fireplace with a similar glazed tile surround like the one below it, and built-in shelves and cabinetry. Like the first floor, the floors on the second level are all wood tongue-and-groove and the walls and ceilings appear to all be plaster. The ceilings in the rooms along the

eastern side of the rooms at the second floor have been compromised by water intrusion and many areas of plaster have fallen onto the floor.

The building maintains a high level of integrity associated with the Kiah Museum (1959-1973) in the survival of much of its original 1913 floorplan, architectural materials, and finishes, along with the character-defining features from the era of the Kiah Museum. The combined survival of architectural details from both eras of its history provide a unique and significant example of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century adaptive reuse.