

Reflections

Dear Subscribers:

The February 2026 issue of Reflections, a publication of the Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network (GAAHPN), is now available. It is available in PDF format on the Georgia Historic Preservation Division website. It's easy to become a subscriber: [just click here](#).

GAAHPN has a new website! You can find all things historic preservation and history at www.gaahpn.org. From GAAHPN'S history to current events, to archived issues of *Reflections*, it's a one-stop shop for those interested in Black history and preservation in Georgia. Email us at gaahpnhistory@gmail.com

You may view the issue here, titled [February 2026 Reflections](#). This month you will find:

- Uncover the historic Fort Valley Ham and Egg Show and explore how Fort Valley State University plans to keep the legacy alive through a new one-act play *Now What a Time: A FVSU Ham and Egg Show Play*
- Immerse yourself in the triumphant story of the Hall Family and their battle for land ownership in Appling County, Georgia
- Transport back to 1935 in Taliaferro County for the creation of the Springfield Log Cabin School and Community Center and follow their journey to the future

Questions or comments? Please Contact:

Mary Wilson Joseph

mary.wjoseph@dca.ga.gov

Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Community Affairs



Georgia African American
Historic Preservation Network

Reflections

Volume XXXI, No. 1

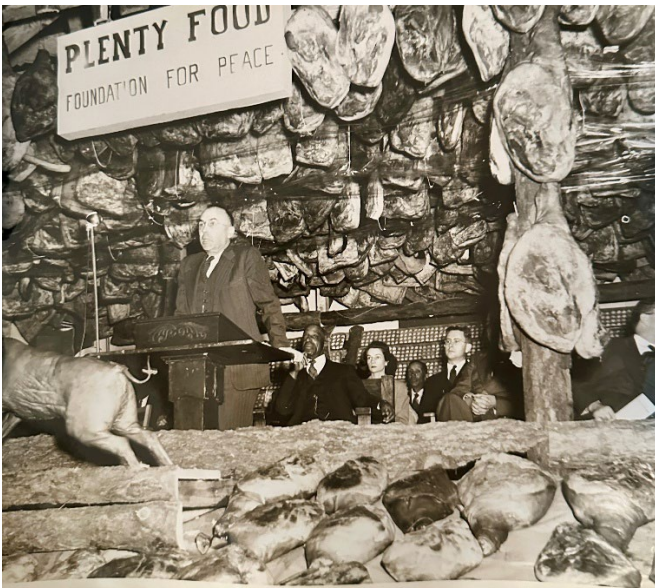
February 2026



**Georgia African American
Historic Preservation Network**

The Fort Valley Ham and Egg Show

By Dawn Herd-Clark, PhD, Kymara D. Sneed, PhD, Kyle Q. Harris, PhD, Maisha S. Akbar, Ph.D. (author bios found on page 7)



The Fort Valley Ham and Egg Show using food to help promote world peace during the Cold War. Otis O'Neal is speaking at the podium

The Fort Valley Ham and Egg Show began in 1916, under Houston County Agricultural Extension Agent Otis O'Neal during the principalship of Henry A. Hunt. Held at Fort Valley High and Industrial School (FVHIS) in Fort Valley, Georgia, this model extension program was replicated throughout the South to address the poverty and food insecurity of many rural Black Americans. While O'Neal taught Black male farmers how to properly raise marketable hogs, Home Demonstration Agent Margaret Toomer educated Black female farmers on the importance of purebred chickens and standardized eggs. At its peak the Fort Valley Ham and Egg Show drew an international audience and evolved into a family friendly event that included farming demonstrations, home exhibitions, 4-H presentations for the youth, and a folk arts festival.

It was an important event for rural African Americans throughout its fifty-year existence. Fort Valley State College (University) hosted its last Ham and Egg Show in 1966.

Otis O'Neal was born to Jasper O'Neal, a former slave, local farmer and minister, and the former Margaret Stroud, from Culloden, Georgia, on November 18, 1884, in Yatesville, Georgia. After O'Neal exhausted the educational options of the Sugar Hill Community in Upson County, he headed to FVHIS in 1902. After teaching stints in Forsyth, Georgia, and Okolona, Mississippi, O'Neal was able to return as the County Extension Agent in Houston County, where he was housed on the FVHIS campus.

Due to the food insecurity and financial challenges faced by many rural Black farmers, O'Neal was determined to bring farmers to FVHIS for education in the latest food preservation methods.

This epiphany led to O'Neal becoming the father of the Fort Valley Ham and Egg Show, which provided innovative agricultural education to tens of thousands of rural Black farmers through its fifty years of existence.

When the first show began in 1916, only 80 samples of produce and 17 dozen eggs decorated the tables. Home Demonstration Agent Margaret Toomer, however, was determined to see that number increase to one hundred dozen. An alumnus of FVHIS, Toomer's continuing education at Morris Brown and later the Tuskegee Institute saw her exposed to the most influential Black agricultural minds of the 20th century, such as Booker T. Washington. Utilizing her farming background and formal education, Toomer worked a short stint as a teacher in middle Georgia from 1924 until 1926, upon which she succeeded Otis

The Fort Valley Ham and Egg Show, continued

O'Neal's wife, Jeannie, as Home Demonstration Agent for Peach and Houston Counties.

Toomer's influence as a home demonstration agent grew through her participation in the Ham and Egg Shows. Just as Otis O'Neal presided over the "Ham" portion, concentrating his efforts to livestock upkeep and meat curing, Toomer oversaw the "Egg" show, focusing her efforts on nutrition and home beautification and improvement, an extension of her annual fieldwork. Margaret Toomer's dream would come to fruition in 1943, where her efforts saw 150 dozen eggs decorate the display table. In an era where Jim Crow attitudes were pervasive even in federal agencies, Toomer's field work and contributions to the Ham and Egg Show afforded her a level of influence unheard of at that time. While segregation impeded on the access to resources for Toomer and many other Black extension agents, she more than made up for this disadvantage with the Ham and Egg Show, and her dedication to improving black lives was instrumental in its success throughout the 20th century.



4-H participants preparing for a play at the Fort Valley Ham and Egg Show

Because of efforts of O'Neal and Toomer, Fort Valley State University (FVSU) remains committed to honoring their memory. Fort Valley State University's Department of Arts and Communications commemorates the historic Fort Valley Ham and Egg Show (1916-1966) through a new one-act play, *Now What a Time: A FVSU Ham and Egg Show Play*. The play, adapted by Dr. Maisha S. Akbar, Professor and Department Chair, stages a brief history of the original event while including performances by FVSU's Blue Machine Marching Band, the University Choir as well as an animal play, a common device used by Georgia Agricultural Services officials at FVSU to teach local farmers about good farming practices.



Various dignitaries at the Fort Valley Ham and Egg Show

Now What a Time showcases the efforts of the event's key players including Otis O'Neal, Margaret Toomer, and FVHIS's second Principal, Henry A. Hunt, as well as the first President Horace Mann Bond. The contributions of other prominent cultural producers, such as Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, Claude McKay, and Katherine Dunham, are also foregrounded. *Now What a Time* effectively stages food production by Black farmers, HBCU theatre history and #FVSUJoy. The play facilitates further research questions about HBCU design technologies.

Staging *Now What a Time* is a process of unearthing a buried FVSU story. This production platform is FVSU's Afrofuture/Afrofarmfuture, which is based on small scale farming, technological innovation, and HBCU folk culture. *Now What a Time* further represents FVSU as a site within the global South where an HBCU counternarrative tradition is performed and preserved. The legacy for the Fort Valley Ham and Egg Show continues.

Bibliography

Photos courtesy of Archives and Heritage Collections, Hunt Memorial Fort Valley State University

Herd-Clark, Dawn, and Chrissy Lutz "No one was on their own:" *The Sociability of Middle Georgia Rural African American Women*, *Agricultural History*, 2019.

Herd-Clark, Dawn and Kyle Harris, "Otis O'Neal and the Ham and Egg Show" in *Middle Georgia and the Approach of Modernity: Essays on Race, Culture and Daily Life, 1885-1945*, ed. Fred van Hartesveldt, McFarland Press, 2018.

Herd-Clark, Dawn and Kymara Sneed "One Hundred Dozen Eggs: Margaret Toomer and the Ham and Egg Show" in *Middle Georgia and the Approach of Modernity: Essays on Race, Culture and Daily Life, 1885-1945*, ed. Fred van Hartesveldt, McFarland Press, 2018.

Kymara Sneed, "Out of House and Home: An Examination of African-American Home Demonstration Work in Peach and Houston Counties, 1930 - 1940," *Master's thesis (University of West Georgia, 2018)*.

Lost Lands: The Untold Story of Peter Hall

By Alexandria Conner
the great-great-great-granddaughter of Peter Hall and a family historian
studying African American land stewardship in rural Georgia. Her research engages
archival records, court documents, and oral histories to reconstruct the Hall family's
legacy.

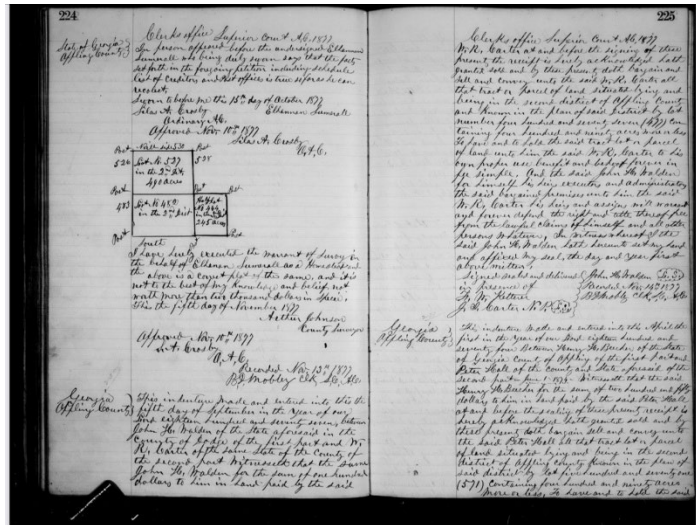
The Hall Family of Appling County, Georgia presents a powerful and well documented example of Black landownership and subsequent land loss due to legal exploitation, attorney liens, probate manipulation, and racial power imbalance. Tax records indicate the Halls accumulated approximately 1,500 acres across multiple lots in Appling County, and portions of this land remain in the family today. However, Lot 571 became the center of an intense legal struggle that ultimately resulted in land loss, despite multiple courtroom victories.

Peter Hall's Acquisition of the Land in 1874

On June 11, 1874, Peter Hall Senior purchased Lot 571 from Henry H Beecher for \$250.00, a remarkable achievement for a formerly enslaved man in the post-Reconstruction South. The 490-acre tract contained mature longleaf pine, the primary resource driving Georgia's turpentine and naval stores economy. These trees were worked for resin extraction, making Peter Hall's land financially valuable long before the legal disputes began.

Conflict between Peter Hall Senior and Mann and Melton from 1884 to 1887

By the early 1880s, white turpentine operators, Mann and Melton, began entering the Hall family's land to cut timber and work the pine trees for resin. Conflict escalated to the Superior Court of Georgia. On December 17, 1884, the Chancellor issued an order restraining Mann and Melton from cutting trees on Peter Hall's land. On December 21, 1886, Peter filed an injunction seeking to restrain Mann and Melton from trespassing upon Lot 571. To proceed, the court required Peter Hall to post a \$1,000.00 bond, which represented a significant financial hardship for a Black landowner in the post Reconstruction South. Although the court initially supported Peter, the Chancellor later removed the restraining order in January of 1887 and temporarily allowed Mann and Melton to continue operations after posting a \$500.00 bond.



Deed record documenting Peter Hall's 1874 purchase of Land Lot 571 in Appling County for \$250 via Georgia Superior Court (Appling County), Deed Book, pp. 224–225, 1874; digital image via FamilySearch

The long conflict reached its first major conclusion on April 3, 1890. The Superior Court ruled in favor of Peter Hall, awarding \$160.00 in damages and affirmed the legal title to Lot 571 belonging to Peter Hall. The operators refused to accept defeat. Mann and Melton filed a motion for a new trial and carried on working the trees through the end of the 1890 turpentine season.

Court Intervention in 1891 and Continued Litigation in 1892

On April 3, 1891, Judge Atkinson responded to the ongoing violations by granting Peter Hall and his tenants full authority to take possession of the turpentine boxes on the land. Turpentine boxes were the cuts made at the base of pine trees where resin collected. This ruling finally gave Peter control of the economic value of his land. In March 1892, the case returned to Superior Court once again and a new trial was granted.

Final Victory in Superior Court and the Death of Peter Hall Senior in 1894

Peter Hall Senior secured another complete victory in Superior Court on March 9, 1894. The jury awarded him \$160.00 in damages and permanently enjoined Mann and Melton from interfering with Lot 571 in any manner. The court also issued a writ of possession in favor of Peter Hall and formally confirmed that the legal title to the land belonged to him.

The Fort Valley Ham and Egg Show, continued

Sale of Lot 571 by Heirs in 1894

Estate documents show Peter's heirs sold Lot 571 to Green T Melton for \$525.00 on September 26, 1894. This sale was made to the same man who had been involved in litigation over the property for the previous decade. The transfer took place only months after Peter's final court victory and shortly after his death. Although this new deed was executed in 1894, Melton did not record it at that time.

The 1898 Lawsuit Filed by PF Hall

On June 4, 1898, Peter Hall's heir, PF Hall, filed a new lawsuit against Melton because full payment had not been received for Lot 571. The lawsuit referred to a promissory note held in the bank. During this case, Melton submitted a plea claiming that the heirs had agreed to drop the outstanding promissory note for Lot 571 if he paid the \$70.00 attorney fee that Peter Hall Senior allegedly owed at the time of his death.

According to Melton's statement, Holton and Sons, the same attorneys who had represented Peter Hall Senior, told him that they would seize the Hall land themselves if the attorney fee was not paid. Melton claimed he paid the attorneys directly to prevent them from acting against the property. This plea attempted to suggest the \$525.00 balance had already been settled, yet surviving documents show that this claim arose only after the heirs sued Melton for nonpayment.

The plea also revealed Peter Hall Seniors' attorneys now appeared on behalf of Green T. Melton. Moreover, only after PF Hall filed suit in June 1898, did Melton finally record the 1894 deed. It was officially entered into the county records on August 1, 1898, nearly four years after its "alleged" execution and only weeks after the heirs sought legal action for nonpayment.

This shift in legal representation, combined with Melton's delayed recording of the deed and the pressure exerted by Holton and Sons, illustrates the dramatic change in power dynamics following Peter Hall Senior's death.



Lot 338 in Appling County, held by the Hall family since the purchase by Henry H. Hall, son of Peter Hall, courtesy of The Heritage Hall Farms Collection

Significance

Despite losing Lot 571, portions of Hall land remain in family hands today, adding a living dimension to a legacy that spans nearly 150 years. Among the most vivid links to this legacy is Nola Mae Hall Landers, Peter's 103-year-old granddaughter and oldest living heir. The Hall family's endurance demonstrates that the story of Black landownership does not end with dispossession; it continues through memory, stewardship, and storytelling.



Nola Mae Hall Landers, age 103, granddaughter of Peter Hall and eldest living bearer of the Hall family's land legacy in Appling County courtesy of the author

Bibliography

Appling County Superior Court, Deed Records, Henry H. Beecher to Peter Hall, deed conveying Lot 571 (2nd District), June 11, 1874, recorded November 1877. Digital image via FamilySearch (accessed November 18, 2025):

<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSLX-2RY7?view=fullText>

Appling County Superior Court, Peter Hall v. W.J. Mann, Green T. Melton, and the firm of Mann & Melton, equity decree awarding damages and granting writ of possession for Lot 571, March Term 1894. Digital image via FamilySearch (accessed November 18, 2025):

<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSYZ-9SDD-Y?view=fullText>

Appling County City Court (Baxley), P.F. Hall v. G.T. Milton, civil complaint and sworn plea concerning Lot 571, June Term 1898, pp. 126–127. Digital image via FamilySearch (accessed November 17, 2025):

<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C3HQ-MXJQ?view=fullText>

Resurrecting Resistance: The Springfield Log Cabin School and Community Center

By Maya Henry
Master of Heritage Preservation at Georgia State University



Historic image of the Springfield Log Cabin School courtesy of the Springfield Community Center Inc.

Developmental History

In 1935, members of the Taliaferro County and Springfield School District purchased four acres of land from Mitchell Chapman (c. 1865), an African American farmer, to build a school for the region's African American students. The land was purchased for \$50 from the initial 1,188-acre plantation. Men from the local community donated trees from their properties to construct the tongue-and-groove planks for the school during the farming community's "off season." The county allocated money to build the roof but when funds ran out, residents fundraised the remaining money. Some donors included workers from the Works Progress Administration who pledged \$3 from their \$5 a month salary.



An interior image of the Springfield Log Cabin School and Community Center. Photo taken by Halston Pitman and Nick Woolever courtesy of the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation

The school was modeled after the Rosenwald five teacher community school plan pictured on the following page. Between 1935 to 1955 the building was a log cabin school in Militia District 606. The children in this district originally went to "Society Hall" but the school could not accommodate all the scholars. By fall 1938, there were around 200 students at Springfield. By the 1940s, the school was improved with the increasingly popular aluminum windows and updated doors. During World War II, many men in the community served and

never returned, decreasing the population in the area. By 1955, the school closed due to low enrollment.

The school went through several transition stages in the following years. In 1965, the building served as a Head Start Program and indoor plumbing was added. It was the headquarters for political education through the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and then a Freedom School during the Crawfordville Student Movement in Taliaferro County, in which students organized a walkout to protest the failure to reinstate African American teachers. The walkout was led by Calvin Turner and Willie Bolden, in addition to Summer Community Organization and Political Education project (SCOPE) members. Their path took them to downtown Crawfordville in front of the courthouse on May 28, 1965. More information can be found in the book *From Level Hill to Capitol Hill* written by student activist Frank Bates (1947-2017).

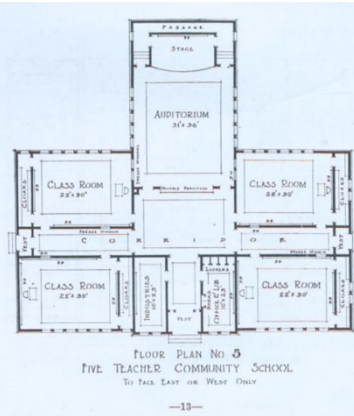
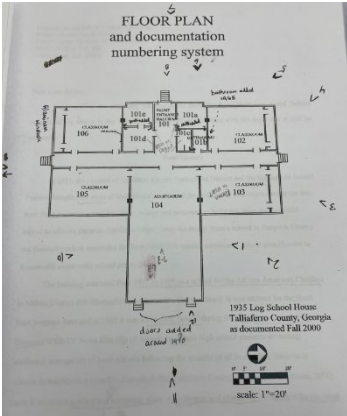
It later became a sewing and silk screen training center until 1967, led by the Office of Economic Opportunity or locally known as the Poverty Program. After the training center relocated to a larger facility, the building became a daycare center for the students. From then on, the surrounding residents pushed for the building to become a community center, but Chapman's heirs attempted to reappropriate the space and started to clear the property. This led to litigation for the next 10-15 years which left the building unmaintained while the legal ownership was sorted out. Without a school in the neighborhood, students were bused to the nearby county for school.

In 1993, a local leader of the SCLC created a 501(c)(3), initiated a Historic Structure Report in 2000, and began working on restoring the log cabin until his passing in 2007. Led by Terry Howard, the nonprofit was restructured on October 27, 2016, and began implementing new strategies including church donations, grant applications, and crowdsource-funding.



A bird's eye view of the Springfield Log Cabin School. Photo taken by Halston Pitman and Nick Woolever courtesy of the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation

Resurrecting Resistance, continued



Side by side comparison of the 1935 Log Cabin School floorplan and the Rosenwald Five Teacher Community School. Images courtesy of the Historic Structures Report (2000) and History South, respectively



Image of the interior. Photo taken by Halston Pitman and Nick Woolever courtesy of the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation

Looking to the Future

Terry Howard and other members of her community in Talliaferro County continue the work of the 501(c)(3) to ensure the Springfield Log Cabin School is reestablished as a hub for the neighborhood. Ms. Howard was born and raised in Talliaferro County and was motivated to dedicate her time to this effort after personally discovering the rich African American history in the county. The non-profit has worked tirelessly to raise funds to restore the roof, working with Ethos and Landmark Preservation. The organization was recently awarded \$750,000 from the National Park Service African American Civil Rights Grant to stabilize the building and prevent future damage. Terry also works with the local church and hopes to host events in the beautiful green space right outside the school. Most importantly, Terry's work has supported local investment and awareness in African American history. You can learn more about the Springfield Community Center and support their preservation work at springfieldcommunityinc.org. You can also follow them on Facebook at the Springfield Community Center, Inc.



An image of Terry Howard in the garden she maintains steps away from the Springfield Log Cabin School, photo courtesy of the author

Bibliography

Historic Structure Report on the Springfield Community Center. 2000.

History South. "Fiveteachew - History South," December 26, 2015.

National Register of Historic Places Preliminary Eligibility

Application. Howard, Terry. 2026.

Reed, Roy. "Dr. King Ponders Georgia Protest." *The New York Times.* October 12, 1965.

"Rosenwald Schools | National Trust for Historic Preservation," December 2, 2024.

Springfield Community. "The Springfield Community Center Inc | Old School Restoration Project," n.d.

"United States, Census, 1930", FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:3CRL-FT2> : Thu Oct 16 09:26:57 UTC 2025), Entry for Mitchel Chapman and Hattie Chapman, 1930.

"United States, Census, 1940", FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K7P2-9VZ> : Sun Jan 19 14:25:01 UTC 2025), Entry for Mitchell Chapman and Hattie Chapman, 1940.

The Fort Valley Ham and Egg Show Author bios:

Dawn H. Clark, PhD, is the former Chair of the Department of History, Geography, Political Science, and Criminal Justice at Fort Valley State University. She is currently an Assistant Professor of History at Hillsborough College in Tampa, Florida.

Maisha S. Akbar, Ph.D. is Professor and Chair of Fort Valley State University's Department of Arts and Communications.

Kymara D. Sneed, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of History at the Mississippi University for Women who specializes in Modern American, Public, African American, and Southern History.

Kyle Q. Harris, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of History and African American Studies at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University.

The Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network (GAAHPN) was established in January 1989. It is composed of representatives from neighborhood organizations and preservation groups. GAAHPN was formed in response to a growing interest in preserving the cultural and built diversity of Georgia's African American heritage. This interest has translated into efforts which emphasize greater recognition of African American culture and contributions to Georgia's history. The GAAHPN Steering Committee plans and implements ways to develop programs that will foster heritage education, neighborhood revitalization, and support community and economic development.



**Georgia African American
Historic Preservation Network**

GAAHPN is an informal group of over 5,000 people who have an interest in preservation. Members are briefed on the status of current and planned projects and are encouraged to offer ideas, comments, and suggestions. The meetings provide an opportunity to share and learn from the preservation experience of others and to receive technical information through workshops. Members receive a newsletter, *Reflections*, produced by GAAHPN. Preservation information and previous issues of *Reflections* are available online. Membership in GAAHPN is free and open to all. Sign up [here!](#)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Dr. Alvin D. Jackson, MD
Chair

Angela Jones-Secretary
Cindy Bowden
Deitrah Taylor
Doris Tomblin
Dr. Alvin Jackson- Chair
Dr. Darryl Nettles- Vice Chair
Dr. R. Candy Tate
Dr. Veronica Womack
Jina DuVernay
Joyce Law
Michele Perry-Stewart
Muriel Jackson
Natasha Washington
Reverend James Rich
Shaundra Walker
Sidney Pettice
Tracy Rookard- Shaw

HPD STAFF



Mary Joseph Wilson
Community Outreach Coordinator
404-904-4284
mary.wjoseph@dca.ga.gov



Maya Henry
Community Outreach Assistant
404-486-6445
maya.henry@dca.ga.gov

Since its first issue appeared in December 2000, *Reflections* has documented hundreds of Georgia's African American historic resources. You can now subscribe to *Reflections* by signing up [here](#). *Reflections* is a recipient of a Leadership in History Award from the American Association for State and Local History. You may find *Reflections* articles on the [new GAAHPN website](#).

Reflections

Published quarterly by the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Community Affairs
Jennifer Flood, Division Director
Mary Wilson Joseph, Editor

This publication has been financed in part with federal funds from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, through the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior or the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or consultants constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior or the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or disability in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility, or if you desire more information, write to: Office for Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.