

# Reflections



Georgia African American  
Historic Preservation Network



A Program of the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources

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## THE WAYNESBORO HISTORIC DISTRICT: GEORGIA'S 2,000<sup>TH</sup> LISTING IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Jeanne Cyriaque, African American Programs Coordinator  
Historic Preservation Division

Waynesboro is located just 25 miles south of Augusta and approximately 100 miles north of Savannah, two of Georgia's oldest cities. The town plan was developed in 1783, when state legislation made Waynesboro the county seat for Burke County in east central Georgia. The Waynesboro Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on March 25, 2009 and the district encompasses 435 acres that centers on the courthouse and central business district and expands to residential and industrial areas surrounding downtown. This historic town of 6,000 residents achieved another distinction when the Waynesboro Historic District became the 2,000<sup>th</sup> listing in the National Register of Historic Places for Georgia.

The Waynesboro Historic District includes 486 buildings, sites and structures that reflect virtually every type of house that was common in Georgia as well as commercial, government and community landmark buildings. Residences represent 75% of the historic district. Many are bungalows and American Small Houses dating from the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Industrial buildings include structures related to agricultural processing and storage near rail-related transportation facilities.

During the early years in Waynesboro's history, the town evolved around agriculture. Burke County agriculture focused on livestock and other crops until the invention of the cotton gin in 1793. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the major cash crop was cotton, and this directly impacted growth in

the African-American population. The enslaved population in Burke County grew from 2,403 in 1790 to 5,904 in 1820 as cotton emerged as a major economic engine. During this period, the white population declined while larger plantations, in order to meet the demand for cotton, replaced small farms. By 1860, half of Waynesboro's residents were enslaved people, and by 1870, African Americans had increased to 75% of Waynesboro's total population. After the Civil War, many freedmen migrated to the town to seek employment as carpenters, masons and domestic workers.

Most of the African-American residences and community landmark buildings are located in the northwest part of the historic district. Some of the house types include small cottages, such as hall parlors, central hallways and bungalows. A significant number of African-American churches and schools are interspersed throughout the historic district, along with social halls.

The Lone Star Benevolent Society Hall is one of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings in the African-American community. It is a wood-frame building with a front gable and a hip-roofed bell tower that dates to when the Lone Star Benevolent Society was organized in 1898. The social hall will soon be adapted for community use as the new home of the Burke County Rural and Folk Life Center.

Thankful Baptist Church is located at the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and 9<sup>th</sup> Street. Towers are located on



Thomas Grove Baptist Church was organized in 1870. This African-American church building was designed by George Bunn in the Gothic Revival-style. It was constructed in 1908. Photo by James R. Lockhart

continued on page 2

## THE WAYNESBORO HISTORIC DISTRICT: GEORGIA'S 2,000<sup>TH</sup> LISTING IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

*Jeanne Cyriaque, continued from page 1*



*The Lone Star Benevolent Society Hall is a building that serves the residents of the African-American community in Waynesboro. These societies often provided burial insurance to families during segregation. The hall is located near Thankful Baptist Church.*

*Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque*

both sides of the front façade of the brick building. Thankful Baptist Church was organized in 1878, and the church had two fires in its history. The current building was erected in 1923, but the church maintains two cornerstones that document a previous building that was destroyed by fire.



*As Waynesboro's African-American population grew, black Baptists organized Thankful Baptist Church in 1878. The church survived two fires, and this brick building was erected in 1923.*

*Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque*

Aurora Lodge No. 54, Free and Accepted Masons, Prince Hall Affiliate is located across the street from Thankful Baptist Church. The two-story, brick building was constructed by 1956, but the lodge was organized in 1883. The Masonic lodge meets on the second floor of the building, while the bottom portion of the building serves the community as a store.

Thomas Grove Baptist Church is located on 6<sup>th</sup> Street across the street from the Confederate Memorial Cemetery. Two towers of differing heights flank the front façade of the brick building. Other distinguishing features are Gothic Revival-style

buttresses and pointed-arched windows. The towers were originally open with supports for the steeply pitched roofs, but were covered with synthetic siding in recent years. The Thomas Grove Baptist Church was organized in 1870 and the present building was designed by George Bunn and constructed in 1908.



*The Free and Accepted Masons, Prince Hall Affiliate Masonic symbol is located on the second level where the Masons meet while the lower level of the building provides commercial space.*

*Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque*

Educational institutions for African Americans include the former Waynesboro High and Industrial School that was built in the 1920s. The school originally provided elementary education and later expanded to an industrial high school that combined a classic curriculum with home economics for girls and agriculture/shop classes for boys. Waynesboro High and Industrial School was the only school of its kind that served the African-American community during the *Jim Crow* era, and the school continued that function until 1955, when Waynesboro constructed new schools for the black community.

As a response to the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board* in 1954, Waynesboro, like so many other Georgia cities, began to construct new schools for African Americans that were part of a concerted effort to resist school integration. These schools were built with modern school technology to prove that separate schools for the races were indeed "separate but equal". In 1956, Waynesboro consolidated all African-American schools and built a new campus of buildings that were constructed across the street from the old industrial school. As school enrollment increased, the campus added several new International-style buildings. A series of covered walkways connect the buildings. When the Burke County school system was integrated in 1970, the elementary school became Blakeney Junior High School. The campus is still used by the school system today.



*Blakeney Junior High School*  
*Photo by James R. Lockhart*

African Americans were also active in the Civil Rights Movement. Herman and Anna Lodge were community activists. Herman Lodge filed a 1976 class action lawsuit, *Lodge v. Buxton*, on behalf of African Americans in Burke County. The suit evolved because the county's at-large elections violated the First, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, as well as the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The outcome of the suit resulted in Burke County redistricting into five districts with each district being represented by one commissioner. The case was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court as *Rogers v. Lodge* in 1982 and the court upheld the redistricting that required commissioners to reside in and be elected by residents in their districts. Once the new voting system was in place, Herman Lodge and Woodrow Harvey became Burke County's first African-American commissioners in 1982.

In May 2009, the Historic Preservation Division joined many Waynesboro residents in a community celebration of the district as the 2,000<sup>th</sup> listing for Georgia. Division director Ray Luce presented a National Register plaque and the Waynesboro Historic Preservation Commission recognized local residents for preserving their homes and businesses. ■

## HAVEN MEMORIAL METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*Joy Melton, African American Programs Assistant  
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In 1866, one year after the end of the Civil War, freedmen in Burke County gathered to begin a church. Two years later, Haven Academy, which functioned as a school and church site, was built. The school grew, so the church constructed a building adjacent to Haven Academy from 1888-1891. Haven Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, now called Haven-Munnerlyn United Methodist Church, is located on Baron Street in Waynesboro. The church was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on April 12, 1996. Haven Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church is also a contributing resource in the Waynesboro Historic District.



*Haven Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church was constructed from 1888-1891. The church building sits on raised piers and is a wood structure with Gothic-Revival design features and stained glass windows.*

*Photo by James R. Lockhart*

The congregation named their church in honor of Bishop Gilbert Haven (1821-1880), the leading bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church northern branch. Bishop Haven supervised the establishment of several religious and educational institutions including the relocation of Clark College, now Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta, Georgia. The first pastor, Rev. James Jackson, sought support from residents in Waynesboro and Burke County for the estimated \$1,800 construction costs. The trustees and members of Haven Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church rallied together to obtain funding from various sources including the Board of Extension of the Methodist-Episcopal Church of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and the Col. W.E. Jones, an advisor to the church.

Haven Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church building is an intact, wood-framed, mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Gothic Revival-style church. The architectural design is extraordinary compared to other African-American churches of that time. The high-pitched, front-gabled sanctuary has smaller cross gables and a corner tower with a front-gabled projecting entry. The enclosure consists of a brick foundation with exterior walls made of wood weatherboarding, painted white, and interior walls made of hand-grained wood paneling on the lower wall and plaster above. Also, there are pointed arch doors with stained glass windows. The church has a spacious sanctuary with center aisle and pews on either side. The pulpit is located on the western wall with an alcove lit by stained glass windows and a balcony with hand-grained wooden railing exists on the eastern wall. Notably, the Haven Church's original details include its plaster, vaulted ceiling, stained glass, pews and floors. Although Haven Academy is no longer extant, there is a small cemetery located on the 2 ½ acre site.



*Waynesboro High and Industrial School is a contributing resource in the Waynesboro Historic District. The school building was constructed in 1920, and used as a school until 1955, when Blakeney Junior High replaced it as the African American community school. Photo by James R. Lockhart*

Haven Academy was absorbed into the Waynesboro High and Industrial School in 1919. The existing school building is located at the intersection of 9<sup>th</sup> and Walker streets in the African-American community. It served the community until 1955 when new schools were constructed. ■

## THREATENED BY DETERIORATION: ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE IN HARRIS COUNTY

Denise Messick, *National Register Historian*  
Historic Preservation Division

**B**ethlehem Baptist Church Colored School (circa 1900) in Harris County was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 30, 2008. Decades of deterioration are now threatening the future of this one-room schoolhouse where African American children in grades one through eight were educated in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Bethlehem Baptist Church, founded in 1871, established the school on their property on a rural road in the Pine Mountain Valley community. The building is a rare surviving example of the type of facility that many Georgians once attended during years of racial segregation.

The school is a simple 15-by-37-foot vernacular building with unpainted weatherboard siding and a stone chimney topped with bricks. Its foundation consists mostly of fieldstone piers, underpinning the log sills. The building has one wood door on front and three windows on each side. Tree saplings were used for joists to support the gable roof. There were never electrical utilities or plumbing in the building, and a fieldstone hearth is the only evidence of a heat source. Two painted black walls served as chalkboards. Four hand-made wood desk/bench combinations survive as a reminder of the young students who once occupied them.

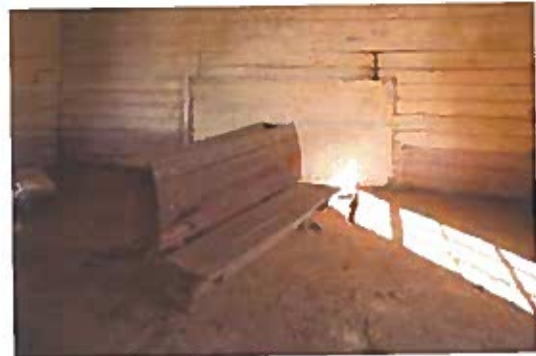


Historical documents and physical evidence point to a construction date of circa 1900 or earlier for the Bethlehem Baptist Church Colored School in Harris County.

Photo by James R. Lockhart

Harris County School Board records for 1885 state that the county had “48 white schools with 1,467 pupils” and “47 colored schools with 2,404 pupils.” The Bethlehem school’s existence is first mentioned in the 1901 board minutes. Bethlehem teachers were qualified through the local school board, but the students and teachers had to work under extreme hardship conditions with poor facilities, materials, and transportation. By 1910 most schools for African Americans still met in homes or churches, and less than 10 percent of the allocation for public education in Georgia was spent on black schools. Teachers were paid less than in white schools, and construction and maintenance funds were almost nonexistent. Therefore, it fell upon African American communities and churches

to support education efforts. The one-room schoolhouse at Bethlehem continued to be used until 1952 when new county schools were constructed. A Harris County resident who attended Bethlehem recalled that one teacher instructed all eight grades, even in the later years.



Four wood bench/desk combinations have seats that can be raised.

Photo by James R. Lockhart

Documenting and researching the history of the school was a labor of love for Bethlehem Baptist Church members Willie and Gloria Brown. The couple prepared the National Register nomination materials by rigorously searching through county school board records and other sources. They hope that listing will bring recognition that might lead to much-needed funding for the schoolhouse’s stabilization. The building sits forlorn and seemingly neglected under its partially collapsed roof. Members work hard to keep the underbrush from taking over the building, but the congregation has dwindled in size and has little money to devote to restoration work. Yet the Browns persevere in their efforts to find a viable future for the schoolhouse, possibly as a history exhibit, to remind people to never take educational opportunities for granted. ■

## DEVELOPING AN AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE GUIDE FOR GEORGIA

Leslie Breland, *Marketing Programs Manager*  
Georgia Tourism Foundation  
Georgia Department of Economic Development

**G**eorgia, and especially Atlanta, have become the place to not only visit but to make home. Generations have passed and so many extended families are rethinking their move north and returning to the South. Georgia is the leading destination for African American tourists, conventioners, and especially family reunions. Georgia has deep roots. There is so much history here, both global and personal.

Did you know? Georgia has the most Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)? Morehouse College, Spelman College, Clark Atlanta University (uniting the former Clark College and Atlanta University), Morehouse School of Medicine, Morris Brown College, and the Interdenominational Theological Center comprise the Atlanta University Center. Paine College in Augusta,

Albany State University, Fort Valley State University, and Savannah State University are additional HBCUs. African American higher education in Georgia dates back to 1867 when Morehouse College was founded in the basement of Augusta's Springfield Baptist Church.



*Beach Institute in Savannah is one of Georgia's historic African American schools that is featured in the guide. Today, Beach Institute hosts lectures and art exhibits.*

*Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque*

Atlanta is often referred to as the "Black Mecca." There is no other place where Black politics, education, business, religion, music and entertainment, and of course, the Civil Rights movement come together and define a place. But this is not limited to the Atlanta area. Throughout the state of Georgia, the African American experience is rich with stories, heritage and culture.



*Thousands of visitors tour the birth home of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the National Historic Landmark District in Atlanta.*

*Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque*

But where does one go to find information that is more than what to see and where to go? Guidebooks are everywhere and come in every shape and form. Some are useful but many are not. So many are a listing of what to see and where to go, and are just that, a listing. Each serves a purpose but we wanted more.

We at the Tourism Division of the Georgia Department of Economic Development, wanted to do something else and ours would be the "official" state publication. There had been earlier attempts at creating an *African American Heritage Guide* but they were sparse in content. We wanted to create a magazine that is a keeper. We wanted a book that shared stories, gave some background and made the experience feel personal. We wanted a magazine that people would keep on their coffee table or in their library. One they could and would refer back to over and over. Our book had to be relevant.

Nothing is done in a vacuum. We wanted the input from those who experienced the history as well as the current movers and shakers in their various disciplines. We wanted good writers who could tell their own Georgia story. We wanted historians who could dig up little known history and make it compelling. We wanted a look and feel that would stand out among other magazines. We also knew that it's hard to be all things to all people, so we had to function in the land of reality and costs.



*Leslie Breland, associate editor, and Gilda Waters, director of the Georgia Tourism Foundation, celebrate the unveiling of the guide in Savannah with Mr. and Mrs. Ben Tucker.*

*Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque*

Sections covering *Arts & Culture, Music & Entertainment, Sports, Architecture & Historic Sites* (including churches around the state), *Gullah/Geechee Culture* in the National Heritage Area along the Georgia coast and barrier islands, *Civil Rights, the Civil War, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Family Reunions, and Short Trips* are filled with background information, fun facts, family pictures, as well as where to eat really good food, hear good music and visit historic areas, all with addresses, phone numbers and of course, websites to get even more detailed information.

The *Georgia African American Heritage Guide* can be a way to begin tracing your family history, plan your next family reunion or even encourage your next move to a beautiful location filled with people who are making history.

To get your copy of the *Georgia African American Heritage Guide*, please go to [www.exploregeorgia.org](http://www.exploregeorgia.org) or call 1-800-VisitGA. Fourteen Welcome Centers located throughout the state and Convention & Visitors Bureaus provide the guide as a service to heritage travelers. ■



**Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network**

**Photograph**

**Not**

**Available**

*Savannah musician Ben Tucker is featured on the cover of the African American Heritage Guide.*

# BASKET CREEK CEMETERY: AN AFRICAN AMERICAN TRADITIONAL CULTURAL PROPERTY

Keith S. Hébert, Historian  
Historic Preservation Division

Cemeteries are significant landmarks that reflect the shared cultural practices that bind people into communities. Sometimes the funerary rituals of a particular cemetery persist from one generation to the next forging a deep-rooted connection between the deceased and their descendants. The Basket Creek Cemetery is located approximately two miles northwest of the Chattahoochee River south of State Highway 166 in south Douglas County. Found in 1886, the site contains 110 known burials of African-American members of the Basket Creek Baptist Church. While thousands of cemeteries exist in Georgia, Basket Creek is distinctive because of its exceptional and rare grave mounds.



Basket Creek Cemetery in Douglas County near the Chattahoochee River was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on May 20, 2009.  
Photo by James R. Lockhart

Grave mounding is a type of funerary ritual that was introduced in Georgia by slaves from West Africa during the late 18th century. The practice had largely disappeared statewide by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century as many rural Southern black communities were dispersed nationally during periods of migration. Each one-foot high triangular-shaped mound runs the length of the grave between the headstone and footstone. The mounding ritual involves forming and continually maintaining sculpted red-clay mounds to perpetually commemorate the life of the deceased.

Mourners begin the ritual by scraping red clay soil onto the grave from its perimeter. Next, a hoe is used to mound the loose material. Finally, a metal file is used to hone the mound's sides to create a pointed top. Those involved in this custom see a poorly maintained mound as an insult to their ancestors as well as a bad reflection upon the local community's association with its heritage. The constant erosion of the mounds caused by exposure and settling, therefore, necessitates the routine observance of this process and its transference from one generation to the next. This funerary ritual has been observed at Basket Creek Cemetery on at least a biannual schedule under the supervision of the cemetery's presentation team—comprised primarily of contemporary church members and the descendants of the deceased—for the last 123 years.

Basket Creek Cemetery is the last remaining vestige of a turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup>-century African-American community located in south Douglas County. This rural black community consisted of single-family houses, saw mills, tenant farms, and churches situated within an area along the Chattahoochee River. Ancestors of the



Members of the Basket Creek Baptist Church preserve the 110 burials in the cemetery by performing a mounding ritual biannually with descendants of the deceased.  
Photo by James R. Lockhart

Endsley (a.k.a. Ensley) family were slaves held in bondage on farms located in the area. After the Civil War members of the Endsley family purchased land and helped develop a local lumber industry. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, members of the Endsley family migrated west to Los Angeles, California, and north to places such as Detroit, Michigan, in search of work and to escape Georgia's racist Jim Crow laws. By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this rural black community had diminished in size considerably due to migration.



The grave mounding ritual is based upon West African spiritual beliefs. Photo by James R. Lockhart

Basket Creek Cemetery's continuous association with the Basket Creek Baptist Church and the persistence of the remaining descendants has preserved a funerary ritual that has virtually disappeared in Georgia due to evolving funerary customs within African-American churches and the geographic relocation of many black families that occurred throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Similar extant examples of grave mounding in African-American cemeteries have been documented in Alabama, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas. The funerary ritual of grave mounding has Trans-Atlantic origins linked to West African spiritual beliefs that predate the establishment of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Basket Creek Cemetery is the only extant example of grave mounding documented in Georgia to date. ■

## HARRIET POWERS: A REMARKABLE WOMAN FOR LOCAL AND GLOBAL HERITAGE

Harriet Powers was born enslaved on October 29, 1837 near Athens, Georgia. Although Powers could not read or write, she created story quilts that represented Bible stories and historical events. Powers lived on a plantation in Madison County owned by John and Nancy Lester where young girls commonly learned to sew from other slaves.

In 1886, Powers exhibited her first quilt at the Clarke County Cotton Fair. This quilt combined two techniques including the West African appliqué and European stitching. This colorful quilt used 299 pieces of fabric organized in a storyboard layout of eleven panels. The quilt portrayed Bible stories including *Jacobs Ladder*, a favorite among slaves because they lived a similar struggle of a man on a long, weary journey and the ladder suggested escape to freedom from slavery.



(Public Domain)

This photo of Harriet Powers was provided courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and is cited at <http://www.earlywomenmasters.net/powers/>



(Public Domain)

The Bible Quilt was completed around 1886 in Athens. A photo was provided courtesy of National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution and is cited in the *New Georgia Encyclopedia*: <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-2577>

Jennie Smith, who was an art teacher at the Lucy Cobb Institute, a young women's school that existed in Athens, Georgia from 1859-1931, discovered Powers' quilt at the fair. Jennie treasured the colors and valued the piece enough to record Powers' detailed explanation of the eleven panels and entered it into the 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta. Likewise, faculty wives from Atlanta University admired the quilt and commissioned another narrative quilt with 15 panels depicting Bible stories and natural events such as the November 13, 1833 "Night of Falling Stars" (Leonid Meteor Storm). Powers did not create her quilts for monetary gain. She initially turned down Jennie Smith's offer to purchase the eleven-panel piece. However, during a time of financial difficulty, Powers eventually sold the quilt to Smith.

Joy Melton, African American Programs Assistant  
Historic Preservation Division

Only two of Power's quilts have survived. The eleven-panel Bible story quilt is among the permanent collection of the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. Powers' other quilt is exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Harriet Powers died on January 1, 1910, and her gravesite is located in Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery in Athens, Georgia. This historic African American cemetery was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on April 19, 2006.

Notably, there are books that feature her quilts and a play, "Quilting in the Sun", on her life. Harriet Powers received posthumous recognition for her contributions to Georgia history when she was inducted as a 2009 Georgia Women of Achievement honoree. If you would like to nominate someone who has left a permanent legacy to Georgia history, visit the Georgia Women of Achievement website: <http://www.georgiawomen.org/nom-how-to-nominate.html>. The deadline for 2010 applications is October 1, 2009.



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## ABOUT GAAHPN



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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 ethnic diversity of Georgia's African American heritage. This interest has translated into a number of efforts which emphasize greater recognition of African American culture and contributions to Georgia's history. The GAAHPN Steering Committee meets regularly to plan and implement ways to develop programs that will foster heritage education, neighborhood revitalization, and support community and economic development.

The Network is an informal group of over 2,700 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 the Network. Visit the Historic Preservation Division website at [www.gashpo.org](http://www.gashpo.org). Preservation information and previous issues of *Reflections* are available online. Membership in the Network is free and open to all.

## Reflections

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