



Reflections

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THE SLAVE DWELLING PROJECT COMES TO GEORGIA

*Jeanne Cyriaque, African American Programs Coordinator
Historic Preservation Division*

Joseph McGill has seen many buildings that are important sites for interpreting U.S. history in his work as a field officer with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. He became interested in slave dwellings because he observed “the buildings that we preserve and interpret in this country are usually iconic, architecturally significant and are usually associated with a proclaimed hero...however, in focusing on these buildings we tend to neglect a major part of the American story.” So, for the past decade, McGill has been on a journey to recognize places that once were occupied by enslaved people in America. McGill was convinced that these historic resources associated with slavery still exist in northern and southern states, and he began the *Slave Dwelling Project* to bring greater awareness to their interpretation and significance in American history.

McGill began his journey with a simple premise: he finds extant slave dwellings and asks the stewards of these places if he can spend the night in them. This journey has taken him to 44 slave dwellings to date in the states of Alabama, Connecticut, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia. The stewards of these places range from house museums, plantations, historical societies, nonprofit organizations, colleges, government entities and private individuals. When McGill sleeps overnight in these places, he is accompanied by fellow Civil War

re-enactors, academicians, staff who interpret these sites, students and persons who are descendants of enslaved people and slave owners. Current uses of the buildings range from guesthouses, storage facilities, museums, studios and offices.

Sleeping in slave dwellings has resulted in several positive outcomes, most notably attracting new audiences to have conversations about slavery. Another outcome of this project is improved, diverse programming at many of these sites



This circa 1850 slave dwelling was used by house servants for the E.P. Williams family in the Nacoochee Valley. Today, it is the African American Heritage Site at the Sautee Nacoochee Center in northeast Georgia.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque



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Joseph McGill, Jr.**

that mobilizes local communities and attracts the heritage traveler. Lastly, McGill implemented an online chronicle of each stay that can be accessed at www.lowcountryafricana.com. These blogs also provide a social media platform for people who accompany him to comment on their stays in these dwellings.

The *Slave Dwelling Project* first stay in Georgia was in April 2012, when Joe McGill and fellow 54th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry re-enactor James Brown accompanied him for a

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visit to the *African American Heritage Site*. This slave dwelling has been preserved by the Sautee Nacoochee Community Association (SNCA), and is part of a campus of buildings that comprise the Sautee Nacoochee Center in the Appalachian Highland region of Georgia.



Joseph McGill (foreground) and James Brown (background) were the featured speakers at the African American Heritage Site. They were dressed in their USCT 54th Massachusetts uniforms for the program. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

The slave dwelling is located in the Sautee Nacoochee Valley, an area encompassing over 2,500 acres in White County. Cherokees occupied this section of Georgia until the Treaty of 1819, when they were forced westward on the Trail of Tears. In 1822, Major Edward P. Williams and his family from North Carolina were among the first 61 whites to migrate to the Nacoochee Valley after the Land Lottery of 1820. The Williams family focused on subsistence farming, and his son, Edwin P. Williams, purchased over 2,300 acres that he managed with an enslaved population. E.P. Williams became a major landowner by 1861, and he owned 18 enslaved people in the valley during the Civil War.

A surviving structure from the Williams family was a circa 1850 slave dwelling. The dwelling was originally located adjacent to the family main house where it was used by house servants. This use continued after enslavement until the twentieth century, when Williams' family descendants added a bath, bedroom, kitchen and a front porch. The granddaughter of E.P. Williams lived in this modified slave dwelling as late as the 1930s. Years later, the dwelling had deteriorated significantly when it was donated to SNCA.

SNCA faced many preservation challenges in saving the slave dwelling. One of the conditions when they accepted the dwelling was that the endangered structure be moved. Additionally, the cabin stone chimney was leaning into the structure. While assembling a team of preservationists to stabilize the structure, SNCA also engaged the residents of Bean Creek, the place in the valley where African American freedmen settled after the Civil War.

Preservation of the slave dwelling initially focused on removing all additions to the structure that did not contribute to its interpretation as a 16-by-28-foot cabin. Rock mason David Vandiver reassembled the original stone chimney while other researchers uncovered historic photos. Jim Johnston, the descendant who donated the cabin, covered the roof with hand-split, 30 inch, white oak shingles fastened with cut nails. The Appalachian Regional Commission provided funding for Phase I preservation initiatives. The cabin was moved to a nature preserve during this stage of its preservation, but ultimately was relocated to the SNCA campus.

SNCA received a Tourism Product Development grant from the Georgia Department of Economic Development for Phase II preservation initiatives. This tourism grant created resources for part-time positions while the project was underway. The cabin overhang and handicap accessibility was constructed, along with landscaping and exterior exhibits.



Joseph McGill demonstrates use of his weapon during the evening program. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

When Joseph McGill and James Brown visited the *African American Heritage Site*, a crowd of 129 people assembled for their evening program. Lawrence Dorsey, a Bean Creek resident, provided a human backdrop for the program while he lit lanterns around the cabin dressed as a freedman.

Dressed in their 54th Massachusetts uniforms, James Brown performed a monologue that documented his quest for freedom both as a runaway slave, soldier and a freedman. McGill's presentation focused on his quest to raise awareness of the significance of slave dwellings in the interpretation of African American sites associated with antebellum history. He commented on the valor demonstrated by the 54th Massachusetts soldiers on Morris Island. Both men demonstrated how their weapons and equipment were used during the Civil War. Local musicians played the banjo while participants enjoyed a lite meal. That evening, James Brown, Caroline Crittenden, Joseph McGill, Sabrina Dorsey

and Stacey Allen stayed after the crowd left for more conversation. Stacey Allen, a young descendant of the Williams family and their slaves, slept in the dwelling with James and Joseph.

Because the *African American Heritage Site* is regularly used for living history programs, McGill thought this dwelling was more “adorned” than many he had slept in, as the structure had one bed, a fireplace and cooking instruments inside. He was also surprised to learn about the Bean Creek community and he was very pleased that Stacey was from this community and was a descendant of the slave owner and enslaved people connected to this dwelling. The following morning, Joseph, James and Stacey rejoined the community for a pancake breakfast at the Sautee Nacoochee Center. “Both James and I left with the promise that we both would return if invited.”



Tabby number two is the slave dwelling that Joseph McGill slept in during his stay on Ossabaw Island. This tabby cabin and two additional ones were residences for enslaved people on the North End Plantation.
Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

The *Slave Dwelling Project* second stay in Georgia was a visit to the tabby slave dwellings on Ossabaw Island in May 2013. This stay was McGill’s first overnight trip to a barrier island, so the planning and public programming for the event required a slight variation in that the island is only accessible by boat.

The Ossabaw Island Foundation and the Ossabaw Island Education Alliance are the stewards for Ossabaw Island, a 26,000 acre site near Savannah that is comprised of forests, wildlife and historic buildings. The State of Georgia purchased the island in 1978, and today it is Georgia’s first Heritage Preserve.

Paul Pressly, director of the Ossabaw Island Education Alliance, conducts interpretive programs to



Paul Pressly
Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

educate visitors about the indigo plantation that was established on the island by John Morel in 1760. Today, three tabby dwellings remain on the North End Plantation where enslaved people once lived.

Paul Pressly crafted a visit from the *Slave Dwelling Project* that incorporated both the stories of enslavement and freedmen on Ossabaw Island, as well as life on the mainland in the Pin Point community. The weekend event started at the Pin Point Heritage Museum. Joseph McGill provided a presentation about the project to other Savannah partners. The Ossabaw Island Foundation also used the public event to announce a new partnership they had formed with Bethesda Academy and the Pin Point Heritage Museum to share their respective stories.

Twelve people participated in the overnight stay on the island, and tabby cabin number two was the place where Joseph McGill would stay with two additional visitors. Toni Battle came from California, where she is involved with the Legacy Project. The second visitor was writer Tony Horwitz, author of *Confederates in the Attic*.



Joseph McGill comments about the tabby cabin’s construction for two families separated by a common fireplace.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

When the group arrived, Pressly led a walking tour of the North End Plantation and the three surviving tabby cabins. Then, the group took a truck ride to Middle Place, where tabby ruins from that plantation co-exist with buildings constructed for artists as part of the Genesis Project in the 1960s. After dinner, the entire group participated in blessing the cabin where Joseph, Toni and Tony would stay for the night.

McGill ended his weekend by speaking on Sunday at Sweetfield of Eden Baptist Church in Pin Point, but Sarah Ross offered an unscheduled stay on Saturday night at the slave dwelling at Wormsloe Plantation. To his surprise, that dwelling is now used as guest quarters. Conversations are underway for a future return visit to Wormsloe with public programming, a key element of the *Slave Dwelling Project*.

These two dwellings are examples of how enslaved people lived in the Georgia mountains and on a barrier island. Interested stewards of other dwellings can contact Joseph McGill on Facebook at The Slave Dwelling Project or Twitter @slavedwelling.

CHUBBTOWN: A BRIEF HISTORY OF AN ANTEBELLUM AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Danielle Ross, African American Programs Assistant
Historic Preservation Division

The historic Chubbtown community, located five miles southeast of Cave Spring, Georgia served as a rare, self-sufficient, antebellum, African American community in Floyd County, Georgia. Chubbtown was initially settled by eight brothers who moved to Georgia from North Carolina in the early-to-mid 1800s. The eight Chubb brothers from oldest to youngest were: William, Henry, John, Thomas, Jacob, Isaac, Nicholas, and George. Isaac Chubb Sr., father of the Chubb brothers, was listed as a resident of Caswell County, North Carolina in 1830. It is believed that the Chubb family was freed through purchase by an ancestor for \$1,200.00. Already at this point in history, the Chubb family served as a rare example of freed blacks in the South. Early in the Chubb family history, the spelling of the family name consisted of one 'b', but ultimately came to be spelled with the double 'b' that is still currently used.



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Photograph Not Available

This 1899 map of Cave Spring labels Chubbtown as its own community along the border of Floyd and Polk Counties. Photo courtesy of the U. S. Geological Survey (see red circle).

Isaac Chubb Sr., along with his wife and a small child, migrated from Caswell County, North Carolina to north Georgia around 1833. By 1850, Isaac Chubb Sr. lived with his wife and child in Morgan County. During this time in Georgia the population was just over 900,000 with a little over 381,000 enslaved people, and 521,000 whites. Of this total approximately 2,900 were listed as free blacks, with just 16 of this number living in Morgan County. Isaac Chubb Sr. and his family totaled 10 of the 16 free blacks in Morgan County. Shortly after 1850, the Chubb family moved to present-day Floyd County, Georgia. Isaac was recorded as being a blacksmith, as occupations in the trades were dominant throughout the Chubb family. According to historic records, the listed trade occupations that the Chubb family held varied from carpenters to maple syrup producers. Alfred Chubb, the son of Henry Chubb, was said to have grown a majority of the food his family ate while also selling cotton for income. John Chubb was listed in the 1870

census as a wagon maker. Thomas Chubb was listed as a blacksmith, just like his father, Isaac Chubb, and William Chubb was a house carpenter.

Around the mid-to late 1800s the second oldest brother, Henry Chubb, purchased 120 acres for \$900.00 before the end of the Civil War. While this acquisition of land by a freed African American seems almost unfathomable during this time in history, the land purchase ultimately formed the heart of what is now Chubbtown. Overall, the Chubb brothers lived comfortably. All together the brothers owned 32 rural lots of property that contained 40 acres of land each.

The community of Chubbtown included all of the necessary businesses for growth and self-sufficiency. The brothers continued to purchase land to add to the community throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s. The community ultimately covered over 1,280 acres of land in both Floyd and Polk Counties. Upon establishment of the community in the latter half of the 1800's, key businesses sprang up along Chubbtown Road: a cotton gin, grist mill, distillery, syrup mill, post office, sawmill, general store, and meeting hall were among the businesses that helped to keep Chubbtown thriving. One specific property, the Chubb Methodist Episcopal Church (later named Chubb Chapel United Methodist Church) was founded in 1870. The church was used at the time as both a place of worship and a school. Henry Chubb is the only brother that is listed on the deed as a trustee of the church. The Chubb Methodist Episcopal Church evolved from a single plot of land to multiple plots of land through land contributions from Alfred Chubb and Clemmie Chubb. Chubb Methodist Episcopal Church was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on May 4, 1990. The church is a Gothic Revival structure that has few alternations other than necessary upgrades and an addition.



*Chubb Chapel United Methodist Church still serves as the community church for Chubbtown. Constructed in 1870, the building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
Photo by Danielle Ross*

With the continuous expansion of the Chubb brothers' property, the town began to attract the attention of neighboring white communities in Floyd County. This attraction landed



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Alfred and Clemmie Chubb both promoted education for Chubbtown youth. Clemmie bought land for the community school while Alfred provided transportation for its students. Photo courtesy of Chubb Chapel United Methodist Church 2011 Homecoming Booklet

Chubbtown a mention in the *History of Floyd County*, published in 1922. In addition to its mention in the county history, many white families traveled specifically to Chubbtown to get supplies or goods from the Chubbtown grocer. Over time, there was a lot of respect that the white community held for the black community of Chubbtown. In addition to the growth and economic activity within Chubbtown, the Chubb family was instrumental in furthering



The 1920s Fairview School is a historic African American school in Cave Spring. Descendants of Henry Chubb sold the Fairview School and its four-acre site to the Fairview-E.S. Brown Corporation. It was listed as a Place in Peril by the Georgia Trust in 2011. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

education within Floyd County- namely Cave Spring. In 1926, Clemmie Chubb bought a lot for \$35 to build Central School. By 1933, the initial investment was reimbursed to Clemmie and Alfred to build an additional school building near Central School. Central School ultimately consolidated into the Fairview School by 1942. After the consolidation, the Chubb family maintained an active role in African American education in Floyd County. Alfred Chubb began the first African American bus system in Floyd County in 1942 to assist with transporting children from Chubbtown to Fairview. Alfred's daughter, Elvira Chubb (Bray), was also involved in furthering education for African American students, as she taught at Fairview School during the 1940s.

During the period of 1930-1940 the small stream known as Spring Creek flooded over its banks, carrying with it the grist mill, distillery, and other businesses that contributed to the functionality of the community. This natural disaster set the stage for the gradual decline in the prosperity of the community. By 1940, all of the Chubb brothers had died. The Chubb Family Cemetery is located on the main thoroughfare through the town, and is the burial place for the Chubbs and many families that had strong ties to the community.



The founding Chubb brothers and family descendants are buried in the cemetery on Chubbtown Road. Photo by Danielle Ross



Chubb Cemetery also is the final resting place for other members of the community. Photo by Danielle Ross

While the community is no longer a self-sufficient town, Chubb descendants still own portions, but not all, of the existing properties within Chubbtown. The community itself still bears the name Chubbtown. Descendants of the Chubb family still reside in the area and many of the influential families of the community attend Chubb Chapel United Methodist Church. For further information on Chubbtown and its history please refer to Kenneth Jones's *The Chubbs of Chubbtown* and the National Register nomination for *Chubb United Methodist Episcopal Church*. ■

FOURTH GRADE HISTORY SLEUTHS RESEARCH THE WATKINSVILLE ROSENWALD SCHOOL

*Jeanne Cyriaque, African American Programs Coordinator
Historic Preservation Division*

In February I often speak at various programs throughout the state in celebration of Black History Month, but a unique invitation led me to visit the Colham Ferry Elementary School (CFES) in Watkinsville. Assistant Principal Chuck Cunningham was launching a social studies project with the fourth grade class at CFES that he thought I might be interested in, as the students were researching a school that once existed at their site, the Watkinsville Rosenwald School.

The Watkinsville Rosenwald School was built in 1928 and was the only Rosenwald School in Oconee County. The school was constructed with a *Community School Plan* designed by the Rosenwald Fund to accommodate four teachers. The building cost was \$5,810 with \$810 contributed from the African American community, \$3,500 in public funds and \$1,500 from the Rosenwald Fund. The school remained as the Watkinsville Rosenwald School until 1956, when it was dismantled to make room for a new school for African Americans, the E.D. Stroud School, named in honor of E.D. Stroud, a former principal of the Rosenwald School.



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Jeanne Cyriaque shares her knowledge about Rosenwald Schools in Georgia with the Colham Ferry fourth grade class. Photo courtesy of Colham Ferry Elementary School

Armed with these facts and a historic photo of the Watkinsville School from the Fisk University archives, I met the students and provided a PowerPoint presentation about the 259 school buildings that once existed in Georgia. I shared with the students a few statistical charts that showed how many buildings existed in some of the 15 Rosenwald states. Then I displayed two maps of Georgia that graphically illustrated on their school's state of the art multimedia system how many buildings once existed in the state's 103 counties and how many we have found that were still standing. This led to a number of questions about how they could research schools in these states, and I showed them how they could access www.rosenwaldschools.com to query information with a link to the Fisk University database and possible photos. Additionally, I showed them documents on the Historic Preservation Division (HPD) website, www.georgiashpo.org especially *Rosenwald Schools in Georgia, 1912-1937* and the numerous Rosenwald School articles we have published in *Reflections*. I also

shared with them some of the most recent books authored by Peter Ascoli, Stephanie Deutsch and Mary Hoffschwelle, who are members of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Rosenwald Initiative.

The second part of my presentation focused on the 51 buildings that we have documented in Georgia that are still standing. I discussed with the students how finding these buildings was an incredible journey that is still ongoing, and some of the complexities involved in researching historic schools that were not well documented due to racial attitudes about black education during segregation. I encouraged the students to find living individuals in Watkinsville who may have attended the Rosenwald School or the E.D. Stroud School that followed it.



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The fourth grade class conducted interviews with alumni who attended the Watkinsville Rosenwald School and the E.D. Stroud School. Their personal accounts of both schools proved invaluable in the research project.

Photo courtesy of Colham Ferry Elementary School



Georgia Browning taught at the Watkinsville Rosenwald School and the E.D. Stroud School.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

The students informed me that they had invited some alumni to visit with them the morning before my presentation, and I encouraged them to pursue oral histories with these former students to learn more about the Watkinsville Rosenwald School. They uncovered some surprising facts and presented them to all of us at a school assembly in May.

When I arrived at Colham Ferry that morning, every student participated in the day's event. The students contacted numerous alumni and former teachers who were escorted to the cafeteria still in use from the E.D. Stroud era

for a reception. The most popular attendee among the parents and friends of the project was Georgia Browning, who taught at the school. The students then escorted us to the gymnasium still in use since the late 1950s, where the entire school witnessed their PowerPoint presentation.



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The gymnasium is one of the remaining buildings from the E.D. Stroud era.

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The first group discussed what life was like in the 1920s-1930s in the United States, Georgia and Oconee County. They explained that this topic was important because “we need to know the rich history of Oconee County in the 1920s and 1930s, because if we didn’t know what the past was like, we would never know how the African American children received an education through the Rosenwald Project.” Then the students explained the partnership between Booker T. Washington and Julius Rosenwald that led to the construction of the Watkinsville Rosenwald School, with all slides accompanied by historic photos.

One of the alumni sketched a floor plan from memory that illustrated two buildings existed on the site. By researching school board minutes the students learned that the Rosenwald School was sold to members of the Wilkes family for \$750. Mrs. Susan Wilkes, a family descendant who works at CFES, shared information that the building was dismantled, and the material was used to build three grain barns. The CFES history sleuths found these barns and the current owner, who donated one of the original planks from the barn as well as a piece of tin from the roof.



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“We are delighted to have received one of the original planks from the barn as well as a piece of tin from the roof.”

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Alumni, former teacher Georgia Browning and Assistant Principal Chuck Cunningham stand in front of the oak tree where the students placed the marker.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque



Colham Ferry’s mascot is the mustang, so the fourth graders sold decorated horseshoes to raise funds for the marker and had it engraved.
Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

After the presentation, the fourth graders took all outside to view the rock marker they dedicated beneath the oak tree where the Watkinsville Rosenwald School once stood.

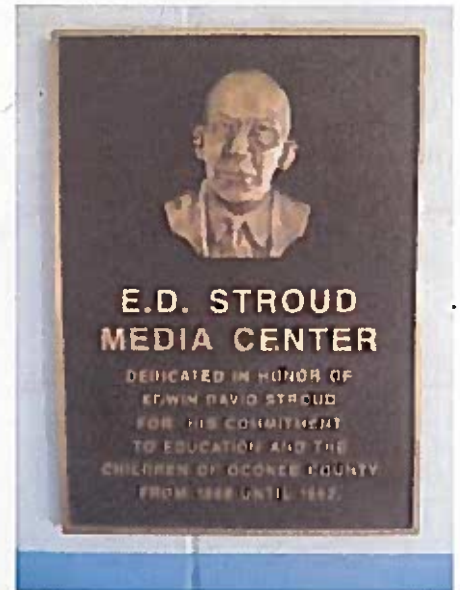
Colham Ferry Elementary School, the current school, is one of 500 schools in Georgia that were built for African Americans in the 1950s-1960s as part of Georgia’s massive resistance to school integration. After the U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1954 (*Brown vs. Board*) these schools were built with public funds to demonstrate that Georgia could administer two “separate but equal” school systems for black and white students.

After the Rosenwald School was dismantled, it was replaced by the E.D. Stroud School in 1956. Over the years, as school population increased, gradually racial demographics of the school changed. Many additions were made to the original E.D. Stroud school, adding new wings to the core structure. Yet, the combined cafeteria and auditorium with a stage, and gymnasium remain from this era.

Following integration of Oconee County schools, the name was changed to

Oconee County Intermediate School, and in 1996 was renamed Colham Ferry Elementary School.

This summer construction is underway again for yet another school expansion at CFES. Due to the research of these fourth graders, the documentation of its African American past is enriched for future generations.



A bronze plaque of E.D. Stroud is displayed outside the media center named in his honor.
Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

ABOUT REFLECTIONS

Since its first issue appeared in December 2000, *Reflections* has documented hundreds of Georgia's African American historic resources. Now all of these articles are available on the Historic Preservation Division website www.georgiashpo.org. Search for links to your topic by categories: cemeteries, churches, districts, farms, lodges, medical, people, places, schools, and theatres. You can now subscribe to *Reflections* from the homepage. *Reflections* is a recipient of a *Leadership in History Award* from the American Association for State and Local History



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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 built 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 plans and implements 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 3,000 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 the Network. Visit the Historic Preservation Division website at www.georgiashpo.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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