



# Reflections

Volume XV, No. 2

December 2018

## JEANES SUPERVISORS: UNSUNG MASTER TEACHERS THAT CHANGED EDUCATION

By Contributor *Vernon F. Clarke*  
Documentarian/Filmmaker/ Lecturer

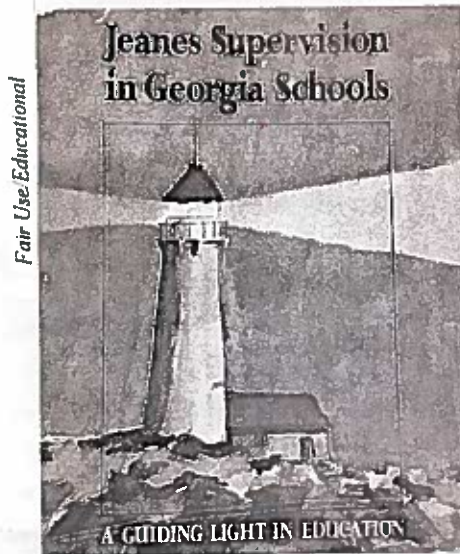
We took straw and made bricks, said Narvie J. Harris, a former Jeanes Supervisor in DeKalb County, Georgia.<sup>1</sup> The Jeanes Supervisors were “master teachers” who had a profound impact on countless southern Black children through education for more than 60 years during the time of Jim Crow and segregation.<sup>2</sup> Established by the Anna T. Jeanes Foundation this group of “unsung” African American educators operated in Georgia and 14 other states, as well as overseas, and worked to improve the economic, political, and social conditions of the rural communities that they served.<sup>3</sup> The fabric of their story is one of commitment, determination, and often heart-wrenching struggles.

Quality and equal education is considered inalienable right by the American people and viewed as the path to both a better life and to becoming a productive member of society. Unfortunately, the ideal of an equal education for all has not been the reality for African Americans. In the period from the early 1900s to 1960s two very

1 Clarke Vernon F., *We Took Straw and Made Bricks: The Jeanes Supervisors* documentary. Directed by Vernon F. Clarke, Atlanta: Breaking New Ground Production, 1995.

2 Anderson, James D., *The Education of Blacks in the South 186-1935*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1988, 156.

3 NASC Interim History Writing Committee, *The Jeanes Story: A Chapter in the History of American Education 1908-1968*, Atlanta, Southern Education Foundation, 1979, 11.



Cover of historical narrative published 1975 by Georgia Assoc. of Jeanes Curriculum Directors

HPD File Photo

different and unequal education systems were established in the South where Black schools were inferior to white schools in almost all respects: facilities, textbooks, teachers, resources, etc. However, even during these difficult and harsh times there were individuals and groups committed to providing the best education possible for Black children. One such group was the Jeanes Supervisors Program.

Anna T. Jeanes was a wealthy Philadelphian Quaker woman who founded the Anna T. Jeanes Foundation, also known as the Negro Rural School Fund, in 1907 with the stated mission of “improving

Southern rural schools for Negroes.”<sup>4</sup> The Foundation was one of the first established for the sole purpose of improving Black public schools.<sup>5</sup> The Foundation came into being after Booker T. Washington approached Anna Jeanes for \$10,000 to build a dining room at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. She however refused, stating that the money should be used for more pressing needs primarily the improvement of rural education.<sup>6</sup> Prior to her death in 1907 Anna Jeanes provided \$1 million to create the Anna T. Jeanes Foundation and appointed Booker T. Washington as Chairman of the Board of Trustees. This appointment in itself was an important and significant event given the racial climate of the country at this time. Without a doubt the thought of having Blacks controlling money and resources for Black schools was very daring in 1907.

While the first Jeanes Teacher was employed in Virginia, Georgia had one of the largest group of Supervisors who worked throughout the state.<sup>7</sup>

As their responsibilities expanded, the Jeanes Teachers eventually became “Supervisors.” This program in

4 Ibid 18.

5 Anderson, 158.

6 Clarke, *We Took Straw and Made Bricks: The Jeanes Supervisors* documentary, 1995.

7 More than 350 Jeanes teachers and supervisor served in Georgia according to the Georgia Association of Jeanes Curriculum Directors, *Jeanes Supervision in Georgia Schools, A Guiding Light in Education: A History of the Program from 1908-1975*, Atlanta, Southern Education Foundation 1975, Index 281

## THE HISTORY (AND FUTURE) OF A BOARDING HOUSE: THE MITCHELL YOUNG ANDERSON MUSEUM

By Special Contributor Gylbert Coker, Ph.D.  
Executive Director, The Mitchell-Young-Anderson Museum

The house on 319 Oak Street in Thomasville is an historical and cultural gem. It represents the entrepreneurial ingenuity of Sam Young and his wife Emma Mitchell while revealing an aspect of the economic evolution that took place specifically in the African American neighborhood, today known as the Stevens Street Historic District.

Following the end of the Civil War (1861-1865), the land just west of Stevens Street that sloped downward toward two creeks was subdivided. Freed Africans from Thomasville and surrounding counties were encouraged to settle in this area as it was considered undesirable by most Thomasville whites since it was low lying and the Atlantic and Gulf Railroad (now the CSX Railroad), completed in 1868, stretched through the area.<sup>1</sup>

As with most family history, there are pieces in time that are missing. What is known is that Emma Mitchell was born after the Civil War in 1868 on her father's plantation which stood near Ochlocknee church.<sup>2</sup> Sam Young was born in 1866.<sup>3</sup> It is not known how or where Sam and Emma met, but they did. They fell in love and got married in 1882.<sup>4</sup> According to family accounts, Sam had skills as a carpenter and moved to Thomasville where he made



The Mitchell Young Anderson House is now a heritage museum. Photo Credit: Meissa Jest/HPD

enough money to send for Emma and their babies. They lived in a small house on Jackson Street going towards the train station. Sam then built a two-story family house at 408 Monroe Street where the family would live.

During this time, wealthy Northerners and Midwesterners were seeking southern destinations offering relief from winter cold, the pressures of industrialized urban life, and pulmonary diseases.<sup>5</sup> In the 1870s northern sportsmen formed relationships with whites and blacks in Thomas County who aided their quest to build a personal hunting paradise.<sup>6</sup> Other visitors, perhaps not as affluent, wintered in the city's several grand hotels or stayed in smaller hotels and boarding houses.<sup>7</sup> Restaurants, bars, shops, doctor's and lawyer's offices began to open, resulting in jobs for many African Americans who lived in the Stevens Street neighborhood. Most of these jobs did not pay black workers enough money to

purchase land or build their own homes but they earned enough to pay for a room, food, and clothing.<sup>8</sup>

In 1887 the house at 319 Oak Street became available and Emma and Sam Young purchased it with the intention of turning it into a boarding house. Many people in the neighborhood would rent rooms in their homes to earn extra money; this house would have been the largest boarding house in the district. According to family oral history, Emma was a no-nonsense manager of the house. People were expected to pay their money on time. If they did not, she put them out. Men were not allowed to bring women friends into their rooms. Roomers were given a breakfast and a dinner, clean sheets, a wash area, and outhouse.

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Florida had become fashionable. Thomasville was no longer "the" winter resort. Winter visitors became few. Businesses began to close their doors. Those in the Stevens Street District were hit twice by fewer visitors to Thomasville and by competition from the Jewish shops, Greek restaurants, and African American owned businesses on

<sup>8</sup> Anderson, Jule, untitled draft of family history, c. 2010, Mitchell Young Anderson Museum Collection.

<sup>1</sup> National Register of Historic Places, The Stevens Street Historic District, Thomasville, Thomas County, National Register #01000500, March 2001, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Mitchell Young Anderson Museum Collection, Charlie Young letter to Jule Anderson, December 19, 1965. Emma Mitchell's father, Lemond or Lemuel, was the son of his white master, Lenna Mitchell and his enslaved mother Waddie. Master Mitchell gave Lemond his own plantation near Ochlocknee GA where he raised his family: His wife, Matilda, four children including Emma. Matilda dies in 1869 during childbirth.

<sup>3</sup> Anderson, Jule, untitled draft of family history, c. 2010, Mitchell Young Anderson Museum Collection.

<sup>4</sup> Young, Charles "Reminiscences of Charlie Young for Bill Rogers", 1964; family oral history incorporated in *Thomas County: 1865-1900*, William Warren Rogers. Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1973.

<sup>5</sup> Harrison, Ann, "Thomasville's Pines were preserved during 'resort era' August 21, 2014 Tallahassee Democrat, part of the USA Today Network.

<sup>6</sup> Brock, Julia, *Northern Hunting Plantations in the Red Hills Region, 1870-1930*, Ph.D. Candidate, 2010 Department of History of University of California, Santa Barbara.

<sup>7</sup> Rogers, William W., *Transition To The Twentieth Century: Thomas County, Georgia, 1900-1920*, 2002 Sentry Press, 167 and 253.

the West Jackson Street, referred to as The Bottom.



l to r: Joseph Young, Charlie Young, Carrie McNair (Charlie's wife), c. 1910. Courtesy of Gylbert Coker

Sam and Emma Young's son Charlie married Carrie McNair on March 22, 1908.

Charlie inherited the 319 Oak Street house from his parents in 1911 and used the house as both his residence and as a boarding house. According to the family, Charlie's brother Joseph, who had been given 315 Oak Street next door, had a car. When their African American guests arrived in town, Joseph drove to the rail station, picked up the visitors, and brought them to the boarding house. If all the rooms were full at Mitchell Young house, the remaining visitors stayed in Joseph's house. From 1930 through 1945 or so, Virginia, Charlie's daughter, and her husband Essic Anderson took over the responsibilities of the house, renaming it Rosebud Tourist Home in this "City of Roses."<sup>9</sup> They rented rooms to Black entertainers such as the cast members of Silas Green from New Orleans, a traveling minstrel show, The Southerners, a male vocal group, as well as sports and entertainment figures, railroad men and traveling salesmen.<sup>10</sup> The doors remained

<sup>9</sup> Thomasville Magazine online, <https://www.thomasvillemagazine.com/georgias-rose-city/> accessed October 31, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Anderson, Jule, untitled draft of family history, c. 2010, Mitchell Young Anderson Museum Collection.

open until 1949 when the Imperial Hotel, the first and only African American hotel opened in Thomasville. Virginia continued to live in the house with her two daughters, Jule and Brenda after her husband died. It was not until the 1990s when Jule Anderson returned from California that the house was reopened as an Afrocentric bed & breakfast.

Jule Anderson died in 2014. In her will, she directed that the house, owned by her family for 127 years, become a museum that reminds the public of the history of the boarding house and of those early days when the Stevens Street neighborhood was filled with promise, hope, and ambition.

Today, the Mitchell-Young-Anderson (MYA) museum houses a collection of early 20th century family heirlooms, furnishings, and material artifacts and the vast personal collection of art, books and music recordings bequeathed by founder Jule Anderson. The museum is also a movie venue, showing films written, directed, and performed by African American people. MYA plans to also present films made in other countries within the African Diaspora such as Brazil, Jamaica, and Nigeria as well as Afrocentric films produced in Europe.



Gylbert Coker, front row, 2nd from right, with the Getty Leadership Institute 2018 Class. Courtesy of Getty Leadership Insitute/ Melody Kanschat

The MYA museum was awarded a scholarship to participate in the Getty Leadership Institute (GLI) in Claremont, California this summer. The program is an international training dedicated to developing individual leadership skills and strategic planning among museum professionals. Since its founding in the late 1990s, the GLI has served more than 1800 museum professionals from more than 40 countries worldwide.<sup>11</sup> The GLI program provided each participant with a mentor, a coach as well as professors of Behavioral and Organizational Sciences, Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Marketing, and Management. The MYA museum was the smallest site represented in this summer's class which included Yale University Art Gallery, the Smithsonian Institute, and other museum as far away as Sweden, Austrilia, China, and Kenya.

Since returning home, I have organized a new board and, with them, revised the MYA mission and created an "elevator" statement. The GLI fellow directors from other instituttions helped me to envision the future for the MYA museum and to recognize the importance of this boarding house owned by Black people for Black people since 1887 as a valuable part of American history. ■

<sup>11</sup> The Getty Leadership Institute, About GLI, <https://gli.cgu.edu>, accessed October 31, 2018

## CARVER HEIGHTS, COLUMBUS'S FIRST POST WWII SEGREGATED NEIGHBORHOOD

Compiled by Students of Cultural, Urban Geography and GIS courses at Columbus State University and CSU Professor Amanda Rees

Located in Midtown section of Columbus, the Carver Heights subdivision stretches over 84 acres and includes approximately 430 homes; the first home was built in 1946. This community was the first African American suburb built in Columbus after World War II.<sup>1</sup> Established just outside the city's eastern boundary, the location of Carver Heights reflects that of other southern segregated suburbs. This contrasted with black, segregated suburbs in the North, where expansion typically occurred into older existing white neighborhoods.<sup>2</sup>

in post-war America: the American Small House and the American (or California) Ranch.

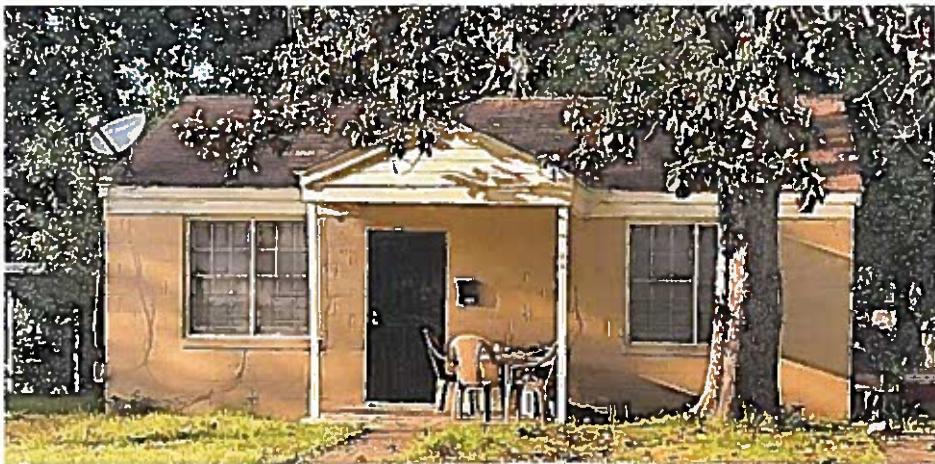
At a time of institutional segregation, Carver Heights gave African Americans access to the American dream of home-ownership. The land was platted for a series of post-WWII cottages, today known as the American Small House, interspersed with some early ranch homes.<sup>4</sup> Amongst the single-family homes are multiple duplexes and one apartment building. In addition, the subdivision included a commercial section where folks

after WWII when labor and materials were in short supply.<sup>5</sup> This building type met a clear national goal to provide well-designed, well-built, affordable, single-family homes. Many of the Carver Heights homes were built using a brick facade, an inexpensive feature at the time, with modest porches or stoops adorned with decorative iron porch columns. The two-bedroom home was the most common, as it was the smallest house that could be guaranteed a mortgage.<sup>6</sup>

At the end of World War II, some of the 100,000 African American soldiers stationed at Fort Benning were ready to settle down. After serving their country, these veterans qualified for home loans guaranteed by the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (GI Bill).<sup>7</sup> Loans could only be used for new construction, which meant that veterans could not use this resource to re-invest in existing buildings because lenders deemed rehabilitation a financial risk. Until the mid-1960s, suburb developers could legally discriminate against African American and Jewish home buyers. Thus, many suburbs were only open to white homeowners. Carver Heights symbolizes strong leadership of developer Edwin Edward Farley and his colleagues and the remarkable opportunity for African Americans advancement. Carver Heights became home to the families of active duty military members stationed at Fort Benning and to veterans who became part of the post-war labor force as teachers, housemaids, ministers, and employees in local businesses, mills and factories.

Many owners planted vegetable gardens and fruit trees. Morehouse Street was home to the Maddox family. Retired Sgt 1st Class Arthur Alvoid Maddox was a former member of Fort Benning's School for Bakers and Cooks and ran a garden nursery from his home.<sup>8</sup>

At least eight additional segregated subdivisions were subsequently



A typical American Small House in Carver Heights neighborhood, Columbus Georgia  
Courtesy of Emma Fortson

Segregated suburban developments constructed for African American residents have been divided in two major types: suburbs that combined residential and work spaces and welcomed blue collar residents; and suburbs developed for a small but growing black middle class.<sup>3</sup> Carver Heights was built and marketed to returning African American veterans. It includes two primarily residential architectural styles that represents a unique period of building

1 Wade, Joyce. 2017. "16. Carver Heights Subdivision" Columbus State University Archives [Online] Georgia. <http://digitalarchives.columbusstate.edu/16-carver-heights-subdivision>. Accessed November 12, 2018.

2 Little, Margaret Ruth. 2012. "Getting the American Dream for Themselves Postwar Modern Subdivisions for African Americans in Raleigh, North Carolina." *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum*. 19(1):73-86.

3 Wiese, Andrew. 2004. *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

could buy gas, rent a motel room, launder clothes and grab a drive-through meal.

This new subdivision also honored African American leaders and institutions as it bears the name of renown scientist George Washington Carver who conducted his research 40 miles west at the Tuskegee Institute of Alabama. There are streets named for Carver and Booker T. Washington, co-founders of Tuskegee Institute and historically black colleges and universities such as Fisk University and Morehouse College.

Across the nation, the American Small House period emerged during the Great Depression and reached its climax

4 Georgia Historic Preservation Division, "The American Small House" presentation [Online] [https://georgiashpo.org/sites/default/files/hpd/pdf/AmericanSmallHouse\\_0.pdf](https://georgiashpo.org/sites/default/files/hpd/pdf/AmericanSmallHouse_0.pdf) Accessed October 17, 2018.

5 Ibid.

6 Wiese 2004.

7 Ibid.

8 Oral Interview with Emma Maddox Anckwe (daughter), October 28, 2018.

constructed in Columbus including Willis Plaza, Washington Heights, Bel Mar, Quail Creek, East Carver Heights, Cedar Hills, Dawson Estates and finally Mount Vernon.<sup>9</sup> After WW II Black civic leaders saw these separate suburban communities as a source of black improvement and as a solution to often-wretched current conditions. This contrasts with the North, where white civic leaders contained black housing development to the central city.

Carver Heights was the home of its developer E.E. Farley (circa 1902–1956) and his wife Ella. The Farleys were successful business people and owned the Farley Realty Company which sold property in Carver Heights.



Columbus civic leader E.E. Farley (c. 1902-1956) Courtesy of Columbus Public Library/ Genealogy Room Fair Use/Educational

In 1954 Farley moved his family from the heart of Columbus's African American commercial and residential community downtown to the new Carver Heights subdivision.

The Farleys regularly rented out rooms to newly trained school teachers from Tuskegee relocating to Columbus. As Fort Benning offered only 4-5 homes that could be rented by black soldiers, others in the community rented rooms to newly located soldiers and their families<sup>10</sup> The community opened their homes to newly relocated folks seeking to make a new home in the city. Farley was active within the broader

9 Oral Interview with Emma Maddox Anckwe, Carver Heights resident, October 29, 2018.

10 Ibid.

Columbus community. He led the local chapter of the NAACP. He also served as executive secretary of the Army and Navy YMCA at Fort Benning.

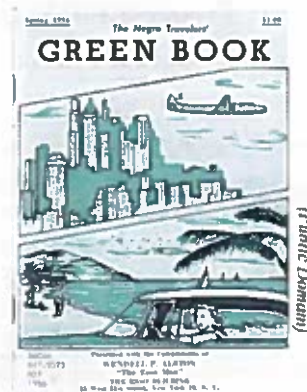
His membership within the local African American fraternal organizations allowed him to work alongside other influential civil rights leaders such as Dr. Thomas H. Brewer, Primus King, and A. J. McClung. In 1925 Farley was instrumental in funding critical improvements to the 9th Street YMCA established in 1907. In 1941 his personal appeal to the wealthy African American Columbus business woman Elizabeth "Lizzie" Lunsford yielded \$15,000 of the \$20,000 needed to fund the new African American USO. Farley, Dr. Brewer, and other prominent local African Americans orchestrated the inaugural football game between Tuskegee and Morehouse held at the city's Memorial Stadium in 1936. Today, the fall football classic remains a staple social event in Columbus. The stadium was renamed the A. J. McClung Memorial Stadium in 2002.<sup>11</sup>

Farley only lived in his Carver Heights home for two years when he died of a heart attack in 1956. Being an astute businesswoman herself, Mrs. Farley continued their real estate business until selling it in 1971. The business was purchased by Booker Edmonds and continues under the name Edmonds-Farley Realty.

The Carver Heights Motel, built in the early 1950s, is one-story building laid out in a V- shape and offered 12 small en-suite rooms. It was constructed at the same time as the homes in the subdivision. Five contiguous lots were assembled to form a small triangular commercial district on the development's western boundary that included the motel, a small grocery store, a gas station, and a drive-through restaurant. This business center made the segregated community remarkably self-sufficient.

The Negro Travelers' Green Book (started in 1936 by Victor Hugo Green) featured Carvery Heights Motel among those lodgings, restaurants, and other services that would welcome African

11 Nicholson, Klaus, ActiveRain.com blog; May 30, 2007 <https://activerain.com/blogsview/111441/columbus-ga--fort-benning--the-a-j-mcclung-memorial-stadium>; accessed November 12, 2018



The Negro Traveler's Green Book. 1956 The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library

American travelers in 1956.<sup>12</sup> It was one of three places that provided lodging for African Americans in Columbus; the others were the Lowe's Hotel and the 9<sup>th</sup> Street YMCA - both located downtown in what is now known as the Liberty District. Today, the Carver Heights Motel is the only building in the city left of the three Green Book listings.

While the Carver Heights motel maintained its service as a motel into the 1960s, it also played an important role as a community center. During the years 1958 to 1961 polio paralyzed almost 14,000 people in the US.<sup>13</sup> Columbus doctors sought to inoculate residents in May 1958 and set up a clinic at the Carver Heights motel to offer the polio vaccine to everyone under 40 years of age in the neighborhood. ■

This article was compiled from research conducted for the Martin Luther King Jr. Outdoor Learning Trail interpretive history project through a partnership between the Columbus Community Geography Center and Turn Around Columbus. Dr. Amanda Rees, Professor of Geography at Columbus State University coordinates the Columbus Community Geography Center and led this project. Visit <https://history.columbusstate.edu/columbuscommunitygeography.php>

12 Green, V. H. 1956, The Negro Travelers' Green Book. New York: Victor H. Green & Company.

13 Surveillance of Polipmyelitis in the United States, 1958-1961 December 1962. Public Health Reports Vol.77 No. 12 pp.1011-1020 [https://www.jstor.org/stable/4591692?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/4591692?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents). Accessed on line November 12, 2018

## TUSKEEGEE AIRMEN'S HOME ANCHORS WEST ATLANTA PRESERVATION INITIATIVE

Special report by contributor Ben Sutton, Director of Preservation, Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation

When Edward Johnson moved to Atlanta in 1947, he arrived in a city that was growing and changing at a rapid pace. The post-World War II population boom, along with new demographic shifts and the building economic and political power in the African American community were reshaping large portions of the city. On the West Side, black owned businesses and neighborhoods were growing – particularly around the intersection of Hunter and Ashby Streets (now MLK Jr. Drive and Joseph E. Lowry Blvd.) – to rival the historic Auburn Avenue business district on the east side of town.

Mr. Johnson, who served as a flight instructor in the Tuskegee Airman during World War II, pursued a career as an electrician and became the first African American Licensed Master electrician in Atlanta. He started his own company, Johnson & Wood Electric (founded with a fellow Tuskegee Airman), and grew his business out of a storefront on Hunter Street. He married Harriett May Robinson, an Atlanta native and Spelman graduate, and their family built a charming ranch house on Harwell Street on one of the few undeveloped lots next to the railroad tracks in the historic Washington Park neighborhood. The couple raised three daughters and put them all through college. Mr. Johnson served as a deacon at Friendship Baptist Church, the same church where Mrs. Johnson has been baptized. Mrs. Johnson, after her girls were older, returned to school and earned a Masters in Education, teaching kindergarten in Atlanta Public Schools for several years. The Johnson family's story is an example of the rich fabric of the African-American community during this era: a strong middle class community that served as a foundation for the political leadership that arose from these neighborhoods during the Civil Rights Movement.

Seventy years after Mr. Johnson first moved to Atlanta, the city is experiencing another tumultuous era of growth. The region is the third fastest growing metropolitan area in the country, with much of that growth occurring within the city limits. The Beltline, a major infrastructure and development project, is repurposing the same railroad tracks that ran beside the Johnson house into a citywide trail and park system. Development has boomed throughout Atlanta, and the west side, after decades



*The Johnson Family House, as seen from the Westside Beltline. Courtesy of the Georgia Trust*

of disinvestment that followed its peak in the 50s and 60s, is feeling the pressure. Throughout Atlanta important historic resources are being threatened and lost on a regular basis, but the Westside seems to be in particular peril, with older residents being squeezed by housing costs and speculative investors that show no understanding of the neighborhoods' vital history.

Recognizing these challenges, the Georgia Trust has launched the Westside Preservation Initiative, which seeks to promote historic preservation in Atlanta through the rehabilitation of historic houses and neighborhoods. By engaging residents and building partnerships, the Trust seeks to empower neighborhoods to

preserve their sense of culture, property, and place. The projects will also set an example for appropriate preservation in the city of Atlanta, proving the viability of responsible and incremental community investment and housing affordability through the rehabilitation of historic housing stock.

Working closely with the Johnson family, the Trust has purchased three properties in West Atlanta – the house that the Johnsons built in Washington Park, an adjacent lot, and a 1920s bungalow in nearby Mozley Park that had long been in Mrs. Johnson's family. The Trust will oversee the full rehabilitation of these houses and sell them back to the community at an affordable price. These properties are the perfect start for the initiative for several reasons – the houses are both contributing properties in National Register historic districts, they have been unoccupied so no residents will be displaced, and their original architectural character remains intact. Most importantly, once completed, these houses will be owner occupied, adding to those people investing not only in property but in the neighborhoods they call home.

Trust President & CEO Mark McDonald said, "The Georgia Trust believes this initiative will reinforce the cause of historic preservation, neighborhood revitalization, age, ethnic, and economic diversity and the quality of life in these neighborhoods. Preservation should be more than saving historic buildings in a city. It should also be about the preservation of human resources." The fabric of the community, represented in the history of the Johnson family, can be rebuilt by a new generation, when they respect and understand the history of the places they call home. ■



*Volunteers on Harwell Street. Courtesy of the Georgia Trust*

## JEANES SUPERVISORS: UNSUNG MASTER TEACHERS THAT CHANGED EDUCATION

*continued from page 1*

conjunction with other philanthropic efforts like the Rosenwald School Building Fund were to have an enduring impact on public education in the South by employing the most experienced, dedicated and insightful Black teachers from segregated Negro schools and training for them to become "Master Teachers."<sup>8</sup>

The Jeanes provided educational assistance to rural schools in their respective county through curriculum development, teacher training, and by acting as principals and superintendents when needed. Simultaneously they served as community advocates and social workers. Jeanes operated on the mantra, "the next needed thing," and historians have compared them to the modern day Peace Corps.<sup>9</sup>

The Jeanes helped design and implement community projects ranging from digging wells to provide clean drinking water to building new schools for the children to attend. They introduced scientific techniques to area farmers which produced larger harvests and more crops to sell.<sup>10</sup> They also developed basic health and hygiene programs instrumental in preventing the spread of infectious diseases in these extremely poor communities. They provided rudimentary sex education and were involved in housing and sanitation projects.

In Georgia two prominent Jeanes Supervisors were Narvie Jordan Harris and Susie Weems Wheeler. Mrs. Harris became a Jeanes Supervisor in 1944 in DeKalb County and worked there until 1968. Dr. Wheeler became a Jeanes Supervisor in 1946 and served several school systems including Bartow, Cartersville, Calhoun, and Paulding until 1968. In recognition of their commitment to the education of countless children, two schools were named in their honor: The Narvie J. Harris Elementary School, located in DeKalb County, Georgia and the Noble Hill-Wheeler Memorial Center – a restored Rosenwald School built in 1923- located in Bartow County.

<sup>8</sup> Anderson, 138.

<sup>9</sup> Clarke, *We Took Straw and Made Bricks: The Jeanes Supervisors* documentary, 1995

<sup>10</sup> Clarke, *We Took Straw and Made Bricks: The Jeanes Supervisors* documentary, 1995

Mrs. Harris's distinguished career as an educator began at Atlanta University in 1944 as one of the first group of teachers to study supervision through a grant provided by the Georgia State Department of Education. She received her Master's Degree in Education. Mrs. Harris learned of the Jeanes opportunity from the Southern Education Foundation.<sup>11</sup>



Fair Use Educational

Narvie Jordan Harris c. 1975.

*Photo published in Jeanes Supervisors in Georgia Schools, 1975 by Georgia Assoc. of Jeanes Curriculum Directors*

After receiving her degree, she was employed as a Jeanes Supervisor in DeKalb County. Here, Mrs. Harris would serve in several positions of leadership in the education department. Early in her Jeanes career she served as general supervisor for grades one through twelve at the twelve one-teacher schools and the three combination (elementary and high) schools within DeKalb County. She also coordinated and organized various art, music, and science fairs and festivals, some of which were adopted statewide.<sup>12</sup>

After the 1954 Supreme Court decision to desegregate public education the Black schools in DeKalb were closed,<sup>13</sup> and Harris transitioned to the Central office where she developed programs for the elementary schools. Soon after, she would become the director of Head Start for the DeKalb County.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Clarke, *We Took Straw and Made Bricks: The Jeanes Supervisors* documentary, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> Mason Jr., Herman "Skip", *African American Life in DeKalb County 1823-1970*, Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, 1998, 67.

<sup>13</sup> Georgia Association of Jeanes Curriculum Directors 173.

<sup>14</sup> Mason, 69.



Fair Use Educational

Susie Weems Wheeler c.1975

*Photo published in Jeanes Supervisors in Georgia Schools, 1975 by Georgia Assoc. of Jeanes Curriculum Directors*

Dr. Weems Wheeler was selected to become a Jeanes Supervisor in 1946, a position that afforded her an opportunity to impact the lives of thousands of black children.<sup>15</sup> "I was approached to become a training person for Jeanes supervision at Fort Valley State," said Dr Wheeler during a 2007 interview. She attended Atlanta University for Jeanes Supervisor training after having worked as a teacher in Bartow County for nine years. Dr. Wheeler completed her Jeanes training courses and graduated from Fort Valley State College in 1945. That year, she took a position teaching sixth grade at Summer Hill High School in Cartersville. When Bartow County became a part of the Jeanes program, Cartersville was selected for the northern section of Georgia and Dr. Wheeler was assigned as the Jeanes Supervision for county's African American schools.<sup>16</sup> Dr. Wheeler told the interviewer, "... I had this position that was sort of like a black superintendent. And I had to help get black teachers for the rural schools... to help try to improve the schools."

In 1983, Dr. Wheeler launched the idea to preserve Noble Hill School and worked tirelessly with others until the former rural schoolhouse was once again the center of black community there. ■

Vernon F. Clarke, filmmaker and documentarian, produced the award winning film "The Jeanes Supervisors: Striving To Educate". Mr. Clarke lectures on documentary studies, film history and TV production and has presented at Clark Atlanta University, Clayton State University and Tuskegee University. He is based in Atlanta and can be reached at [vfclarke@gmail.com](mailto:vfclarke@gmail.com).

<sup>15</sup> Glass-Avery, Hermina, *Reflections* newsletter. Georgia Historic Preservation Division, April 2007, 4-6.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

## 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](http://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



Georgia African American  
Historic Preservation Network

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](http://www.georgiashpo.org). Preservation information and previous issues of *Reflections* are available online. Membership in the Network is free and open to all.

## Reflections

Published quarterly by the  
Historic Preservation Division  
Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Dr. David Crass, Division Director  
Melissa Jest, 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 Natural Resources. The contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior, 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 Natural Resources. 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.