

# Reflections

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The July 2024 issue of *Reflections*, a publication of the Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network (GAAHPN), is now available. It is available in PDF format on the Georgia Historic Preservation Division website. It's easy to become a subscriber; just click [here](#).

You may view the issue here, titled [2024-07-reflections](#). This month you will find:

- Recently, John Calhoun Square was re-dedicated as Susie King Taylor Square in Savannah, GA (Chatham County). Find out more about this momentous name change.
- Learn about the benefits of becoming a part of the Certified Local Government (CLG) program, which provides grants for eligible long-term, local preservation projects.
- Cherokee County now has a Black History Driving Tour. Take a journey into the county's past.
- Public libraries reckoned with desegregation in the 1920s and 1930s. Find out how Georgia counties dealt with this difficult history.

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Georgia Historic Preservation Division





July 2024

## SAVANNAH'S TAYLOR SQUARE

By *Hermina Glass-Hill, MHP*  
*Susan Taylor King Institute*

February 10, 2024, the City of Savannah dedicated “Taylor Square” in honor of Susie King Taylor, a Liberty County-born young freedom seeker who, in antebellum years, attended secret schools in Savannah, Georgia. This is the first time in Savannah’s 291-year history that a square was named for a non-white and a woman. Taylor served as a nurse and teacher during the Civil War. A renaissance of Taylor’s historical significance arose in 2017, when Hermina Glass-Hill, a public historian and environmentalist, organized the Susie King Taylor Women’s Institute and Ecology Center and the annual



*Taylor Square dedication ceremony, Savannah, GA. February 2024. Photo courtesy of Jennylyn Pawelski.*

Susie King Taylor Escape to Freedom Celebration. In 2021, Glass-Hill, designed an award-winning permanent museum exhibit in Taylor’s honor titled *Susie King Taylor: Our Geechee Heroine of Freedom, Our American Patriot of Liberty* in Taylor’s hometown of Midway in Liberty County, Georgia.

Savannah is Georgia’s “Hostess City,” and it is known for its historic charm, antebellum homes, and the Oglethorpe Plan, an urban plan designed by General James Oglethorpe which laid out the city around a group of squares and residential dwellings and streets in a grid pattern. Sources such as historian Michael Thurmond, author of a provocative new book titled *James Oglethorpe, Father of Georgia: A Founder’s Journey from Slave Trader to Abolitionist*, considers Oglethorpe as a converted abolitionist. However, during the colonial era, there were twenty-two squares named for prominent businessmen and planters.

One of those planters was South Carolina-born statesman John Calhoun, a two-term vice president in 1825 under President John Quincy Adams and in 1829 under President Andrew Jackson. And Calhoun was also a slave owner.

The process of changing the name of Calhoun Square to Taylor Square occurred as a response to

recent socio-political changes in the United States, which is not that different from how social and political changes happened during the early periods of American democracy in Calhoun’s day. The social responses to the murders of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Ahmaud Arbery on February 23, 2020, in Brunswick, Georgia, both captured on cell phone video and broadcasted around the world, inspired some local Savannahians to seize the moment of national unrest as an opportunity for social change in the Hostess City. A group led by Patt Gunn, co-founder of the Center for Jubilee, Reconciliation and Healing, considered how they might make changes to improve the representation of history in Savannah’s very storied past. What was missing in various historic narratives was the influence of African American/Gullah Geechee people whose labor built

## TAYLOR SQUARE, *continued*

Savannah. The group concluded that changing the names of historic squares named for colonial-era slave owners Whitfield and Calhoun was a way to tell new stories based on truth-telling.

In 2021, the group focused on new names for the squares that would honor the history of Savannah's Black community. Suggestions included "Sankofa" and "Jubilee" square. But the democratic process for changing the name of a historic square had to be approved by the Savannah City Council and it would require at least fifty-one per cent agreement of residents living in the areas around the squares. For more than two years, the group worked tirelessly with the help of some coalition partners and council members knocking on doors and securing signatures on a Change.org petition. The process also included public comment periods, public engagement, and hearings. And there were at least fifteen names suggested including historic and contemporary personalities, such as preservationists and educators. On August 24, 2023,



Taylor Square dedication ceremony, February 2024. Photo courtesy of Jennylyn Paweleski.

Photo of Taylor King, courtesy of Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2018663038/>.

Savannah City Council, led by Mayor Van Johnson, II, voted unanimously to remove Calhoun's name from the square and replace it with the new "Taylor Square." Johnson issued a statement that "[Calhoun] he was not what Savannah is, and [he] certainly is not what Savannah wants to be." He then immediately established procedural protocols for dismantling and replacing square markers as this was surely an unprecedented historic moment for the city.



Hermina Glass-Hill at the Taylor Square dedication ceremony, February 2024. Photo courtesy of Jennylyn Paweleski.

Six months later, on February 10, 2024, during Black History Month, the City of Savannah celebrated with thousands of citizens from near and far joining the official dedication of Taylor Square. The celebration was enjoyed by a diverse crowd of people from a wide range of lived experiences. Looking out from the podium over that crowd that gathered at Taylor Square, Mayor Johnson said, "This is what Savannah truly looks like!"

Taylor Square is significant because now the public-at-large and tourists visiting the Hostess City have an opportunity to visit this square and access a richer and fuller understanding of how Savannah came to be what it is. For centuries, the narrative has appeared to be just one side of the coin. Now with Taylor Square we see that there is another side of the coin, and the truth can now be excavated.

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## GOOD PRESERVATION SENSE: THE CLG PROGRAM

by Natasha Washington  
African American Programs Graduate Research  
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All things historic preservation cost time, energy, and especially, money. There are several grant and funding opportunities on a federal, state, and local level for those interested in rehabilitating an existing property or conducting periodic historic surveys. Every year since 1985, the National Park Service provides states with money through the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) Grant program, of which 10% is used for Certified Local Government (CLG) grants.

Becoming a CLG is a great way to show commitment to long-term preservation projects in their community and the only way to take advantage of these grant funds, which are 60% federally and 40% locally funded. Beginning in early December through February 1st annually, Georgia CLGs can submit applications for preservation projects in their area for projects such as “historic resources survey, National Register nominations, preservation planning, design guidelines, information/education projects, historic structures reports, preservation plans, architectural drawings, and specifications.”<sup>1</sup>

In 2023, seven municipalities received a total of \$118,000 for various activities, such as historic resource surveys and design guidelines. Besides historic survey reports, structure reports, and design guidelines, many types of projects qualify for the grant monies available including rehabilitation activities of cemeteries and “brick and mortar” projects. For instance, the City of Rome (Floyd County) was the recipient of \$9,000 in 2015 and \$23,000 in 2017 that helped to stabilize the only existing structure<sup>2</sup> to represent African American education prior to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, The Fairview School, in Cave Springs.

Site of both the Rosenwald Colored School built in 1924 and an equalization school in the 1940s, these repairs are part of a progressive plan to readapt the space into an “early 20th century school setting, promoting heritage tourism and educational experiences for children.”<sup>3</sup> Fairview celebrated their 90th anniversary in 2014 and you can find the Reflections coverage [here](#). Fairview turns 100 this year!

They will be celebrating September 28-29, 2024. Find details [here](#).

To qualify to become a CLG in Georgia, a city, town, or county must pass a local preservation ordinance and create a historic preservation commission consisting of at least three members. The commission must adhere to federal preservation standards and must survey and inventory their historical properties on a regular basis. The Georgia Historic Preservation Division (HPD) assesses the performance of a CLG once every four calendar years. Some of the many benefits of becoming a CLG, besides grant eligibility, are the ability to more closely partake in the National Register (NR)

process by of viewing the local National Register of Historic Places nominations prior to the Georgia National Review Board; participation in or access to training sessions, information material, statewide meetings, workshops, and conferences provided by HPD or NPS; and engagement in partnerships with other preservation organizations or groups.<sup>4</sup> There are currently 100 CLGs in Georgia. If you are interested in becoming a CLG, applications are accepted all year. Find out more information at HPD’s website [here](#), or, contact [outreach@dca.ga.gov](mailto:outreach@dca.ga.gov).



Before and after: The Fairview School project in Floyd County rehabilitated as of 2022. Photos courtesy of The Fairview/Brown E.S. School Foundation.

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction of 2024 Historic Preservation Fund Application Guide*, accessed 4/15/24. [https://www.dca.ga.gov/sites/default/files/final\\_2024\\_clg\\_application\\_guide\\_and\\_nr\\_tiger\\_users\\_guide.pdf](https://www.dca.ga.gov/sites/default/files/final_2024_clg_application_guide_and_nr_tiger_users_guide.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> *Restoration Project*. Preserve the Memory of Fairview and E.S. Brown Schools website, accessed 4/15/24. <https://fairviewbrown.org/restoration-project.html>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>4</sup> Certified Local Government Fact Sheet, Georgia Historic Preservation Division website, accessed 4/17/24. [https://www.dca.ga.gov/sites/default/files/clg\\_fact\\_sheet\\_0.pdf](https://www.dca.ga.gov/sites/default/files/clg_fact_sheet_0.pdf)

# NEW DRIVING TOUR EXPLORES CHEROKEE COUNTY'S BLACK HISTORY

by Harvee White  
Education and Programs Manager,  
Historic Cherokee



Cover image of website for the Black History Driving Tour in Cherokee County. Photo courtesy of Historic Cherokee.

History Cherokee invites residents and visitors to journey through Cherokee County's Black history with a new driving tour. The tour highlights nineteen sites in Canton and Woodstock and seeks to shed light on the often overlooked contributions of the Black community in shaping the cultural and historical landscape of Cherokee County. The selected sites span decades and showcase the resilience, creativity, and perseverance of communities and individuals who have left an indelible mark on Cherokee County.



Black History Committee members Tony Riddick and Bruce Baker gave lectures on walking tours. Photo courtesy of Historic Cherokee.

The tour was developed by History Cherokee's Black History Committee. Through projects such as the Black History Driving Tour, this group of volunteers helps History Cherokee represent more diverse storytelling.

The Black History Driving Tour aims to raise awareness about the importance of preserving and celebrating Black history in our local community. By uncovering the stories of the past, we can foster a deeper understanding of our shared heritage and promote inclusivity. The tour encourages participants to reflect on the challenges faced by the Black community, celebrate their triumphs, and recognize the ongoing contributions of Black individuals to Cherokee County. "We believe that by acknowledging and celebrating the diverse history of Cherokee County, we can cultivate a sense of unity and understanding among our residents," said Harvee White, Education and Programs Manager at History Cherokee. "These nineteen locations provide a glimpse into Cherokee County's Black history, and it is our responsibility to ensure that these stories are preserved for future generations."

## CHEROKEE COUNTY'S NEW DRIVING TOUR, *continued*

While some sites may be on private property, no longer standing, or not conducive to walking tours, the driving aspect of this experience allows for a safe and accessible exploration. Participants are encouraged to respect private property and exercise caution at sites that may pose safety concerns. The driving tour is currently available online. A print version of the tour is available at the Cherokee County History Center and other select locations in Cherokee County.



*Stops on the Cherokee County Black History Tour include, from top: The Magnolia Thomas Site, recreation of the original home; The North Georgia Fire Station; and the Cherokee County Training School, 1953. All photos courtesy of Historic Cherokee.*



*Brochures from the project. Photo courtesy of Historic Cherokee.*



*This project is supported by Georgia Humanities, in partnership with the Georgia Department of Economic Development, through funding from the Georgia General Assembly. The digital tour was created using Open Tour Building, a free software platform created by the Emory Center for Digital Scholarship.*

## PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND THE AFRICAN AMERICAN PURSUIT TO READ

by Victoria Larcheveaux,  
Curator, Troup County Archives and Legacy Museum



Auburn Avenue branch of the Carnegie Library. Photo courtesy of Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History, Fulton County Library System.

In the era of Jim Crow, a free public library did not mean free for every taxpayer. It was in this unequal setting that the first public library systems began to develop in the South. Noticing how African Americans were being left out of the public library conversation, steel magnate Andrew Carnegie began to issue grants to certain areas to improve their libraries. In Macon, Georgia, the new public library established in the 1880's was strictly for whites only. Not letting this discourage their access to books and knowledge, a local black clergyman operated a one-thousand-volume subscription library out of his home. This unorthodox way of providing library access was not that uncommon actually, and Black people in numerous places in the South found ways to utilize buildings in a unique manner in order to give more people access to books.<sup>1</sup>

In Savannah, Georgia in 1906, a free public library for African Americans opened. Funded by city money and subscription fees, this facility went on to flourish without the aid from Carnegie during its formative years. By 1907, the building housed twelve hundred volumes. Over the years, the library provided a positive center for knowledge in the community.

While public libraries were being developed, it seemed to be implied that these new facilities would be for whites only. This idea sparked some debate in Atlanta when in the early 1900's, a Carnegie grant was issued to start the building of a public library. By the time the building was officially opened

in 1902, conversation was brewing among some of Atlanta's Black elites. Catching the attention of W.E.B Du Bois, he gathered a small group to approach the Board of Trustees on the issue of why African Americans were not allowed to use the public library. Du Bois and his colleagues had a point; why were African Americans being treated unfairly when this new library was created under the impression of a free public library for all?

African Americans in Atlanta had already been taxed for the building of the Carnegie library, which meant that all Atlanta residents should have equal and unrestricted access to the library. It would not be until the year 1920 that funds were secured to build a library for African Americans in Atlanta, nearly two decades after the introduction of the first Carnegie library in the city. In the meantime, African Americans in Atlanta did not sit by idly. Being denied access to the main public library branch led to improvisations in other areas. In 1904, Atlanta's Sojourner Truth Club opened a free reading room and library supported by private contributions and the occasional entertainment. Typically, the entertainment included talks given by the likes of W.E.B Du Bois, Mary Church Terrell, and Booker T. Washington.<sup>2</sup>

The director of the Atlanta Public Library was a white woman, Tommie Dora Barker, and she had a hand in pressing the board to build a branch for Atlanta's black citizens. With a \$25,000 grant from the Carnegie Corporation, the Sweet Auburn branch was opened in 1921 in the middle of the Black neighborhood.

<sup>1</sup> Wayne A. Weigard, *The Destruction of Public Libraries in the Jim Crow South*. Louisiana State University Press, 2018: 1-4.

<sup>2</sup> Weigard, 26-27.

## PUBLIC LIBRARIES, *continued*

The original plans for the building called not only for a library, but a community center as well. By 1925, the Sweet Auburn Center was functioning as just that. The Carnegie segregated libraries offered African Americans a place to read in their own safe space, not simply crammed into a “Negro reading room” in the damp basement of a white library. Libraries built and funded like those under the Carnegie name became a sort of start for the Civil Rights Movement long before the thoughts of schools and buses.<sup>3</sup>



*West Hunter branch of Atlanta Library. Photo courtesy of Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History, Fulton County Library System.*

While literature for African Americans was limited, the hunger for black news was the real priority in the community. Black newspaper publications focused on celebrating black accomplishments; a stark contrast to the books offered in the libraries. Not only were newspapers popular, but so were nonfiction books as opposed to the fiction that was preferred in the white libraries. African Americans saw this unequal treatment in the public library system as a way to come together.<sup>4</sup>

The Southern Library Movement was well planned and driven by Black civic and religious organizations, educators, clergy, business leaders and librarians.<sup>5</sup> After all, all citizens were paying taxes on the buildings. Not only this, but the push for libraries was primarily driven by the younger generation of student activists, and they were the main ones demonstrating at public libraries. However, segregation was enforced by imposing “vertical integration,” a process designed to keep white and black library patrons standing during their visits.

By removing all the tables and chairs, whites and blacks could not share the same space and segregation could continue.

Public demonstrations were used to pressure for change. Protesters utilized the ideas behind sit-ins at lunch counters and brought “read-ins” to public libraries where people would sit and read in the public libraries until law enforcement was involved. Public library integration practices served as a sort of precedent to other civil rights actions, considering that some public library desegregation efforts started as early as 1939.<sup>6</sup> By the end of the 1960s, separate state library organizations no longer existed. By 1972, ninety percent of people living in southern states lived in areas with access to a public library. Rarely making news outside of the area where they were, these protesters were able to make changes to laws and social customs.<sup>7</sup>

Many people who integrated libraries in the South are unsung heroes. They never made front page news, they only wanted to be able to read. Public libraries allowed a new generation of African Americans to grow up with access to things that their parents had only dreamed of. Driven by their own will for more resources and opportunities, public library demonstrations marked the beginning of a still ongoing fight for equal access for all.



*Negro history collection. Photo courtesy of Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History, Fulton County Library System.*

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Griffis. “University of Southern Mississippi: New Online Archive on Racially Segregated Libraries.” *Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, Apr. 2017: 279.

<sup>4</sup> Wayne A. Weigand. *The Desegregation of Public Libraries in the Jim Crow South*. Louisiana State University Press, 2018: 39.

<sup>5</sup> Patterson Toby Graham. *A Right to Read: Segregation and Civil Rights in Alabama’s Public Libraries, 1900–1965*. University Alabama Press, 2002: 49.

<sup>6</sup> Weigand, 207-210.

<sup>7</sup> Graham, 137.



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 5,000 people who have an interest in preservation. Members are briefed on the status of current and planned projects and are encouraged to offer ideas, comments and suggestions. The meetings provide an opportunity to share and learn from the preservation experience of others and to receive technical information through workshops. Members receive a newsletter, Reflections, produced by the Network. Visit the Historic Preservation Division website at [www.dca.ga.gov](http://www.dca.ga.gov). Preservation information and previous issues of Reflections are available online. Membership in the Network is free and open to all. [Sign up here!](#)

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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](#). Search for "Reflections" to find the archived issue and a list of topics by categories: cemeteries, churches, districts, farms, lodges, medical, people, places, schools, and theatres. You can now subscribe to **Reflections** by [signing up here](#). **Reflections** is a recipient of a Leadership in History Award from the American Association for State and Local History.

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