Reflections

Dear Subscribers:

The March 2023 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.

You may view the issue here, titled *2023 - Reflections*

Sweet Auburn Avenue is a historic district with rich stories of the African American community in Atlanta. Learn about black businesses, churches, and day-to-life during its prime. Also, discover the new changes that are bringing this historic neighborhood revival back and why it is one of the famous National Historic Landmark Districts in the Nation.

Every year the Georgia Trust of Historic Preservations, The Places in Peril list, emphasizes vulnerable historic sites around the state. For the 2023 year, six historic African American sites are listed. Learn about these buildings' historical significance and how important it is to save these structures

Who doesn't like trying new restaurants from time to time? Read about the Salaami Restaurant in Griffin, Georgia. Learn about the history of how the restaurant started and where particular foods originated. The history of both will have you wanting more knowledge about African and African American foodways and a trip to Salaami Seafood Restaurant.

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Georgia Department of Community Affairs

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Reflections

Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network

Volume XIX, No. 1 **March 2023**

The Revival of Sweet Auburn

Natasha Washington, African American Programs Assistant

Located on just one and a half miles of road, Auburn Avenue was, and still is, home to legendary African American industry and affordable, middle-class family residences. The National Landmark District neighborhood has withstood a myriad of changes over the last 100 years, from exploding growth in industry in the early decades of the 20th century to a pivotal turn for the worst in the economic sector in the 1970s, with Black flight to the east, west and north of Atlanta and the northern states resulting in the disappearance of local monies. Economic concerns on state and federal levels at the time also prevented investment into local preservation projects.

Auburn Avenue, formerly Wheat Street but renamed in 1893, was located at the heart of the Old Fourth Ward, extending east of Atlanta's business district on Peachtree Street. The neighborhood was originally inhabited by majority White businesses and residents, with the area on the eastside between Shermantown and the Old Fourth Ward for Black people.[1] After racial tensions came to a vicious head resulting in the Atlanta Race Massacre of 1906, during which more than twenty-five Black people were killed and many hundreds injured,[2] Black people concentrated their resources to support one another and fled downtown to Auburn Avenue. By 1909, most of the businesses, sixty-four, were Black owned, up from just ten in 1900.[3]

Auburn Avenue, 1973
Photo Courtesy of HPD

These businesses included Atlanta Mutual Insurance Association (now Atlanta Life Insurance Company), founded in 1905 by Alonzo Herndon, and the Standard Life Insurance Company in 1909 by Herman E. Perry, which together with the founding holding company, Service Company, helped to propel Auburn Avenue to the status of "richest Negro street in America," by Fortune Magazine in 1956. Strolling down the street in the 1930s, 40s, or 50s one could easily pass by several staples in the community: *The Atlanta Daily World*, the first "successful" Black daily newspaper as of 1928 in America began in Auburn Avenue offices. Per the founder, W.A. Scott, "The responsibility of a Negro newspaper is

1. Edward Hatfield. "Auburn Avenue." New Georgia Encyclopedia, last modified Sep 24, 2020, accessed Jan 31, 2023. https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/counties-cities-neighborhoods/auburn-avenue-sweet-auburn/
2. Charles Crowe. "Racial Massacre in Atlanta September 22, 1906." The Journal of Negro History 54, no. 2 (1969): 150–73. https://doi.org/10.2307/2716690.
3. Jennifer F. Giarrantano and David L. Sjoquist. "Auburn Avenue." Economic Development Journal, Spring 2018, Vol 17, number 2, pg. 7-8.

Natasha Washington continued from page 1

to dispense to the public good wholesome information to enlighten our people. . .and to serve as a guide and organ of expression for the community."[4] The first African American owned radio station, WERD, could also be found on Auburn beginning in 1949, in the Prince Hall Masonic Building, completed in 1937. Stopping into one of the Black-owned banks in the community to conduct financial business was easy, as Citizens Trust Bank or Atlanta State Savings Bank, the first chartered Black banks in Georgia which opened in 1913, were nearby. Need a new hairdo or a clean edge-up from the barber? Both services could be found on Sweet Auburn, at Poro Beauty Salon (1928) or King and Son Silver Moon Barber Shop (1904). If one were looking for a bite to eat, look no further than restaurants such as Ma Sutton's Restaurant, a Green Book establishment described as a place where "everybody all over the country would come to Atlanta and go get a decent meal."[5] Or pick up a refreshment at the Italian Ice Cream and Soda Parlor, located at the corner of Auburn and Piedmont. Night life was also bustling, as The Top Hat Club and The Ponciana Night Club attracted the elite and working-class clientele alike in the early 1930s. Every Sunday morning, there was no excuse to miss church services, as Auburn housed the first organized Black church in Atlanta, Big Bethel A.M.E. (1847), as well as Wheat Street Baptist (1869). Both of which, as well as Ebenezer Baptist Church founded in 1886, were major gathering and planning spaces for the Civil Rights Movement and other social actions.[6] Jewelry stores, plumbers, realty companies, and many other goods and services could be found on Auburn, within the reach and comfort of the local community. As John Wesley Dobbs stated, "Remember when you're walking up Auburn Avenue, you are 'going to town'."[7]

Designated as a National Historic District in 1974 and a National Historic Landmark in 1976, Auburn Avenue was a lasting example of Black ingenuity and perseverance. However, also by this time, much of Auburn was in dire need of preservation work and repair since the economy of the area changed after the Civil Rights Movement and urban renewal plans in the 1960s.

Big Bethel A.M.E. Church, 1973
Photo Courtesy of HPD

Since then, Auburn has had difficulty achieving some of its economic goals, often with Black elites and Black residents of Auburn clashing on preservation decisions, as in the 1988 demonstration regarding the newly built Auburn Avenue Research Library.[8]

As of 2012, Sweet Auburn Works (SAW), a local non-profit formed by a partnership with the National Park Service, Historic District Development Corporation (HDDC), the National Main Street Center, and an Auburn Avenue stakeholder committee, has been on the streets of the community, helping to guide preservation-based economic revitalization and or the Sweet Auburn area, with their mission stated as, "Preserve, Revitalize, and Promote the commercial and cultural legacy of the Sweet Auburn District." Since their inception, with its beginnings in the HDDC originally co-founded by Coretta Scott King and Christine King-Farris in 1980, SAW has been committed to helping the commercial district restore its

4. Alan Sverdilik. "Atlanta Daily World." New Georgia Encyclopedia, last modified Mar 18, 2021. https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/atlanta-daily-world/
5. Clifford M. Kuhn. Living Atlanta: An Oral History of the City, 1914-1948. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005.
6. Big Bethel A.M.E. Church history, accessed January 26, 2023. https://www.bigbethelame.org/History Neither Wheat Street Baptist nor Ebenezer Baptist Churches are within the Sweet Auburn District.
7. William L. Calloway. The "Sweet Auburn Avenue" Business History, 1900-1988. Atlanta: Central Atlanta Progress, 1988, pg. 2
8. Danielle Wiggins. 2022. "'Save Auburn Avenue for Our Black Heritage': Debating Development in Post–Civil Rights Atlanta." Journal of African American History 107 (1): 79–104. doi:10.1086/717346.

former glory. SAW uses Main Street-inspired programs to help do this, including helping the existing landowners redevelop their empty parcels and buildings into new residential and commercial space. Also, the Heroes Walk will be a one-mile pedestrian experience curating the history of the neighborhood's most inspiring leaders for visitors, residents and tourists. Last, the SPARK Innovation Lab is a retail-focused accelerator that will help the neighborhoods existing retailers take advantage of the new foot traffic created by the new development. The SPARK Lab will also ensure future entrepreneurial endeavors cater to the local area residents as well as uplift and embody the spirit of Sweet Auburn, helping to establish businesses that capture Auburn's essence and are focused on "encouraging legacy reinvestment and redevelopment, keep[ing] minority business development issues at the forefront of its strategic work plan."[9]

When walking down Auburn Avenue today, stop into Sonya Jones' legendary bakery, Sweet Auburn Bread Company, for a slice of decadent pound cake or luscious pecan pie. Both the Apex Museum, the oldest Black History Museum in the city of Atlanta founded in 1978, and the Madame C.J. Walker Museum, which honors the legacy of Atlanta's Black business leaders, can be found on or near Auburn, continuing the legacy of education and pride that Auburn embodies. Many restaurants and lounges have opened in recent years. There are a few local businesses that can still be found from days gone by, such as The Top Hat Club, which is now called The Royal Peacock. And of course, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, which hosts hundreds of thousands of visitors a year.

More small businesses and non-profit organizations are moving into the area with SAW at the helm and the community values in focus. The future looks bright for Auburn Avenue to live up to the "Sweet Auburn" moniker once again.

9. Jennifer F. Giarrantano and David L. Sjoquist. "Auburn Avenue." Economic Development Journal, Spring 2018, Volume 17, number 2, pg. 15.

Prince Masonic Hall, now S.C.L.C. Headquarters, 1973. Photo Courtesy of HPD

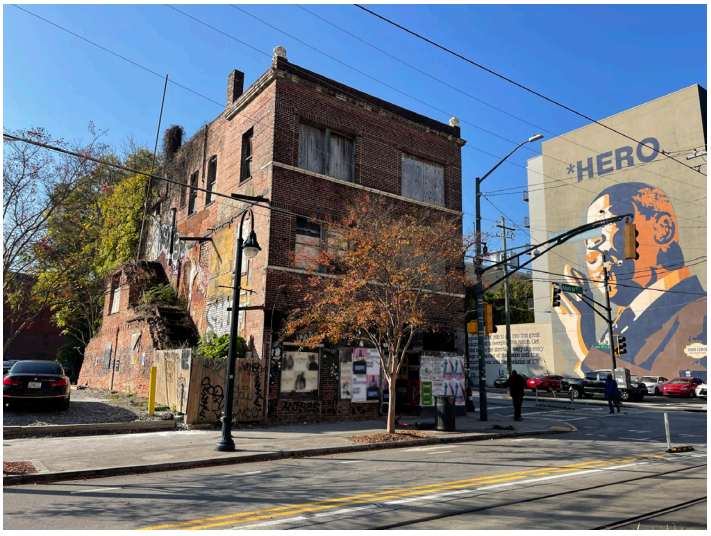
African American Sites on the 2023 Places in Peril List

The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, Special Contributor

Since 2006, the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation has highlighted threatened historic sites around the state via the Places in Peril list. The preservation of African American sites is particularly important, as these places have been overlooked due to systemic racism and disinvestment in those communities. Six historic African American sites are listed on the 2023 Places in Peril list.

229 Auburn Avenue

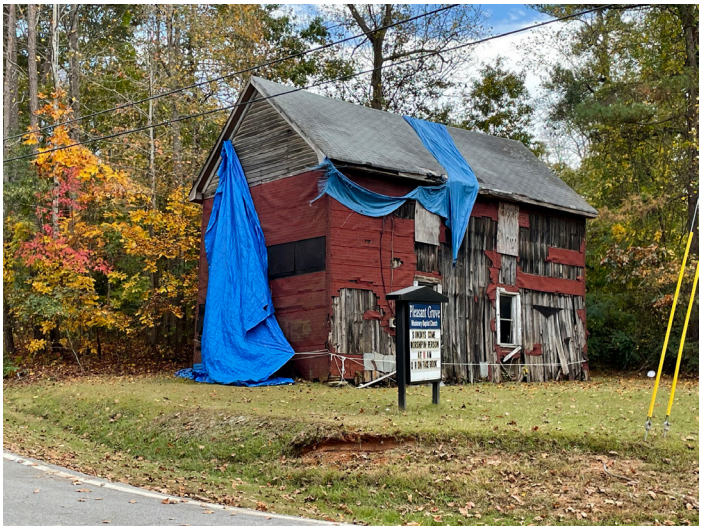
A contributing property in the Sweet Auburn Historic District, 229 Auburn Avenue has been home to several African American businesses in the 20th century, including a branch office of the Atlanta Life Insurance Company. Sweet Auburn, located in downtown Atlanta, is a historic African American neighborhood that was one of the largest concentrations of Black businesses during the 20th century. After suffering damage from a tornado in 2008, 229 Auburn has been vacant for years and was identified by the National Park Service as the most imperiled building in Sweet Auburn. Advocates have secured a commitment from the owners to preserve 229 Auburn, and the structure's rehabilitation and sensible reuse are vital to the long-term preservation of Sweet Auburn



229 Auburn Avenue
Photo Courtesy of The Georgia Trust

Beulah Grove Lodge No. 372

The Beulah Grove Lodge No. 372, Free and Accepted Masons, was built on land provided by freeman Jack Smith in 1881 for use of the African American community in Douglasville. The building was constructed by Lodge members in 1910, with a schoolroom for the Pleasant Grove Colored School on the ground floor and a Masonic lodge space on the second floor. Lodges played an important role in the African American community. The masons assisted in helping families, churches, and schools to keep the rural community together. The Pleasant Grove Colored school was used by the community from the end of the Civil War to the 1930s. Around the 1970s or early 1980s, the members of the Beulah Grove Lodge #372 ceased meetings because most of the older masons passed away. Later, the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church used the building as an addition to its fellowship hall until 1998. The building, owned by neighboring Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, has not been in regular use for almost four decades and has thus deteriorated.

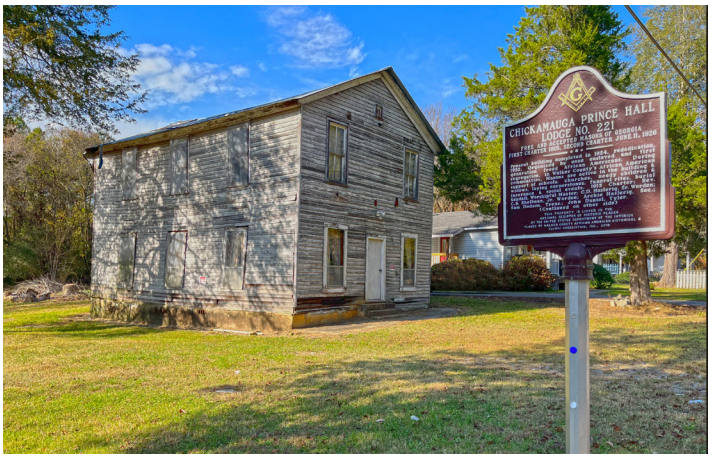


Beulah Grove Lodge No. 372
Photo Courtesy of The Georgia Trust

Chickamauga Masonic Lodge No. 221

Another lodge on the 2023 list, Chickamauga Lodge No. 221, Prince Hall Affiliate of the Free and Accepted Masons, was organized in 1915 by former enslaved and first-generation freed African Americans. In 1916, the two-story lodge was located next to the District Hill School for African Americans. District Hall school eventually became a Rosenwald School, Wallaceville school for the Colored. Rosenwald schools were schools built for African American children in the south during the early 20th century. This Rosenwald school was supported in part by the masons, and both structures were on the land of the Haslerig Family.

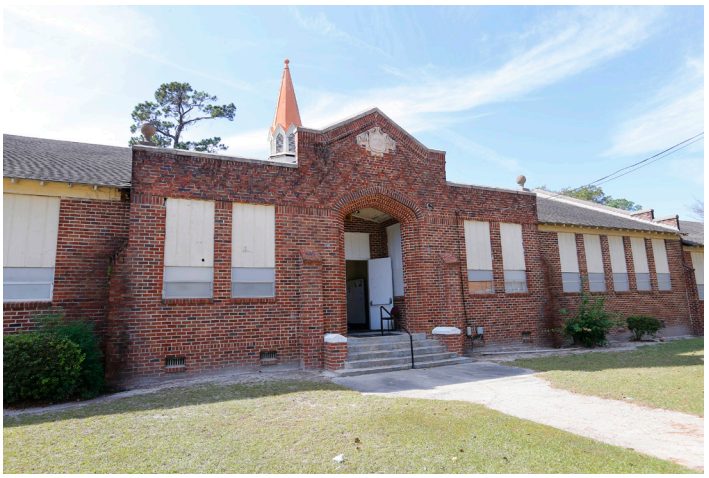
The Harslerig purchased the land circa 1905 on Hwy. 341 South and Cove Road, reserved for the school and lodge, which some of the Herslerig family attended the school prior to both structures being destroyed by fire for an unknown reason. The current building was completed in 1924, and the lodge's members were community leaders and local Odd Fellows. The lodge was the location for the chartering and meeting of the Walker County African American VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) in the 1940s, and a chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star chartered in 1944 as a woman's group, also met there. In need of a new roof and structural evaluation, this lodge no longer has members of its own, but the building is now cared for by local Masons from other regional lodges, and it remains an important space for the African American community in Chickamauga.



Chickamauga Masonic Lodge No. 221
Photo Courtesy of The Georgia Trust

Dasher High School

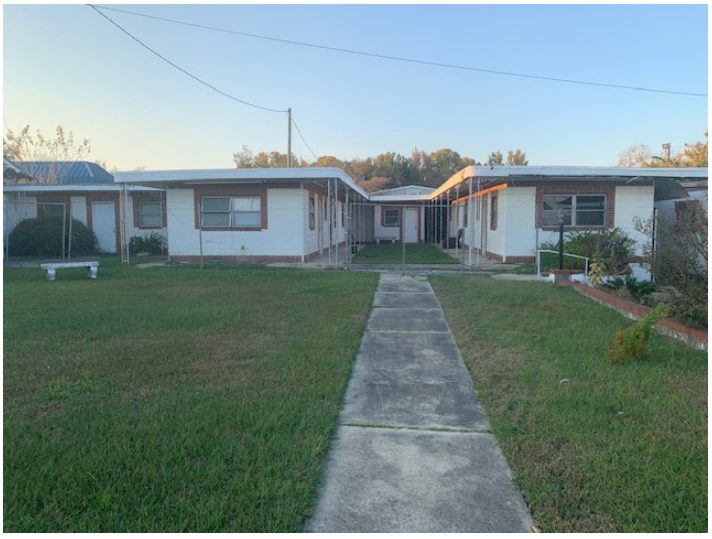
The former Dasher High School, named for Mayor Robert Dasher, was built in 1928 as the third public high school for African American students in Valdosta. It is the only remaining school building from that era. Several leaders of the Valdosta community graduated from Dasher High School, including the nation's first African American television journalist, Louis E. Lomax. The building, now owned by the Coastal Plain Area Economic Opportunity Authority which provides services to low-income households, continues its life as a community center. However, parts of the building, particularly the auditorium, are unsafe for the public. The Economic Opportunity, as well as others, hope to preserve this part of Valdosta's African American legacy by restoring Dasher High School and utilizing it to serve its residents.



Dasher High School
Photo Courtesy of The Georgia Trust

Dudley Motel

The Dudley Motel was opened in 1958 by Herbert "Hub" Dudley, a prominent Black business owner in Dublin, to accommodate African American travelers during the Civil Rights era. Dudley also opened the nearby Retreat Café and Service Station, as well as several other businesses for African American patrons in Dublin. The Dudley Motel was listed in African American travel guides like the Green Book and housed several important guests, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Andrew Young. The motel has been closed and vacant since the 1980s, though its original details remain intact.



The Dudley Hotel
Photo Courtesy of The Georgia Trust

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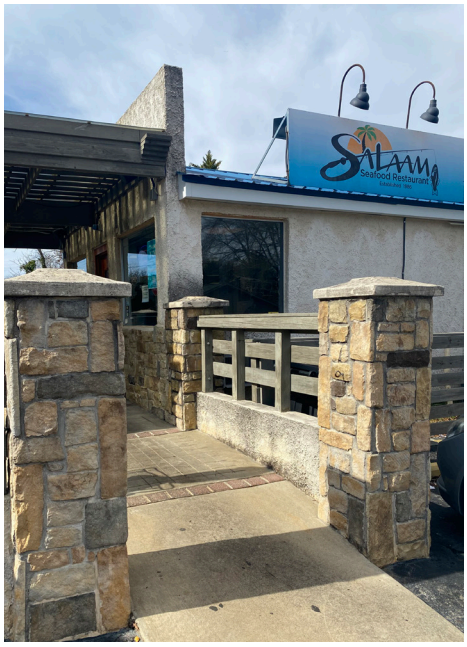
A Meal to Remember: Griffin's Best Fried Fish

Nyla Henderson, Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network Assistant

Nestled between Atlanta and Macon, in the small town of Griffin, Georgia sits Salaam's Seafood – Griffin's best kept local secret. It is not- so-secret in fact, as Salaams has served the Griffin area for over 30 years. Opening in 1986, owners Susie and Daa'ood Amin Sr., originally bought the building, which now houses Salaam's, as an accident. "Salaam was started by a mistake honestly," says Khaleelah Amin, current COO of Salaam's Seafood. According to Khaleelah Amin, her parents intended to renovate the building and resell it for a profit. However, after spending a considerable about of time on the housing market, the family decided to un-list the building and try their hand at the restaurant business. Salaam's Seafood became an instant success with a mass outpouring of support from the local Griffin community.



Front Entrance of Salaam's Restaurant
Photo Courtesy of Nyla Henderson, HPD

"We grew up in the neighborhood," says Khaleelah Amin. Salaam Seafood notes its excellent customer service as the reason for their success. With extremely fair food prices and an oasis like atmosphere Salaam exemplifies community impact. Over a 30-year legacy Salaams has been family owned and operated with an international customer base. "I have a lot of family that works here. A lot of the staff here has been blood family relatives. We do have other family that's not kin to us, but we have adopted them as family because we treat them all the same," exclaims Khaleelah Amin. Shutting down briefly to adhere to COVID-19 polices and regulations, Khaleelah Amin also describes how often taking times for respite on behalf of the staff allows for a smoother running operation. Especially in the times of social uncertainty surrounding the COVID era, Salaam's is open during a modified scheduled, Wednesday through Saturday 11am to 7pm, which allows for the staff to rest and recuperate before serving the community.

In the middle of a humble small-town street, the savory aroma of freshly fried seafood billows out of a small tannish-white building, adorned with the signage "Salaam Seafood Restaurant." Bustling with customers all eager for a bite, Salaam's is no stranger to a long line of hungry individuals, all patiently waiting for a taste of history. When I arrived, I entered through a modern-deco style patio with a wooden finish. With a chill in the air, the patio, decked two tall warming stations and a large flatscreen T.V., makes the vibe perfect to catch a game or hang out with friends while grabbing a bite to eat. As I entered the small building, the '80s style flooring and décor provided a sense of timelessness. The limited inside-seating was closed off due to its intimate space and post-COVID era precautions. I ordered my food from a sweet older lady who talked me through the menu rather patiently, considering how busy they were.

After sitting down with Khaleelah, and receiving my meal, I got to experience some of the most delicious fried fish my taste buds have ever come into contact with. I ordered a 2-piece whiting dinner with a side of okra, fries and fish nuggets along with a jumbo-sized hand squeezed lemonade. And I had to get something sweet – a slice of red velvet cake. As I bit into the whiting, fresh pieces of fried batter flew all across my outfit. The okra was Portraicrisp and extremely warm as I bit into the large-sized pieces – I could tell this was fresh grown okra. Soon, fresh white okra seeds swam in the complementary homemade thousand island dipping sauce as I switched from dipping nuggets, fries, and okra, occasionally catching a breath of air in between gulps of my Jumbo lemonade. The red velvet cake was moist and had a soft texture; this caliber of baking can only be achieved by the elders of a family. The quality of Salaams seafood and customer service is astronomical and inviting; eating at Salaam's has now become one of my most cherished memories!

Connecting to Black foodways, okra arrived in North America by way of our enslaved African ancestors.[1] During the turmoil fueled journey, enslaved Africans held on to their traditions by planting leftover seeds from crops known to withstand various climatic temperaments.[2] Throughout time African Americans have developed and sustained the historical tradition of preparing meals known as "soul food."

1 Texas A&M System. "Okra, or "Gumbo," from Africa" https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/publications/vegetabletravelers/okra.html

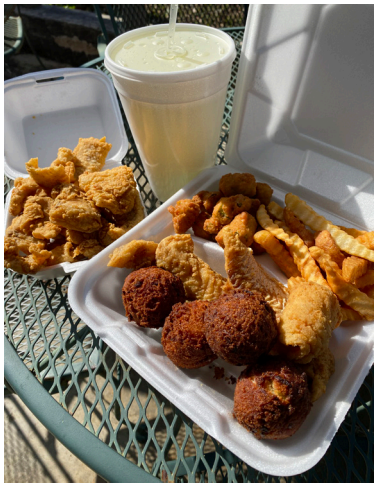
2 Ben Goody. "Food is Love Made Edible" June 2020 https://foodislovemadeedible.com/2020/06/15/the-interesting-history-of-okra-its-african-roots-and-how-it-made-its-way-to-america/

Soul food meals typically include, but are not limited to, fried chicken, pork items such as ribs and pigs' feet, red beans, rice, sweet potatoes, various greens, and various versions of fried fish,[3] including whiting. While the foodway origins of whiting in the Black community are vague, fish fries are known to have originated in the south as a form of celebration, often taking place at church revivals or other communal gatherings.[4]

Historically, fried fish became closely related to the Black community due to the use of fish as food rations for enslaved people. Furthermore, during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Western Europeans thought less of persons who consumed fish; their thought process was that fish-eating was associated with poverty and Roman Catholicism.[5] Additionally, both free and enslaved African Americans made up an overwhelming part of the labor force that operated the fishing industry. This major exposure to fishing created a conscious link to the Black community and the prevalence of fish in soul food dishes.[6] To date, within the Black community, a fish fry still acts as a celebration for special occasions and can often be seen as nothing more than a friendly neighborhood get-together or can also be utilized as way to accrue funds by selling fish dinner plates.[7]

3 African American Registry. "Soul Food" in America, a story" https://aaregistry.org/story/soul-food-a-brief-history/
4 F.D. Opie, Hog and Hominy: Soul Food from Africa to America, 2008, pg. 1-238
5 A. Miller, Soul Food: The Surprising Story of an American Cuisine, One Plate at a Time, 2013, pg. 1-333
6 Ibid.
7 F.D. Opie, Hog and Hominy: Soul Food from Africa to America, 2008, pg. 1-238

Hushpuppies are a historical staple in the Black community and were named after their ability to silence the dogs of slave catchers. As recounted in many historical narratives, escaping enslaved Africans would throw balls of fried cornmeal out as an attempt to keep chasing hounds off their scent.[8] The origins of hush puppies can also be found in many Native American traditional recipes that included maize. Hush puppies are not only an ancestor to the sweet corn fritter, but also a descendant of the Nigerian acara, made of black-eyed peas, as well as related to Brazilian acaraje, Caribbean acras, and Creole calas.[9] As if the beauty of history isn't tempting enough, come taste a piece of soul food greatness at Salaam's Seafood Restaurant located at 503 E. Broadway St. Griffin, GA 30223.



Fried Whitening, Fried Okra, Fries, and Lemonade from Salaam Restaurant
Photo Courtesy of Nyla Henderson, HPD

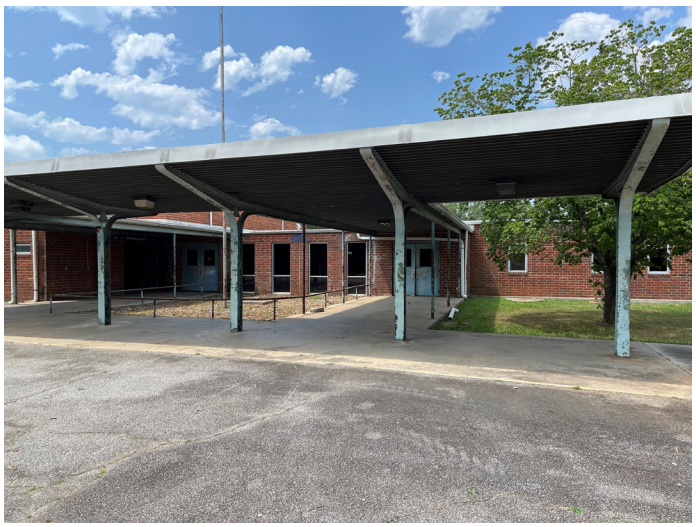
8 https://ncpedia.org/hush-puppies
9 Ibid.

Continued: African American Sites on the 2023 Places in Peril List

Wilkes County Training School

Established in 1956 as an Equalization School, the former Wilkes County Training School combined roughly 40 rural African American schools for first through twelfth-grade students. Equalization schools were built to keep segregation in Georgia, but not equal to white schools. The campus was integrated in 1970, and the ninth through twelfth grades were renamed Washington Wilkes Comprehensive High School. The buildings have been vacant since 2011 and suffer from a lack of maintenance, but they remain a vital resource in telling local and state history about African American public education.

The Georgia Trust looks forward to working with each of these sites in the coming year and beyond. The Trust continues to support the preservation of Georgia's rich African American communities and historic resources. Through programs such as the Places in Peril, the Trust strives to raise awareness and create opportunities for these projects to successfully preserve Georgia's heritage.



Wilkes County Training School
Photo Courtesy of The Georgia Trust

About GAAHPN

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 Board plans and implements ways to develop programs that will foster heritage education, neighborhood revitalization, and support community and economic development.

Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network

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.dca.ga.gov**. Preservation information and previous issues of ***Reflections*** are available online. Membership in the Network is free and open to all.

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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.dca.ga.gov. 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 emailing Mary Wilson Joseph. Reflections is a recipient of a Leadership in History Award from the American Association for State and Local History.

Reflections

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Jennifer Dixon, Division Director
Mary Wilson Joseph, Editor

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