

Reflections



Georgia African American
Historic Preservation Network



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

Volume V, No. 2

July 2005

CHANGING SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN AN ATLANTA NEIGHBORHOOD: THE REYNOLDSTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

Reynoldstown is an Atlanta neighborhood that is nestled between the Cabbagetown and Edgewood communities. Downtown Atlanta is in close proximity to the Reynoldstown Historic District, as it is just two miles west of the district. The district was a strategic position during the Battle of Atlanta in 1864, as its rolling hills and elevation made it one of the highest points in the city. Today, many streets in Reynoldstown bear the names of military leaders who fought in the battle, like Manigault and Wylie.

The district's northern and southern boundaries followed the old Atlanta and West Point Railroad and joined the Central of Georgia (now the CSX) that ran east to west between downtown Atlanta and Decatur. The oldest section of the district is located where these railroad corridors intersected. It is this section of the district that was settled by African Americans who became laborers for the railroads shortly after the Civil War ended. They settled primarily on Chester Avenue and Selman Street.

Arthur Douglas Bailey was one of the African Americans who worked for the Atlanta and West Point Railroad who lived in Reynoldstown. "He was my grandmother's second husband, and we lived on Chester Avenue," said Davidayon Mayers-Kelley. Her grandmother, Lula Mae Bailey, taught music and piano to neighborhood youth, and "Pa" Bailey worked in the rail roundhouse nearby, as well as the depot in downtown Atlanta. He lost his leg in a railroad accident.

Davidayon Mayers-Kelley fondly remembers the corner stores that were once

abundant in Reynoldstown. "Most people did not have cars then, so we would purchase everything we needed at neighborhood stores." "Pa" Bailey's house served a dual purpose, as she remembers it as both a family residence and the site of Arstel's Confectionary. After her grandmother died in 1994, Davidayon Mayers-Kelley eventually returned to the Reynoldstown family residence that she grew up in and converted the house to a duplex, adapting the side of the house that was the confectionary store.



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Arthur Douglas Bailey was one of the early African American settlers in Reynoldstown. Photo courtesy of Davidayon Mayers-Kelley.



Isaiah P. Reynolds operated a business in this commercial building at the intersection of Wylie and Kenyon Streets.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

One of the early freedmen who came to Reynoldstown was Madison Reynolds. Herman "Skip" Mason Jr. discussed the Reynolds family in *Going Against the Wind: A Pictorial History of African Americans in Atlanta*. In 1866, "Madison Reynolds, his wife and their seven children moved from Covington, Georgia to a small settlement between Atlanta and Decatur. Their son, Isaiah P. Reynolds Sr., built a two-story brick store on the corner of Wylie and Kenyon streets in southeast Atlanta." Another brick store

continued on page 2

CHANGING SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN AN ATLANTA NEIGHBORHOOD: THE REYNOLDSTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

continued from page 1

where Reynolds once operated a business is still standing on the corner of Wylie and Flat Shoals. This two-story building is now home to the Reynoldstown Baptist Church. The community that is now known as Reynoldstown was named in honor of this family.



This commercial building in the Reynoldstown Historic District is adaptively used as the Reynoldstown Baptist Church today. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

Most of the historic houses in the Reynoldstown Historic District were built starting in the 1880s. Some of the popular types are gabled-ell, saddlebag and shotgun houses. Chester Avenue has a series of double shotgun houses on one side of the street, and there is an additional row set back-to-back in an alley between them. The houses on Chester Avenue are grouped on small lots and are very close together.

By the close of the 19th century, Reynoldstown began to expand, and developers built seven small subdivisions between 1905 and 1930. These subdivisions were built for whites only. The



This row of double shotgun houses are located on one side of Chester Avenue in the Reynoldstown Historic District. Photo by James R. Lockhart



These double shotgun houses are located behind the ones on Chester Avenue. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

City of Atlanta annexed Reynoldstown in 1909, and it became one of Atlanta's earliest segregated neighborhoods during the first decades of the 20th century, as whites settled in these new subdivisions that included Tudor Revival houses, pyramidal cottages and Craftsman-style bungalows. Bungalows are the most common house type in Reynoldstown, and represent over 36% of the housing stock in the historic district. African Americans were confined to the northwest corner of the neighborhood after the Atlanta race riot in 1906.



Bungalows line Kirkwood Avenue in the Reynoldstown Historic District. Photo by James R. Lockhart

This racial separation increased after World War II, when returning white veterans qualified for federally-backed mortgages. At that time, Reynoldstown became one of Atlanta's first neighborhoods affected by the phenomenon known as "white flight." Veterans qualifying for new houses built with FHA and VA mortgages left urban areas because 40 – 50% of new construction was in all-white suburbs. During the next 15 years, Reynoldstown

went from an integrated neighborhood to an African American community by 1960.

Two historic schools were built in the Reynoldstown Historic District. In 1922, William J.J. Chase designed the Romanesque Revival-style John F. Faith Grammar School. This was a public school that was built for white children. A community school for African Americans was not constructed until 1960.



The John F. Faith Grammar School was built during segregation. This two-story school building features arched entrances. A new sign is currently posted in front of the school that indicates it will soon be the home of Tech High School.

Photo by James R. Lockhart

The Isaiah P. Reynolds Elementary School was designed in the International Style. This style lacks ornamentation and features a flat roof and large expanses of glass for classroom lighting. Davidayon Mayers-Kelley attended this school until 1962, and remembers how “Pa” Bailey and other community residents wanted a school built for African American students who lived in Reynoldstown. Today, the building is known as the Lang-Carson Recreation and Community Center and provides offices for the Reynoldstown Civic Improvement League and the Reynoldstown Revitalization Corporation.



The former Reynolds Elementary School was designed in the International Style. This type of one-story school construction was defined by simple geometric forms and lack of ornamentation.

Photo by James R. Lockhart

Two historic churches associated with African American denominations are examples of community landmark buildings in the historic district. Both churches are made of granite that was



Beardon Temple A.M.E. Church

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

quarried in Stone Mountain. The Beardon Temple A.M.E. Church is located at the intersection of Wylie and Selman streets. The church features twin towers and arched windows above the entrance. The Second Mt. Vernon Baptist Church is located on Stovall Street.

When the Reynoldstown Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on April 3, 2003 there were 544 buildings that were “contributing resources” because they retained a high level of integrity. While listing the district in the National Register of Historic Places recognizes the historic areas of significance of this Atlanta neighborhood due to its ethnic heritage, social history, community planning/development and architecture, this recognition does not prohibit development. Because of its proximity to downtown Atlanta, Reynoldstown is rapidly becoming a “gentrified” neighborhood today.



The gabled ell cottage on the left maintains its historic integrity while new construction on the opposite side of Chester Avenue no longer conveys the historic landscape of the community.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

Gentrification occurs in urban neighborhoods when middle and upper class residences replace lower class housing that may be perceived as deteriorated. When new infill housing replaces older housing stock, the historic character of the neighborhood is often lost. For example, many of the smaller shotgun houses that once distinguished Selman Street and Chester Avenue as a distinct African American neighborhood now co-exist with or were demolished for new houses. These houses do not fit the scale and character of the historic houses that they replaced. As more middle and upper class residents now flock to this inner-city neighborhood, the racial composition of the community is rapidly changing. As a result, unless some balance is achieved in this small quadrant of the Reynoldstown Historic District, new residents may never know about Reynoldstown and its significant African American past.



This historic shotgun house is located on Chester Avenue amid new construction. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

TWO TOWNS: SIMILAR PASTS LEAD TO DIFFERENT FUTURES

*Tiffany Tolbert, African American Programs Assistant
Historic Preservation Division*

The towns of Bostwick and Buckhead are located in Morgan County. They both contain National Register historic districts due to their significance in architecture, agriculture, community planning and development. While these two historic districts have similar developmental patterns associated with the agricultural-based economy of Morgan County, a crucial difference lies in the current states of the African American resources found in these districts.

The town of Buckhead is located in east Morgan County. In 1796, the town's settlement evolved when residents of nearby Greene County began migrating in order to hunt and establish farms. By 1837, Buckhead grew and developed due to its location near the railroad. The production and sale of cotton soon became the central driving force of the local economy and this dependency continued throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries.

During this period, Buckhead became home to a small African American population who worked on the farms of Morgan County. Placed adjacent to the town center, the African American community contained houses, a Masonic Lodge, and eventually a one-story school building. These structures are still extant and illustrate the developmental layout of the African American community in contrast to the white community. While some of the structures are not in the best condition, they are still maintained by the local community and many remain under the ownership of descendants of those who lived in the area during the 19th and early 20th centuries.



The African American Masons built a new lodge next to the historic lodge in Buckhead.
Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

The town of Bostwick is located in north Morgan County. Following its development from the older village of Wellington, Bostwick became a small rural community surrounded by farms. The town's founder was John Bostwick Sr., who started a mercantile business in the area around 1892. As Bostwick opened more businesses, the town grew in proportion to the production of cotton and cotton products. In 1901, a railroad line was completed in nearby Apalachee. This railroad line connected to Athens and led to cotton becoming the driving force behind the economic and social development of Bostwick.



A sign on the road denotes the significance of the Sweet Home Baptist Church to the African American community in Bostwick.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

After the town's incorporation in 1902, John Bostwick Sr., the town's largest landowner, subsequently began subdividing land for purchase by white families in order to encourage residential development. In 1912, Bostwick subdivided land north of the town center for the establishment of a separate African American neighborhood. Resembling other African American communities in Georgia, this neighborhood soon contained houses and a local church. The Sweet Home Baptist Church still stands today and is the last remaining historic resource in this African American community.

Buckhead and Bostwick are very similar communities. Due to their location in Morgan County, both communities benefited from an agricultural focus and became large cotton-producing towns during the late 19th century. This reliance on cotton influenced the creation of separate African American communities in these rural towns.

The African American neighborhood in Buckhead can be found along Perryman and Saffold Roads. Its remaining structures include saddlebag, gabled ell and hall-parlor houses, a two-story Masonic Lodge and a 1950s era school building. While some of the structures are not in the best condition, they are still standing and complement the entire historic district and illustrate the developmental pattern of Buckhead.

In contrast, the Sweet Home Baptist Church is the only remaining historic structure in the African American neighborhood of Bostwick. Although a new church has been built, the old building maintains its historic integrity and sits in its original location. While African Americans still live in Bostwick, their historic resources have been replaced by new, non-contributing structures. Were it not for Sweet Home Baptist Church, any visible indicators of an African American



This historic residence complements the rural setting of the African American Buckhead community.

Photo by Tiffany Tolbert



This gabled ell residence is located on Saffold Road.
Photo by Tiffany Tolbert



The historic Sweet Home Baptist Church sits next to the new church building in Bostwick. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

neighborhood would be lost. Due to its location, the pattern of development started by Bostwick can easily be seen as well as the intentional separation of the African American community, which is located behind the cotton mill and away from the white community.

Bostwick and Buckhead have similar developmental histories. The African Americans who lived in these towns contributed to their growth and success. However, when the growth and success of their cotton-producing economies ceased, these African American neighborhoods declined. This decline led to the abandonment and neglect of historic resources that aid our understanding of the development of rural African American neighborhoods. In Buckhead, where a fair amount of resources remain, an effort must be made to preserve these treasures of rural African American communities. Thus, we may prevent the decline that is evident in Bostwick, where relatively nothing remains. As these resources are lost, so is the history that they tell us about the African American presence in rural Georgia.

THE GEORGIA HERITAGE GRANT PROGRAM

*Carole Moore, Grants Coordinator
Historic Preservation Division*

Quite often, the award of funds through grant programs makes a critical difference in a historic and significant property being preserved or not. One such grant source is the Georgia Heritage Grant Program. It is appropriated annually to the Historic Preservation Division through the Georgia legislature. Since its inception in 1994, the Georgia Heritage Grant Program has provided seed-money to make hundreds of statewide historic preservation projects a reality, including many African American properties.

The selection of award recipients, which can vary from seven to 15, depending on the amount of funds available, is based on various criteria, including need, degree of threat to the resource, project planning, and community benefit. Geographical and demographical distribution and variety of resource types and uses are also considered in award decisions. Grants are available for development and predevelopment projects. Development projects include stabilization, preservation, rehabilitation and restoration activities. Predevelopment projects include plans and specifications, feasibility studies, historic structure reports, or other building-specific or site-specific preservation plans. The maximum grant amount that can be requested is \$40,000 for development projects, and \$20,000 for predevelopment projects.

To be eligible for funding, applicants must be a local government or private, secular, nonprofit organization. The applicant must provide matching funds equal to at least 40% of the project cost. The property must be listed in, or eligible for listing in, the Georgia Register of Historic Places, and be listed prior to reimbursement of funds. All grant assisted work must meet the applicable Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for Archaeology and Historic Preservation."

Last fall, seven projects were awarded Georgia Heritage grants for preservation projects, including an African American historic property. The badly deteriorated Chickamauga Lodge #221 received a \$2,100 predevelopment grant for a preservation plan for the property, which is just the first step in its long-term rehabilitation goal. The lodge wants to continue to use the second floor as its meeting hall and use the first floor as a community center and museum for the county's African American history. It is the first African American building in Walker County to receive preservation funding.



The Chickamauga Lodge #221 continues its significance in the African American community in Walker County. The preservation plan will provide a blueprint to make the facility available for community use while preserving space for Masonic meetings. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

According to the grant application, the project "will be the first tangible project to energize the African American community to search out their history and preserve their heritage." Built in 1924, the Chickamauga Masonic Lodge is located just three miles from Chickamauga in Walker County. The building has continued to be used as a Masonic lodge to the present day. Throughout its long history members of the lodge played an active role in African American community affairs, including helping needy children and widows and providing manual labor for local construction projects during the segregation era. The lodge was also the location for the chartering and meeting of the Walker County African-American VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) chapter during the 1940s. A chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star, chartered in 1944, also met there.

This year's grant applications are currently available on the Historic Preservation Division website at www.gashpo.org in the Financial & Technical Assistance section. Applications must be postmarked by July 30th. For further information about the grant program, please contact: Carole Moore, Grants Coordinator, Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, at 404/463-8434 or email her at carole_moore@dnr.state.ga.us.

TRACING AMELIA'S SONG: A GEORGIA FAMILY ODYSSEY

In 1931, Lorenzo Dow Turner, an African American linguist, was documenting African-influenced culture among the Gullah/Geechee people who lived in South Carolina and Georgia. He traveled to a remote fishing village known as Harris Neck in McIntosh County and met Amelia Dawley, who shared a remarkable song that she learned from her ancestors. Turner recorded her song, and played it for the next ten years for African students he met to attempt to identify the language and possible country of origin. Finally, a student named Solomon Caulker, who was from Sierra Leone in West Africa, recognized the words of the song as Mende. Caulker identified the meaning of the words to the song, and informed Turner that Amelia's song was a funeral hymn. Turner's groundbreaking research in linguistics resulted in the 1949 publication of *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*.

About the time of Turner's initial visit to Harris Neck, Amelia Dawley's daughter, Mary Dawley Moran, had already learned the song from her mother. Growing up in Harris Neck, Mary Dawley Moran was an only child. At the time, she thought it was just a play song, unaware of its African origin.

In the 1980s, Joseph Opala, an American anthropologist, was studying the origins of the slave trade in Sierra Leone, and became interested in Turner's research because nearly 61% of all Africans who survived the Middle Passage and were enslaved in South Carolina and Georgia were from countries like Sierra Leone in the rice-growing region of West Africa. While assisting the Sierra Leone government in planning for a "homecoming" of Gullah/Geechee people, Opala acquired copies of the tapes of music that Turner recorded, and enlisted the aid of Cynthia Schmidt, who was an ethnomusicologist, to see if the music that accompanied Amelia's song could be found. Schmidt located the music to correspond with the words to Amelia's song. When the song was performed during the homecoming, a number of Mende cabinet members were astounded to hear a song in their own language that connected them to a Gullah/Geechee fishing village in Georgia.

After the homecoming, Opala and Schmidt traveled throughout Sierra Leone villages in search of anyone who could recognize the music and words to Amelia's song. Disappointed, they almost abandoned the search when Schmidt decided to take the song to Senehun Ngola, a remote village. There, Schmidt met Baidu Jabati, who remembered the exact words with a similar



**Photograph
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Mary Dawley Moran

melody in her community. Jabati explained that she had learned the funeral song from her grandmother, and was told that she must pass the song to other women so that they could remember lost ancestors. She explained that her grandmother insisted that she knew not only the song but also a ritual that accompanied it.

With the African link to the song established, the researchers next turned to America. Was it possible that Amelia still had relatives in Harris Neck that might know the words to her song? One of the people who attended the "homecoming" in Sierra Leone was Loretta Sams, and she located Amelia's daughter, Mary Dawley Moran, in coastal Georgia. The fishing village formerly known as Harris Neck was now a wildlife refuge, but Mary Dawley Moran still lived nearby. Opala and Schmidt were astonished to hear Moran sing the song, and when she learned of its African origins, another homecoming was planned for the Moran family, who could now trace this ancestral Mende song to Senehun Ngola in Sierra Leone.



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*Keepers of the Song - Mary Moran (center) and her granddaughter Jarette Moran (left) sing the Mende song with Baidu Jabati (right) during their homecoming visit to Senehun Ngola, Sierra Leone. This photo appears in *The Language You Cry In*.*

Herb Frazier Papers, Avery Research Center,

College of Charleston, Charleston SC USA



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Photograph Not Available

Jeanne Cyriaque, Karl Barnes, Isaac Johnson, Jeanne Mills, Beth Shorthouse and Tiffany Tolbert meet Mary Dawley Moran (center) at the conclusion of the GAAHPN Steering Committee tour of Harris Neck. The tour is sponsored by McIntosh SEED.

Eventually, the Moran family traveled to Senehun Ngola and Mary Dawley Moran and Baidu Jabati met for the first time. At the "homecoming" both women wept as they sang Amelia's song. The incredible journey of this family is preserved in the documentary: *The Language You Cry In*. McIntosh SEED (Sustainable Environment and Economic Development) offers a tour of Harris Neck. The tour guide is Wilson Moran, Mary Dawley Moran's son. To learn more about the Mende song and the Gullah/Geechee history of Harris Neck, contact McIntosh SEED at 912/437-7821 or visit their website at www.mcintoshseed.org.

THOMASVILLE CONVERSATIONS

The Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network (GAAHPN) hosted the opening reception at the state preservation conference and annual meeting of The Georgia Trust in Thomasville. Early registrants attended *Thomasville Conversations* at the Magnolia Leaf, a 1908 Neoclassical residence. Today, this contributing resource in the Dawson Street Historic District is adaptively reused as a retreat for business travelers and special events.



The Magnolia Leaf Bed & Business Retreat is a contributing resource in the Dawson Street Historic District, and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on September 7, 1984. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque



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Doby Flowers

Ms. Jule Anderson operates the Mitchell-Young-Anderson House, a bed and breakfast inn located in the Stevens Street Historic District. Anderson's ancestors purchased this 19th century home and converted it to the *Rosebud Tourist Home* in the 1940s to provide lodging for African American travelers during segregation. GAAHPN Steering Committee members stayed at the inn during the conference.

Jack Hadley discussed his *Black Heritage Trail Tour* and several conference participants accompanied Hadley on the tour as a field session during the conference. Jack Hadley Black History

Doby Flowers, a native of Tallahassee, is the owner of Magnolia Leaf. She envisioned a special place that would provide the perfect atmosphere: private suites for business travelers, conference facilities, and support systems like catered meals to pamper her guests. Magnolia Leaf has an adjoining landscaped garden that can accommodate outdoor receptions. Flowers donated the use of the house to the Junior League as a "showcase home." Artists assisted the renovations of each room to accent Ms. Flowers' collection of rare antiques.

Memorabilia Inc. is a collection of thousands of photos and artifacts about African Americans in Thomasville. The collection is located in the Douglass High School complex, and the buildings are presently the home for community programs sponsored by the Douglass Alumni Association.

Juanita Jackson, a member of Bethany United Church of Christ, provided information about the historic Allen Normal and Industrial School. Today, Bethany Congregational Church and a former faculty residence are the only buildings remaining from this historic school that was established by the American Missionary Association in 1886.

Dr. Isaac Mullins and Mrs. Josephine Mullins shared the legacy of First Missionary Baptist Church, the oldest African American Baptist church in Thomasville. The church and parsonage are contributing resources in the Dawson Street Historic District.

GAAHPN STEERING COMMITTEE



Isaac Johnson
Chairman

Isaac Johnson
Augusta, Chair
706/738-1901

Beth Shorthouse
Atlanta, Vice-Chair
404/253-1488

Jeanne Mills
Atlanta, Secretary/Treasurer
404/753-6265



Georgia African American
Historic Preservation Network

Karl Webster Barnes
Atlanta, 404/758-4891

C. Donald Beall
Columbus, 706/569-4344

Corinne Blencoe
LaGrange, 706/884-8950

Linda Wilkes
Atlanta, 678/686-6243

Thomas Williams
Kennesaw, 678/445-5124

STAFF



Jeanne Cyriaque
African American
Programs Coordinator
Reflections Editor
Voice 404/656-4768
Fax 404/657-1040

jeanne_cyriaque@dnr.state.ga.us



Tiffany Tolbert
African American
Programs Assistant
Voice 404/657-1054
Fax 404/657-1040

tiffany_tolbert@dnr.state.ga.us

ABOUT GAAHPN



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The Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network (GAAHPN) was established in January 1989. It is composed of representatives from neighborhood organizations and preservation groups. GAAHPN was formed in response to a growing interest in preserving the cultural and ethnic diversity of Georgia's African American heritage. This interest has translated into a number of efforts which emphasize greater recognition of African American culture and contributions to Georgia's history. The GAAHPN Steering Committee meets regularly to plan and implement ways to develop programs that will foster heritage education, neighborhood revitalization, and support community and economic development.

The Network is an informal group of over 2,050 people who have an interest in preservation. Members are briefed on the status of current and planned projects and are encouraged to offer ideas, comments and suggestions. The meetings provide an opportunity to share and learn from the preservation experience of others and to receive technical information through workshops. Members receive a newsletter, *Reflections*, produced by the Network. Visit the Historic Preservation Division website at www.gashpo.org. 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

W. Ray Luce, Division Director &
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Jeanne Cyriaque, 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.



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A Program of the
Historic Preservation Division
Georgia Department of Natural Resources
34 Peachtree Street, NW
Suite 1600
Atlanta, GA 30303-2316