

Reflections



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



Georgia African American
Historic Preservation Network

December 2000

2000 GEORGIA CENTENNIAL FARM AWARDS HONOR REVEREND JAMES FOWLER FARM

In 1888, Rev. James Fowler acquired 202 acres of land in Oakfield, Worth County, through the will of N.F. Mercer, a white man. Fowler was born into slavery in South Carolina, and transported to Georgia with his siblings. Fowler used his inheritance to become a local leading cotton producer by the 20th century. The *Sylvester Local* reported in 1947, "the first two bales of cotton for the season received in Sylvester were grown by Jake Thomas and Jim Fowler, colored farmers."

The Rev. and Mrs. James Fowler had 13 children, and their descendants acquired additional land over the next hundred years. Rev. Fowler's youngest son, Arthur, inherited the original farm in 1933 and continued producing crops on 204 acres. In 1984, Arthur's daughter, Juanita Fowler Miller, inherited this rare African American-owned farm.

Despite Georgia's recent droughts, the Fowler descendants produce cotton as the primary crop. The Miller family has added peanuts, wheat and soybeans, with 160 acres currently in agricultural production. Miller and her family were honored October 6th at the 2000 Georgia Centennial Farm Awards ceremony at the Georgia National Fair in Perry. The

Rev. James Fowler farm is the third African American recipient of a Centennial Family Farm Award.

The Lewis Clark farm in Boston, Thomas County, was awarded a Centennial Family Farm Award in 1996. Lewis Clark purchased 50 acres from James F. Brown in 1875. Clark raised cotton, corn, sweet potatoes, sugar cane, and garden vegetables on the farm. He willed it to his daughter, Lenary Clark Allen Williams, upon his death in 1899. Williams continued farm production until her death in 1987 and willed the farm to her daughter Essie Allen Spruel, the present owner. The Lewis Clark farm is currently leased, and there are no extant farmhouses or outbuildings.

The first African American Georgia family to receive a Centennial Family Farm Award (1995) were the descendants of Nathan Morgan, a former slave, who purchased 202 acres from A. Windsor in 1886. The Morgan farmstead is located 6.5 miles from Americus, Sumter County. In 1890, Morgan built a farmhouse using lumber hauled by wagon from a nearby sawmill. Morgan willed the farm to his nine children upon his death in 1917. Nathan's son, Milton, and his family produced cotton, corn, peanuts, and vegetables. They



"If the weather and insects permit, cotton is ... produced on this farm in each of the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries." Juanita Fowler Miller

Photo by James R. Lockhart

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CENTENNIAL FARM AWARDS

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cultivated crops with mules, and raised livestock to feed the family. Milton Morgan owned the farm from 1925 to 1947. He sold 60 acres during his ownership, including one acre that is presently the site of Mount Zion A.M.E. Church, the family church.

In 1952, Milton's son, Carranza, bought the farm after his father's death, continuing the legacy. Carranza constructed six additional outbuildings and began utilization of modern farming practices including tractor usage and electrical systems. The Morgan family farm was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1998.



The Morgan family farm historic outbuildings include a smokehouse, cotton barn, hog pen, mule barn, corn crib, and hen house. Photo by James R. Lockhart

Following the Civil War, most African Americans worked as tenant farmers on former white-owned plantations or migrated to industrial cities. Carole Merritt reported in *Historic Black Resources*, "landownership has come hard to African Americans, particularly in southern states like Georgia. By 1900 only one in seven black farms was operated by owners, and only one in five acres of farmland in the state was black-owned." The Georgia Historic Resources Survey documented fewer than ten African American-owned farms in 38,000 properties. The accomplishments of these three families are extraordinary, given the historic economic barriers they surmounted to acquire farms, produce crops, and maintain the land within their families for over 100 years!



A pear tree on the Lewis Clark farm in Boston.



This two-room log house, c. 1875, was the birthplace of Essie Allen Spruel, the granddaughter of Lewis Clark. The Lewis Clark farm no longer has extant outbuildings or a farmhouse.

CENTENNIAL FARM AWARDS PROGRAM

Since 1992, the Georgia Centennial Farm Program has honored historic farms, recognizing the importance of these resources to the state's agricultural heritage. The **Centennial Heritage Award** honors farms owned by members of the same family for 100 years or more and listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The **Centennial Farm Award** does *not* require continual family ownership, but the farm must be at least 100 years old and listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The **Centennial Family Farm** honors farms owned by members of the same family for at least 100 years or more that are *not* listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Each farm must meet the minimum criteria of ten acres in production and \$1,000 annual income.

The Georgia Centennial Farm Program is administered by the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, in cooperation with the Georgia Farm Bureau Federation; the Georgia Department of Agriculture; the University of Georgia, College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences; the Georgia Forestry Commission; and the Georgia National Fairgrounds and Agricenter. The Centennial Farm Committee is comprised of representatives from each of these organizations. Participants who qualify for a Centennial Farm Award are honored each year at the Georgia National Fair. Applications for the 2001 awards cycle must be received by March 1, 2001.



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THE HERNDON HOME NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

C. Donald Beall, GAAHPN Steering Committee

June 23, 2000, marked the dedication of **The Herndon Home** as a National Historic Landmark. This 1910 Beaux Arts mansion, constructed by African American craftsmen, was the family residence of Alonzo F. Herndon. A former slave, Herndon became one of Atlanta's leading black entrepreneurs. Herndon owned one of the finest barbershops in the country, the Crystal Palace, and founded the Atlanta Life Insurance Company. **The Herndon Home** is located near the Atlanta University Center, home of five historically black colleges and universities, and still maintains its grandeur. **The Herndon Home** property, included in the **Atlanta University Center Historic District**, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

Edward Irons, chair of the Alonzo F. and Norris B. Herndon Foundation, presided at the dedication. Carole Merritt, **The Herndon Home** director, joined Irons in accepting the plaque from National Park Service Senior Historian Frank Miele. Ray Luce, Historic Preservation Division director, provided remarks for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Generations of Herndons and friends celebrated this historic designation, along with Camille Love, director of the City of Atlanta Bureau of Cultural Affairs, and Nancy Boxill, Fulton County commissioner.

As an African American male from rural Georgia, touring this historic property left me in awe of every aspect of the home, including its structure, furnishings and landscape. Be sure to tour this grand historic place next time you are in Atlanta.



Visit The Herndon Home, 587 University Place N.W., in Atlanta. Tours are conducted hourly from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Admission is \$5 for adults, and \$3 for students. Group rates are available. For group tour reservations and further information, call 404/581-9813. Photo by James R. Lockhart



Reverend Primus King
Columbus Ledger-Enquirer
100 People to Remember
January 2000

In 1944, African American voters in Georgia were prohibited from voting in the Democratic Party Primary Election. During that period, Georgia was a Democratic Party state, and this practice ensured no black participation in the selection of candidates for the General Election. On Independence Day, Primus King, a black preacher and barber from Columbus, requested a ballot in the all-white Georgia primary. When he was refused, he filed a suit that ultimately changed the state's electoral process. In

1946, the case reached the U.S. Court of Appeals. When the federal judge asked King if he wanted damages or the right to vote, he said "I want the right to vote, for me and for my people."

Governor Roy Barnes, Vernon Jordan, past director of the Georgia NAACP and former president of the National Urban League, state representative Calvin Smyre, King family members and other officials recently dedicated a section of Macon Road as the Primus King Highway in Columbus, Muscogee County. Though a portrait is displayed in the Columbus Board of Elections and a local recreation center bears his name, the dedication was the first time the state of Georgia honored King, who died in 1986. Governor Barnes acknowledged the accomplishments of King. "Modern Georgia and the modern South owes this little barber and preacher a debt of gratitude. It took great courage for him to file that suit ... he went against the crowd. History is ordinary people doing extraordinary things, people who made a difference, and Primus King made a difference."

Vernon Jordan spoke about King's lone fight for blacks to vote in the primary and hold office. "In many ways he is more important than Martin Luther King Jr. because he did it by himself. He was unlearned and unlettered, but he had a Ph.D. in commitment, courage, faith and fortitude." State representative Calvin Smyre introduced the resolution in the 2000 General Assembly resulting in the highway designation.

NEW AFRICAN AMERICAN NATIONAL RECREATION TRAIL

The **Columbus Black Heritage Trail** recently received a National Recreation Trail designation from the Department of the Interior. Thirty properties along this urban concrete trail document African American heritage in Columbus, including the home of Gertrude Pridgett “Ma” Rainey and the former site of the Dillingham Bridge, built by Horace King, a former slave. Other properties along the trail include the Liberty Theatre and the William H. Spencer House. The **Columbus Black Heritage Trail**, Muscogee County, is the second African American trail to receive this designation, following the Carter G. Woodson Black History Trail in Washington, D.C.



The home of Gertrude Pridgett “Ma” Rainey was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1992. Born in Columbus in 1886, Rainey began her career traveling the minstrel circuit with her husband. “Ma” Rainey incorporated country blues and jazz in her performances in African American segregated theaters throughout the South. Her legacy influenced legendary blues singers Billie Holiday, Bessie Smith, and Ethel Waters. “Ma” Rainey is known as “the mother of the blues.” Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque



Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, the William H. Spencer House was the family residence from 1912-1925. Spencer was an educator who was appointed the first Supervisor of the Colored Schools in Muscogee County. This neo-classical home was restored by the Golden Owlettes, Inc., alumnae who attended the William H. Spencer High School in Columbus.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

The Liberty Theatre opened in 1925 as the first African American entertainment center in Columbus. When it was no longer used as a movie house and the building deteriorated, the Liberty closed in 1974. The Liberty Theatre was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. Restored by 1997, it presently serves the African American community as the Liberty Theatre Cultural Center.

Photo by the Columbus Convention & Visitors Bureau

AFRICAN AMERICAN PROPERTIES RECEIVE GEORGIA HERITAGE 2000 GRANTS

Governor Roy Barnes recently announced Georgia Heritage 2000 Program grants that will support three African American preservation projects. The Historic Preservation Division administers the program, providing matching grants. Georgia Heritage properties must be listed in or eligible for the National Register and owned by local governments or non-profit organizations. Development grants were awarded to:

Alapaha School Alapaha, Berrien County

Constructed in 1924, this wooden schoolhouse was used to educate African American students until 1950. It has served as a Masonic Lodge for the past 30 years. Grant funds totaling \$37,000 will be used to stabilize and repair the building for a town library, community center and Masonic Lodge.

The Herndon Home Atlanta, Fulton County

Since 1977, the Alonzo F. and Norris B. Herndon Foundation has owned and operated The Herndon Home, a National Historic Landmark and house museum. The grant will provide \$14,000 to fund construction work required to make the facility accessible to disabled visitors.

West Broad Street YMCA Building Savannah, Chatham County

Constructed in 1927, this YMCA building served as a social center for the surrounding African American community for over 50 years. Con Ed, Inc., a nonprofit community-based organization, plans to restore the building and provide needed social service programs for adjacent neighborhoods. Grant funds of \$7,000 will be used for structural stabilization of the building.

RECENT NATIONAL REGISTER LISTINGS

The **Fort Valley State College Historic District** is located on the southwest side of Fort Valley, Peach County, and borders on nearby residential neighborhoods and farmland. The district includes buildings facing the quadrangle and main entrance to this historically black college that is now a university. Buildings circled around the quadrangle include: the Benjamin Anderson House, Carnegie Hall and Huntington Hall. The Anderson House is a frame residence presently used as Alumni House. Other buildings in the district are primarily brick in the Georgian Revival architectural style. The district occupies 16 of the 1,380 acre Fort Valley State University campus encompassing modern buildings and research facilities. The **Fort Valley State College Historic District** was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on April 14, 2000.



Carnegie Hall, c.1925, was built with a \$25,000 contribution from the Carnegie Corporation. The building was the campus library until 1952. Carnegie Hall is presently used as the campus safety office and commuter student lounge.

Photo by James R. Lockhart



Anderson House, c.1890s, was once the home of Francis Gano, one of the institution's 18 founders. In 1980, this Colonial Revival home was renamed the Benjamin S. Anderson House in honor of an esteemed professor who served the college for 25 years. The home is presently a museum and is used for alumni events and receptions.

Photo by James R. Lockhart



Huntington Hall, c.1908, was a gift from C.P. Huntington. The building was utilized as a dormitory for girls. It is the oldest building on campus, erected with the assistance of student laborers.

Photo by James R. Lockhart

Washington Park is a key recreational area in this African American community characterized by historic bungalow residences, commercial structures and landmark buildings. The **Washington Park Historic District** is located two miles west of the central business district in Atlanta, Fulton County. The neighborhood was developed c.1919-c.1947. Though originally planned as three subdivisions for whites, due to the proximity of this community to the Atlanta University Center, the redesignation of the Ashby Street School (renamed E.R. Carter) as black, and the designation of **Washington Park** as the city's first black park in 1919, whites did not settle in this Atlanta subdivision. Heman Perry, an African American entrepreneur and founder of the Standard Life Insurance Company of Atlanta, was a significant



Washington Park is the focal point in the community for recreation. In 1919, Washington Park became Atlanta's first park for African Americans.

Photo by James R. Lockhart

pioneer in the development of **Washington Park**. As developers no longer viewed this land as desirable for white settlement, Perry bought the land and planned the residential community. Perry created numerous financial subsidiaries including the Citizen Trust Company. These companies provided services to the black community that were denied by white companies. Through the Citizen Trust Company and affiliate subsidiaries, Perry financed mortgages and 80% of the black-owned businesses on Auburn Avenue in 1925. **Washington Park** developed as a black middle/working class residential community in the 1920s, and remains an African American neighborhood today. The **Washington Park Historic District** was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on February 28, 2000.

GREEN GROVE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH AND SCHOOL DEDICATION

Green Grove Missionary Baptist Church and School received a historical marker from the Historic Chattahoochee Commission at ceremonies held during the Fall Ramble, hosted by The Georgia Trust in Stewart County. Listed in the National Register in June 1995, the Green Grove properties include the church, school and cemetery.

The Green Grove complex is located approximately six miles southeast of Lumpkin in a rural setting. The church was founded in 1886 by Perry Hudson to serve African American tenant farmers, former slaves who worked on nearby plantations following the Civil War. By 1898, the Green Grove Church held classes for students. In 1919, a devastating tornado swept through Lumpkin. The church was demolished and one of the students was killed. Hettie York donated land for a new church, completed in 1920. Four years later this building was destroyed by a fire. A new church, New Green Grove, the present building, was completed in 1927. The church held classes for ten years until 1937, when the Wesley Chapel school for white children closed. This school was purchased by the Green Grove trustees, who disassembled the building and moved it four miles by wagons to the present location. These black craftsmen, including Johnny Hudson, currently a master craftsmen at nearby Westville Village, Oscar Powell, and other church members carefully reassembled the school piece by piece, completing it in time for fall classes. This was truly a remarkable feat!



Green Grove Missionary Baptist Church is a fine example of a country church in early 20th century rural Georgia. The current pastor is Reverend Ben Stanley.

Grades 1-8 were taught at the one room school without desks, electricity or plumbing. In spite of these meager surroundings, students received an outstanding educational foundation that resulted in extraordinary careers.

Sammie Glenn Hudson was the first teacher/principal of Green Grove School. Mrs. Hudson remained principal of the school for 20 years until it closed in 1958. Willie Marie Powell Porter taught students at the school from 1948 to 1955, and was a key leader in the preservation of the Green Grove properties. She is a church officer and member of the Westville Board of Trustees.



Inside the Green Grove School are the original benches for students and displays of their class projects.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

The Green Grove cemetery, established c.1920, is located adjacent to the school, directly behind the church. Deceased founders and members of the church are buried there among blooming shrubs and trees.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque



Green Grove School is an example of a one-room school typically used to educate African American students in early 20th century rural Georgia. The windows provided a natural light source in this wood frame building. The school is presently used for church functions, special classes and family reunions.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque



*The Green Grove Missionary Baptist Church and School dedication program participants included, from left to right: **Houston Porter**, director of Transportation, Houston County Board of Education and former Green Grove student, his mother **Willie Marie Powell Porter**, pioneer Green Grove educator and preservationist, **Greg Paxton**, Georgia Trust president/CEO, **Douglas Purcell**, Historic Chattahoochee Commission director, **Charlotte Frazier**, Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network (GAAHPN) chair, **Matthew Moye**, Westville Historic Handicrafts, Inc. director/CEO, **Johnny S. Hudson**, assistant principal, Harris County High School and former Green Grove student, **Willie Glenn Hudson-Wheeler**, retired director of Guidance, Columbus School System, and **Jeanne Cyriaque**, African American programs coordinator, Historic Preservation Division.*

Photo by Donald Beall

Let's Keep In Touch

As chair of the Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network (GAAHPN), I welcome you to the premier edition of *Reflections*, the quarterly newsletter for our network. The Georgia African American historic preservation movement is a catalyst to stabilize traditional African American neighborhoods, create contextual economic development, promote neighborhood conservation and tourism, and provide education and training. Join this statewide team of volunteers in promoting African American historic preservation. Our collaboration will produce greater recognition of African American contributions to Georgia's history, and a legacy for future generations. Feel free to call upon the GAAHPN Steering Committee for information or technical assistance in your preservation projects.



*Charlotte Frazier, Chair
Georgia African American
Historic Preservation Network*

Welcome to *Reflections*, the official newsletter of the Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network! *Reflections* is published quarterly by the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Help GAAHPN to promote African American preservation initiatives and resources by sending me your project information. GAAHPN recognizes that network members may have changed mailing information, so please take a few moments to complete the enclosed Database Rehabilitation form to ensure your receipt of future *Reflections* editions and HPD communications. Plans are underway to establish a link to *Reflections* on HPD's web site. You can check HPD's web site regularly at www.gashpo.org for current preservation news.



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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 throughout the state. 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 Network 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 450 people from around the state 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. Membership in the Network is open to all, and Georgians are invited to find out more about their work.

Reflections

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