

Reflections



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REMEMBERING THE ALBANY MOVEMENT

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When the southwest region of Georgia was opened to white settlement after the Creek Indian treaty, Nelson Tift, a land speculator and merchant, founded Albany in 1836. Tift envisioned this city on the banks of the Flint River as a major commercial market for cotton. Soon cotton planters and their enslaved African Americans populated the town and surrounding countryside. When Dougherty County was formed in 1853, Albany became the county seat.

By the end of the Civil War, the vast majority of Albany's residents were freedmen and cotton planters. In 1867-68, more than 2,400 African American men were registered to vote in Albany and Dougherty County. During Reconstruction, considerable political gains were achieved, when men like Phillip Joiner and Benjamin Sikes served as delegates to the convention, and two black legislators served from the region during this turbulent time. But Albany, like other southern cities, gradually implemented Jim Crow tactics such as literacy tests and poll taxes to reduce the black vote, and intimidated African Americans with violence. By 1915, Albany's registered black voters totaled twenty-eight.

In 1903, W.E.B. DuBois published *The Souls of Black Folk*. In his discussion of the Black Belt, he described Albany and Dougherty County as a place "with ten thousand Negroes and two thousand whites." Once the heart of the Cotton

Kingdom until 1898, as DuBois pointed out, Albany and Dougherty County became a region dominated by sharecropping. When cotton prices fell, vast plantations were sub-divided to small, one-family farms where African Americans worked their "shares" under the supervision of white overseers while the farms were under the control of absentee landlords.

Albany's population continued to have a black majority until World War II. During this period until the 1960s, the groundwork for implementing a fight against segregation lied with the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The Albany NAACP chapter was founded by C.W. King, a World War I veteran. The chapter conducted voter registration drives in the 1940s and advocated for

improved city services in the African American community. C.B. King and Slater King were two of C.W. King's sons. C.B. King was one of only three black attorneys who practiced in Georgia outside of Atlanta. Slater King was a builder and real estate broker. Tom Chatmon was then the adult supervisor of the NAACP Youth Council. Another prominent African American men's organization was the Criterion Club. Its membership was comprised of Albany's leading African American businesses. The Criterion Club and the NAACP constantly pushed for integration of Albany's public facilities through negotiation with city



Mt. Zion Baptist Church was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on August 10, 1995. In November 1998 the church renovations were completed, and it re-opened as the Albany Civil Rights Movement Museum at Old Mt. Zion Church. The Freedom Singers perform at the museum on the second Saturday of each month.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

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REMEMBERING THE ALBANY MOVEMENT

Jeanne Cyriaque, continued from page 1



C.B. King was an African American attorney who was one of the leaders of the Albany Movement. The new Albany federal courthouse is named in his honor. Photo courtesy of Cochran Studio/A.E. Jenkins Photography

officials, but accomplishments were marginal until national events forced the formation of the Albany Movement.

In 1961, the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) issued a ruling based upon the 1960 U.S. Supreme Court landmark decision in *Boynton v. Virginia* that barred segregation in bus and train terminals. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) sponsored a series of integrated bus rides to test the ICC ruling with the hope that the federal government would intervene in the freedom movement. John Lewis, who would later become a U.S. Congressman from Georgia, was one of the interracial team who volunteered for *Freedom Rides* throughout the South.

The *Freedom Rides* traveled unmolested in Virginia and North Carolina, but John Lewis and Albert Bigelow, a retired white naval officer, were assaulted in Rock Hill, South Carolina. While no violence occurred during stops in terminals in Augusta, Athens and Atlanta, the *Freedom Riders* were attacked by violent white mobs in Anniston, Birmingham and Montgomery, Alabama, and the riders received no police protection resulting in serious injuries. The *Freedom Rides* in Mississippi resulted in the arrests of 300 persons who were incarcerated in Parchman Penitentiary. These events forced the ICC to deliver an edict for complete desegregation of interstate transportation facilities by November 1, 1961.

Coinciding with these developments, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC or “Snick”) was planning a southwest Georgia voter registration project. The project director was Charles Sherrod, a Virginia divinity student who had already worked in previous SNCC projects in McComb, Mississippi. When Sherrod and fellow SNCC members Charles Jones and Cordell Reagon came to Albany, their goal was to organize local leadership and register voters in 23 southwest Georgia counties. Many of these rural counties surrounding Albany were known for their violent reaction to any semblance of African American protest. Lee and Terrell counties were notorious for their white supremacist tactics that were supported by the local sheriffs. Additionally, both counties were primarily rural, and a few white families dominated the local economy. Sharecroppers who lived in these counties were always fearful of losing their land due to local economic control. Widespread poverty and illiteracy were also obstacles to getting people registered to vote.

At the time that Charles Sherrod came to Albany, he was already a SNCC veteran. Though he was just 23 years old, he had



Hundreds of marchers conducted protests against segregation in Albany's public facilities. Photo courtesy of the Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection, dgh231-86

attended workshops in Nashville where he learned the principles of non-violent, direct action protest from James Lawson. Upon his arrival, students from Albany State College (now Albany State University) were eager to participate in voters' education workshops. Soon he recruited some of the students, including Bernice Johnson and Rutha Harris, to join the initiative. Local churches provided meeting space for the workshops. When the students learned of the impending ICC ruling, they decided to conduct a sit-in at the Albany Trailways bus station. Student members of Tom Chatmon's NAACP Youth Council were refused service at the all-white lunch counter, and Police Chief Laurie Pritchett arrested them. These students were bailed out, but later that same day, two Albany State students, Bertha Gober and Blanton Hall were arrested for violating the color line in the waiting room. Gober and Hall were not released on bail and remained incarcerated over the Thanksgiving weekend. This action encouraged other students to join, and by the end of the first week of protests, over 700 people were jailed.

The students' zeal soon won the interest of Albany's black middle class. One community leader was Dr. William Anderson, an osteopath. Dr. Anderson was a member of the Criterion Club and the NAACP. Because Dr. Anderson's medical practice depended on the African American community, he was more receptive to the students' demands. As increasing numbers of students and their parents were arrested, Dr. Anderson was asked to chair the Albany Movement, a consortium of SNCC students, the NAACP, the Voters' League and the people who comprised the congregations of Albany's black churches.

While the SNCC organizers were successful in filling up the local jail, they did not anticipate Chief Pritchett's counter tactic



Shiloh Baptist Church and Mt. Zion Baptist Church were the sites for mass meetings during the Albany Movement. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke to over 1,500 members in December, 1961. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

of contacting the police in surrounding counties and transporting prisoners to their facilities. Another tactic he used was to show no outward signs of physical violence against the demonstrators, so as to avoid the perceived need for federal intervention. The result of this maneuvering by Pritchett and the other county sheriffs resulted in the prisoners being widely dispersed and separated ensuring that a “fill the jails” strategy would fail and there was no central focal point for press coverage of the events.

C.K. Smith Memorial Presbyterian Church was the site of the first mass meeting of the Albany Movement on November 25, 1961. Bernice Johnson and Rutha Harris were *Freedom Singers*, a group that was formed by SNCC. The *Freedom Singers* transposed the text of traditional black spirituals and Baptist hymns to contemporary words that described freedom, a basic tenet of the movement. The song leader would lead a phrase that required response in song from the audience. The songs offered a respite for marchers to endure long stays in local jails and became a favorite method to verbalize against segregation. After their initial performance at Mount Zion, the *Freedom Singers* performed nationally for SNCC. Mount Zion hosted a mass meeting one month later, when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke to over 1,500 people during his visit to Albany.

Soon local supporters realized they did not have the capacity to raise funds for posting bond for so many people, so Dr. Anderson called upon Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for assistance from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Dr. King and Ralph Abernathy came to Albany to speak at mass meetings that were held at Shiloh and Mount Zion Baptist Churches. The next day King led a march and was promptly arrested. He planned to remain incarcerated until the city agreed to demands from the Albany Movement for complete desegregation.



Slater King, one of the leaders of the Albany Movement, confronts Police Chief Laurie Pritchett during the mass demonstrations. Photo courtesy of Cochran Studio/A.E. Jenkins Photography



Bernice Johnson and Slater King participate in one of the marches. Photo courtesy of Cochran Studio/A.E. Jenkins Photography



Police Chief Laurie Pritchett confronts Ralph Abernathy and Dr. King during a prayer pilgrimage to Albany's City Hall. Photo courtesy of WSB Newsfilm Collection, University of Georgia Libraries

Mayor Asa Kelley and city officials agreed to make concessions and King was released, but the concessions never materialized. When King returned in six months to serve his sentence, Pritchett secretly arranged for his bond to avoid any national press coverage.

Historians have often characterized the Albany Movement as a failure for Dr. King because the SCLC intervention did not force the city to make any overtures towards desegregation in spite of the massive arrests. Yet, King learned many lessons from the Albany Movement that would help him in planning the Birmingham Campaign. The Albany Movement was a success for SNCC organizers, as it inspired Charles Sherrod to continue the southwest Georgia project in surrounding counties where white supremacy was challenged and African Americans registered to vote. The Albany Movement also successfully engaged young people and the *Freedom Songs* became a stalwart of future direct action. Perhaps the Albany Movement's greatest triumph was its ability to address the generational divide to bring about change.

By the 1990s, the community and the city came together on a series of initiatives that commemorate the Albany Movement. The Charles Sherrod Civil Rights Park was constructed in Albany's *Freedom District* with a memorial to the movement's participants.



A memorial to the Albany Movement is the centerpiece of the park that is located in Albany's Freedom District.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

Mount Zion Baptist Church was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on August 10, 1995. In November 1998 the church renovations were completed through sales tax revenues that were approved by Albany voters and the Albany Civil Rights Movement Museum at Old Mt. Zion Church was open to the public to assist in the interpretation of the Albany Movement. The museum is located across the street from Shiloh Baptist Church that was the other site of mass meetings in Albany's *Freedom District* in 1961 and 1962. The Albany Civil Rights Movement museum is a repository of oral histories from people associated with the Albany Movement. The museum is a frequent site for plays, poetry readings and special lectures. The *Freedom Singers*, led by Rutha Harris, perform at the museum on the second Saturday of each month. ■



Some of Albany's Freedom Singers, from left to right, are Geneva Fields, Patricia Alford, Janice Route-Blaylock and Angie Gibson. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

THE PITTSBURGH HISTORIC DISTRICT: REMEMBERING AND RETELLING LOCAL HISTORY

*Hermina Glass-Avery, African American Programs Assistant
Historic Preservation Division*

Few urban African American communities in the country can boast of continuous patterns of ethnic heritage, community planning and development sustained by an intact offering of residential, commercial, and institutional buildings as the Pittsburgh community. An African American settlement that developed in southwest Atlanta around 1883, the Pittsburgh Historic District is bound on the north by Shelton and Stephens Streets, to the west by Metropolitan Parkway (formerly Stewart Avenue), to the east by the Southern Railroad, and to the south by University Avenue. Its name denotes the similarities to the smoke-filled rail yards of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

During the first decade, the increase of industry in Atlanta's southern rail yards required a labor force of skilled, unskilled, as well as domestic laborers. African Americans supplied this labor as they simultaneously created a community that included several black-owned businesses, churches, and schools. The district consists of a wide variety of single-story house types that date from 1883 to 1954 including single shotgun, gabled-ell, side-gabled, hall and parlor, Georgia cottage, to New South, bungalow, and ranch.



Idus Parks (left) worked at the neighborhood grocery store that was owned by a Jewish grocer, Ike Andrews (right). The store was located at McDaniel and Delevan Streets. Photo courtesy of the Glass family

1960s, the community would witness a large-scale exodus of its middle class and younger residents. Widespread property abandonment led to the demolition of many homes. This decreased the availability of a viable housing stock in the area for decades. By 2000 the neighborhood was on the rise with new residential developments and rehabilitation projects like the Crogman Elementary School Apartments.



Crogman School Apartments is a community landmark named for educator William Henry Crogman who, in 1903, became the first African American president of Clark College, now Clark Atlanta University. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on July 14, 2005.

School photo by James R. Lockhart



Pictured above is a Georgian cottage (right) and a variation of a bungalow (left). Photo by James R. Lockhart

By the 1910's, African Americans continued to migrate into the area, dramatically increasing the population and by the 1930s the population was predominantly African American. McDaniel Street emerged as the major thoroughfare with numerous businesses sprouting up, including grocery stores, cafes, beauty and barbershops, shoe repair, wood and coal yards, ambulance and mortuary services and ice cream parlors. Although many of these establishments were black-owned, several of the stores belonged to Jewish merchants, like Ike Andrews, who lived in other areas of Atlanta.

Ultimately the Great Depression, World War II, the Interstate Highway System, and urban renewal would negatively influence the future of the Pittsburgh community. By the early

Gloria Glass Goodson, 76, was born and raised in Pittsburgh. The third of twelve children born to Freddie and Savannah Parks Glass, Goodson recalls her experiences. “Pittsburgh was a nice neighborhood when I was a young girl. We were all poor, but we didn’t know it. We lived at 1050 Smith Street with my grandparents. Then we moved to 1019 Hubbard Street until my parents bought a house in Mechanicsville, on Windsor Street.

The area where I lived was called the ‘green row.’ All the houses were just alike in that block on that side of the street—green. On the opposite side of the street the houses were all different. And they were duplexes with only two rooms – a bedroom, and a kitchen. We had outdoor bathrooms on the back porch. You had to go out in the yard to gather water to use for dishwashing, cooking, and all that. And that was right here in the city of Atlanta.



Gloria Glass Goodson stands on the porch of her family home on Windsor Street. Photo courtesy of the Glass family

Ma-Deer was from Meriwether and daddy was from Coweta. He got tired of working on the farm, so he moved to Atlanta and lived with his uncle and aunt across the street from my mother’s family who moved to Atlanta when Ma was three months old. My grandparents, Willie and Eula Mae Martin Parks, came to Atlanta around 1912. Their parents, Major and Georgia Ann Favors Martin, were born in slavery. Daddy, he worked at a feed mill as a common laborer. He worked at Ever Best Feed Mill. I don’t know if they made flour or not, but I know my mother used to buy Capitola flour and we used to take the coins out of the bags and go to the movies with the tokens in the sacks of flour.

When I started school I attended Crogman Elementary School. After I finished the sixth grade, I went to David T. Howard. In the ninth grade I was transferred to Booker T. Washington High School and graduated in 1951. Washington High School was the first black high school for black students. That was the only one there was that went to the twelfth grade around the Pittsburgh area.

Pittsburgh was very segregated. In 1946 or somewhere along in there, they brought the bus line and changed from streetcars to buses. The buses were segregated. Everything was segregated.

We would have to let white people get on the bus first, and then we got on last. Then we had to sit in the back of the bus. And, the white people had the best jobs. My dad worked at the feed mill and he would be doing the same work that the white guy would be doing, but they would pay the white man more money than they paid my father. I guess they thought the white guy needed more money than daddy did. But the loaf of bread cost the same! They didn’t discriminate on what you bought for grocery!



Eula Mae Martin Parks (front) migrated to Atlanta with her family to the Pittsburgh community from Rocky Mount in Meriwether County. Photo courtesy of the Glass family

The Civil Rights movement opened up jobs for us. We could buy a house anywhere we wanted afterwards. We couldn’t live anywhere we wanted - only in a black area. So, when integration came it opened up a new and better way for blacks. Later on I started selling life insurance for Afro-American Life Insurance. Then, I went on to be a clerk at Grady Hospital when they opened up and starting hiring blacks. When I left there, I went to the Internal Revenue Service where I retired. I worked there for twenty-three years.”



A church in the Pittsburgh Historic District sits between two commercial buildings. Photo by James R. Lockhart

Sponsored by the Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association, the Pittsburgh Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on June 14, 2006. Current and former residents gather at Pittman Park to celebrate the Annual Pittsburgh Community Reunion. For an entire weekend they gather to play games, reminisce, barbeque, eat, attend workshops, and to promote unity, pride, and continued growth in the community. ■

THE GULLAH/GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR: AN EMERGING NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

Jeanne Cyriaque, Commissioner
Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor

In 2006 Congress designated the barrier islands and coastal regions along the Atlantic Ocean as the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor. Congressman James E. Clyburn of South Carolina introduced the bill for the designation in 2005. This emerging National Heritage Area spans a geographical area encompassing over 12,000 square miles along the coast through four states: North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

The Heritage Corridor was created to recognize the important contributions made to American culture and history by Africans and African Americans known as Gullah/Geechee who settled in the coastal regions of the four states. Gullah/Geechee people survived the Middle Passage as enslaved Africans who were captured from the rice-producing regions of West Africa. They lived and worked on vast plantations in semi-tropical conditions and, because of this isolation, were able to maintain the Gullah language, arts and crafts.



*Congressman James E. Clyburn
Sixth District, South Carolina
House Majority Whip*

The Heritage Corridor will assist federal, state and local governments, grassroots organizations and public and private entities in interpreting the story of the Gullah/Geechee culture and preserving its folklore, arts, crafts and music. The Heritage Corridor will also preserve historical sites and artifacts unique to this culture.

The journey to preserve Gullah/Geechee culture began in 2000 when the National Park Service was authorized by Congress to conduct a *Special Resource Study*. The study focused on a geographical region that included 79 barrier islands and adjacent counties that are 30 miles inland. In Georgia, this area includes seven barrier islands and six counties: Bryan, Chatham, Liberty, McIntosh, Glynn and Camden. The *Special Resource Study* documented the national significance of the Gullah/Geechee people and their culture. The National Trust for Historic Preservation included the Gullah/Geechee culture on its 2004 annual list of most endangered resources.



Commissioners gather for a group photo following their induction ceremony. The South Carolina African American Heritage Commission hosted the ceremony at the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture in Charleston. Photo courtesy of the National Park Service



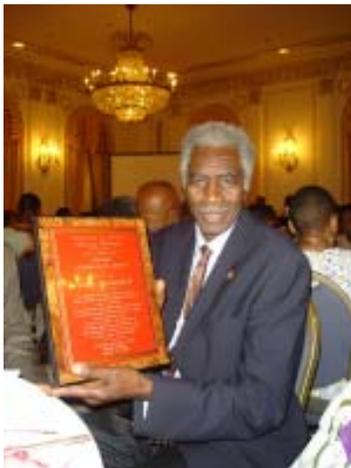
Once the Heritage Corridor was designated, each of the four states and the National Park Service recommended representatives to serve on the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission to the Secretary of the Interior. He appointed 15 commissioners and 10 alternates. In Georgia, the Historic Preservation Division (HPD) participated with the other state historic preservation offices (SHPOs) and the National Park Service in a series of community meetings to inform the public about the heritage area and to seek nominations for the management commission. The Georgia SHPO nominated Charles Hall and Althea Sumpter for initial appointments to the commission and recommended Deborah Mack and Amir Jamal Toure´ to serve as alternates on the commission. The National Park Service nominated Jeanne Cyriaque, HPD's African American programs coordinator, as Georgia's cultural resource expert on the management commission.

On October 29, 2007, Congressman Clyburn was the keynote speaker at the installation ceremony when members of the commission were announced. "After more than seven years of work to establish this corridor, today marks the first day of hard work this commission will undertake to preserve and share this nearly 400-year history that is the core purpose of this initiative," said Clyburn. A primary purpose of the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission is to develop a management plan for this National Heritage Area.



Jeanne Cyriaque, Ronald Daise, Lana Carter, Michael Allen and Antoinette Jackson attended the Congressional reception that was sponsored by the Alliance of National Heritage Areas, the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers and the National Park Service.

The commission adopted by-laws and elected officers in May 2008. The chairman of the commission is Emory Campbell of South Carolina. Campbell is currently president of Gullah Heritage Consulting Service and conducts institutes through lectures, short courses and the Gullah Heritage Trail Tours on Hilton Head Island. He is the author of *Gullah Cultural Legacies* and was the former director of the Penn Center on St. Helena Island for 22 years. The Association of African American Museums (AAAM) presented its Lifetime Achievement Award to Emory Shaw Campbell during its 30th annual conference in 2008.



Emory Campbell, chairman of the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission, received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association of African American Museums. Photo by Nichole Green

Eulis Willis, who is mayor of the city of Navassa in North Carolina, is vice chairman. Jeanne Cyriaque, secretary, coordinates African American programs in Georgia's state historic preservation office. Ralph Johnson, treasurer, is the director of the Center for the Conservation of Architectural & Cultural Heritage at Florida Atlantic University.

At the August 2008 meeting in Wilmington, NC the commission engaged the Denver Service Center to

partner with them to develop the management plan for the corridor. The North Carolina SHPO hosted a reception in Old Town Brunswick and commissioners supported the Atlantic Beach Gullah Festival.

Sapelo Island and Darien were the sites for the commission meeting in Georgia. Sapelo Island Cultural and Revitalization Society (SICARS) hosted the commissioners meeting in Hog Hammock and Cornelia Bailey provided a tour of Gullah/Geechee sites on Sapelo. Reverend Griffin Lotson, executive director of Sams Memorial Community Economic Development in Darien, was another valuable partner who made the Darien meeting a community event. Lotson organized a reception and dinner and the Darien Shouters, Frankie Quimby and the Georgia Sea Island Singers performed. ■



Althea Sumpter, Louise Miller Cohen and Emory Campbell take a break while mapping sites in the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque



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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. 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 2,650 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

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