



# Gwinnett Heritage

Summer 2023

A Quarterly Publication

Vol. 52 No.2



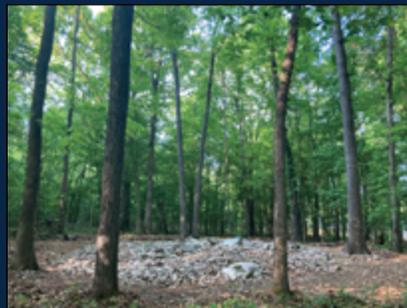
N O R C R O S S



## 150 Years of Norcross History



Bartlett Jenkins and the Southern Claims Commission



Native American Rock Mounds



Warbington Honored at Way Back Winn Event

## A Word from the President



**W**ow! It is hard to believe that three months have flown by and it is time to publish the *Gwinnett Heritage* again. This spring has been a busy time at the Historical Society, and we have some accomplishments to celebrate.

Top of the list is our new website, which went live on April 26. I hope that you have checked it out and like what you see. While there are always hiccups when transitioning from one website to another and it takes a bit of time to adjust to new ways of accessing information, I think having a modern website is a great step forward. Congratulations to Diane McCormic, Richard Lux, Beverly Paff, Priscilla Failmezger and the rest of the team who worked so hard to meet the go-live milestone and who continue to iron out the wrinkles that pop up. And, I want to give a shout out to Mark Tkacik who was so involved with the vendor selection process.

We can also celebrate the inaugural Way Back Winn event that was held at the Elisha Winn House property on April 23. Gwinnett Historical Society co-sponsored this event with Gwinnett Community Services. There were lots of fun activities and yummy refreshments, but the highlight was the dedication of the *Betty Warbington Stage* that caught our Winn House Chair totally by surprise. Be sure to read the article on this event for more details.

On a more somber note, this edition of our publication is dedicated to Susan Youngblood Gilbert who passed away in March. Many of you knew Susan and her passion for the history of her family and community. She served GHS in many roles, including as President. We appreciate her service to GHS and mourn her passing while celebrating her life and influence.

In other articles, you can pick up interesting facts about the history of Norcross, learn about one Gwinnett resident who supported the Union during the Civil War and catch up on the activities of a number of GHS committees. Also, Diane McCormic received permission for us to reprint an article that was originally published in *Archaeology Magazine*. This article focuses on stone mounds in neighboring Jackson County that are not exactly the same as those at Poole Mountain here in Gwinnett but certainly have some similarities.

I hope you enjoy the Summer *Gwinnett Heritage*.

Charlotte Nash

### This issue of *Gwinnett Heritage*

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*Gwinnett Heritage* is published for members of Gwinnett Historical Society in March, June, September and December.

Don't miss an issue of *Gwinnett Heritage*. Notify the GHS office of change of email address and other contact information.

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#### Cover photos

**Top:** Greetings from Norcross mural

**Left:** Bartlett Jenkins' grave

**Middle:** Rock mound in Jackson County

**Right:** Betty Warbington at Way Back Winn event

About Us..... 4

Soaring With Stone Eagles: A complex of Native American rock mounds bears witness to the endurance of ancient traditions..... 5

Bartlett Jenkins: A Union Man in Confederate Gwinnett..... 12

Norcross, Georgia: A Rich History Spanning More Than 150 Years..... 22

Donation Highlights Family Life in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Gwinnett.....30

Way Back Winn Event a Success! ..... 34

Committees ..... 36

Reports from Chairs..... 36

Sympathy ..... 40



Keady Drug Store in Norcross, Georgia

22



Blacksmith in action at the Way Back Winn event

34



North Gwinnett High School JROTC assist with cleaning monuments at Island Ford Baptist Church.

36

# About Us

## Our Purpose

Gwinnett Historical Society collects and preserves the history and genealogy of Gwinnett County, Georgia and the records of the early settlers of the county, including the churches, schools, organizations and other institutions.

## 2023–2024 Officers

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## Connect with us

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## Soaring With Stone Eagles: A complex of Native American rock mounds bears witness to the endurance of ancient traditions

By ERIC A. POWELL, Deputy Editor at *ARCHAEOLOGY* Magazine

Reprinted with permission of *ARCHAEOLOGY* Magazine, [www.archaeology.org](http://www.archaeology.org) (Copyright, The Archaeological Institute of America). It first appeared in the July/August 2022 edition of the magazine.

Note from Preservation Committee Chair Diane Kuczynski McCormic: We appreciate being allowed to reprint this article since it provides context and insight to the Poole Mountain rock mounds in Gwinnett County and the efforts to preserve them.

In 2006, multiple Poole Mountain parcels were rezoned for almost one thousand homes. The conditions imposed through the zoning process required an archaeological study and plan to protect any

archaeologically significant resources on the properties prior to development proceeding. There was little activity on most of the parcels for years, but excavation endangering some of these rock piles recently started, prior to the developer submitting any application for land disturbance permits to the county. These Poole Mountain rock piles resemble those that are now protected in the adjacent Little Mulberry Park.

GHS member, Pat Garrow, was the first archaeologist who surveyed the Little Mulberry Park's mounds and posted recently on the Keep Mulberry Great Facebook Page that he felt "most of them were most likely prehistoric and could potentially contain human remains." Other archaeologists, including Thomas H. Gresham, also studied the rock mounds on property that is now included in Little Mulberry Park and drew different conclusions. Gwinnett County ultimately purchased the property and made it a park, with protection of the stone structures as a major objective. Since there was no conclusive evidence that human remains were present in any of the rock piles, the county did not take an official position on the status of the rock structures as burial places.

Archaeologist Dr. Johannes "Jannie" Loubser, who surveyed the River Glen site in Jackson County, also reviewed findings pertaining to the Poole Mountain site. In a virtual meeting I attended in March 2023, he summed up his opinion, partly in jest, "It was either done by a farmer with a lot of spare time or Indigenous people." He advised that another survey should be done where the archaeologist would map the features and then dig a slot trench in the most likely precontact rock pile. In an earlier email communication with me dated October 15, 2022, he explained the importance of on-site investigation:

"Since artifacts are absent to scarce at these kinds of sites, evidence for authenticity mostly comes from exposing the soil layers and determining their association with the piled stones."

Dr. Loubser further stated:

"Regardless of their age or function, piled features took considerable labor and care to construct. The most recent of these kinds of features do not date too much later than the early twentieth century, when manual labor was still more affordable than mechanical clearing or stone collection from the surface. Basically then, piled stone features are non-renewable physical testimonies of bygone eras."



Image adapted from SANTosito Georgia, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons by Diane McCormic.

Ultimately, the fate of these mounds will depend upon the local community and Gwinnett County government. The federal government typically has no jurisdiction over such matters unless federal funds or federal lands are involved. State law to protect sites focuses on the presence of human remains, with most of the authority and responsibility for enforcement assigned to local governments. As seen in Jackson County, the success for saving the Indigenous rock piles was due in large part to the work of the community in conjunction with Jackson County staff, including Joel Logan, GIS Manager. Joel Logan advised Poole Mountain activist Lindsay Paul, who is leading the "Keep Mulberry Great" effort, that the local community should work closely with Gwinnett County Planning and Development personnel, advice that she has taken to heart.

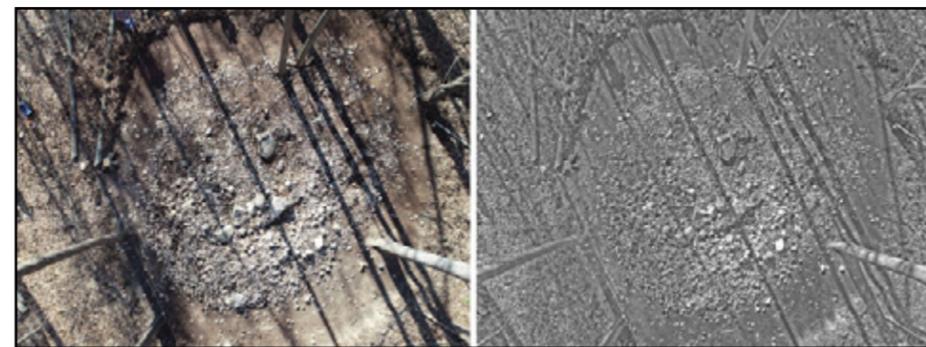
Photo on previous page (taken by Eric A. Powell) A stone mound created by Native Americans between 1550 and 1760 measures up to 30 feet in diameter and is the largest such feature at the site of River Glen in Georgia's Jackson County. The mound was built in the shape of a raptor around a quartz outcropping.

In the fall of 2008, Kevin Thomas, a deputy sheriff in northern Georgia's Jackson County, was on a routine patrol in the new River Glen subdivision. Then consisting of just a few houses under construction near the banks of the upper Oconee River, the development was still largely pristine, its gently rolling hills covered with oak and hickory trees. As he was driving along the neighborhood's River Glen Drive, a flash of white in the woods to the east of the road caught his eye. He pulled his patrol car over and walked toward what turned out to be a mound of stones piled a foot high. "I thought, 'Good lord, these have been here a long time,'" says Thomas. "I've seen piles of stones farmers make after clearing a field, and this looked different—more spread out and much

older." Curious, he searched the area and found dozens of other stone piles of various sizes, ranging from a few feet in diameter to one that was up to 30 feet wide. The individual rocks in the piles varied, too, from fist-sized to small boulders, consisting of both a quartz-rich white rock known as gneiss and a darker colored schist. The unusual complex of stone piles spread across about nine acres.

Over the years, Thomas returned to the site during his off hours and continued to find more stone piles as well as pottery sherds and other artifacts eroding out of the earth near the piles. In 2015, Thomas struck up a conversation with Joel Logan, Jackson County's GIS manager. Logan is responsible for maintaining the county's geographic data and had recently begun working with Johannes Loubser of the archaeology firm Stratum Unlimited to collect information on archaeological sites in the area. Although Thomas had previously been unable to interest archaeologists in the site, his description of the enigmatic stone piles in the River Glen subdivision piqued Logan's curiosity. One day in mid-January of 2016, Thomas, Logan, and Loubser paid a visit to the site.

"I wasn't sure what to expect," says Loubser. He notes that piled-stone features, also known as petroforms, have often been a source of controversy among archaeologists who study the southeastern United States, many of whom assume they were left by European-American farmers clearing their fields of stones. But, like Thomas, Loubser's first thought on visiting the site was that it was unusual and that at least the largest stone mound had very likely been made by Native Americans, not by farmers removing stones before plowing.



A drone image (left) of the River Glen site's largest stone mound. An enhanced version (right) shows the mound's outline. (Joel Logan, Jackson County, GA, GIS)

In researching the River Glen site, Loubser learned that an archaeologist named Gordon Midgette had recorded some of the rock structures in 1967 as part of a survey of the area, but had not made a map of the stones. In the 1990s, another team, led by University of Georgia archaeologist Jerald Ledbetter, noted a nearby turtle-shaped mound of rocks overlooking the Oconee River, but did not find the bigger complex of rock piles recorded by Midgette and later spotted by Thomas. During interviews with Logan, older members of a family that had once owned part of the property on which the stone piles were located reported that, as children in the early twentieth century, they had played among the piles, but had no notion of who had made them.

During the Mississippian period (ca. A.D. 900–1600), ancestors of both the Muscogee Creek and the Cherokee lived in this area of northern Georgia. Mississippian people throughout the Southeast practiced intensive agriculture and lived in towns that grew over time and featured large ceremonial mounds. They also seem to have practiced rituals that involved elements of a belief system shared by peoples living from present-day Illinois to Florida. If the stones had

not been piled by European-American settlers, then it seemed likely that Mississippian people had built the mounds.

Loubser alerted archaeologist Russell Townsend of the Tribal Historic Preservation Office of the

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians to the existence of the site. Given that the stone piles lay in the path of future development, Townsend felt the group should go forward with documenting them. Loubser, Logan, and Thomas worked with a team of volunteers over the course of three seasons to expose and record the site's 56 piled-



A drone image shows one of the River Glen site's seven mounds that have been identified as bird-shaped. (Joel Logan, Jackson County, GA, GIS)

of purpose. They were likely Muscogee people associated with what scholars call the Wolfskin phase of the Late Lamar culture. The Muscogee who built stone structures on this scale, says Loubser, were a people reinvigorating cultural traditions, not abandoning them.



The bird-shaped stone mound known as Rock Eagle in Georgia's Putnam County measures 120 feet at its widest. It has been heavily reconstructed. (Photo by Brian McInturff, CC BY-SA 3.0-migrated, via Wikimedia Commons)

Efforts by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians to raise awareness of Native American rock mounds in the Southeast, along with the discoveries at the Muscogee River Glen site, are changing how archaeologists approach piled-stone features in the region. "I'd say that even eight years ago we would have assumed most of these rock features were the result of farmers clearing their fields," says archaeologist Scott Ashcraft of North Carolina's Pisgah National Forest. "But with Jannie Loubser's work and the Eastern Band encouraging us, we are taking another look." Ashcraft says stone features are sometimes found in the woods of the Southeast in places where farmers are unlikely to have cultivated crops, such as hillsides or mountain passes. "It's not necessarily convenient for the Forest Service to reclassify these sites," he says, "but with what we know now, it's something we really have to do."

stone features. They found that many had an unusual hexagonal shape, while at least seven appeared to be what are known as effigy mounds, which were built to resemble animals or other figures, and in this case appear to represent birds. They also discovered that the 30-foot-wide mound was built around a natural quartz outcropping and outlined the shape of a raptor with its wings folded to the side. The bird-shaped River Glen mounds seemed similar to two larger, well-known stone effigy mounds called Rock Hawk and Rock Eagle that are some 50 miles south of the site in Georgia's Putnam County. Of uncertain age, these two mounds were also built along veins of rock quartz and had been thought to be the only bird-shaped effigy mounds east of the Mississippi River.

To Loubser's surprise, the team also discovered pottery sherds in the mounds that suggested they were built during what archaeologists call the terminal Mississippian or Lamar period. Lasting from about 1550 to 1760, the Lamar period was believed to have been a chaotic time during which Mississippian political and social institutions collapsed in the wake of warfare and widespread disease that followed the arrival of the Spanish. During the Lamar period, people moved out of large towns and onto small farmsteads, where researchers thought they lost touch with Mississippian traditions. But Loubser felt that the builders of the River Glen stone features had been animated by a strong sense

Even prominent piled-stone sites such as Rock Eagle, which has a wingspan of 120 feet at its largest, and Rock Hawk, which was once encircled by a wall 100 feet in diameter, have had their Indigenous origins questioned by locals and some scholars. After many years of excavation by several modern researchers, definitive proof of when the sites were constructed has



The stone mound known as Rock Hawk, now severely degraded, was constructed around a quartz outcropping visible at the center of the image. (Joel Logan, Jackson County, GA, GIS)

been elusive. Extensive archaeological excavations also mean that the sites have been heavily disturbed, and, in the case of Rock Eagle, reconstructed to appear pristine in a manner that might not reflect how it appeared hundreds of years ago.

According to local oral history, around 1800 an American settler named Giles Tompkins took possession of the land on which Rock Eagle was situated. He is said to have asked local Native Americans about the site, and they are said to have replied that they did not know what its origin or significance was. "It's probably fair to say that if they did know," says Loubser, "they wouldn't have told a settler." He points out that many historic accounts suggest that Native Americans in the region made a practice of building or adding to stone piles. Eighteenth-century Irish trader James Adair, who lived among the Chickasaw, a Muscogee-speaking people who inhabited what is now Mississippi, left a detailed account of some of these stone memorials: "To perpetuate the memory of any remarkable warriors killed in the woods...every Indian traveler as he passes that way throws a stone on the place. In the woods we often see innumerable heaps of small stones in those places, where according to tradition

some of their distinguished people were either killed, or buried, till the bones could be gathered."

If the River Glen piled-stone features contained human remains, this would have important consequences. Under Georgia law, sites with buried human remains cannot be developed. Were Loubser and his team to determine that the mounds con-

tained Native American graves, the site would be protected.

Over the course of their three field seasons, Loubser and his team excavated sections of seven of the piles. They found that they were all built above deliberately dug shallow depressions. They also found no traces of a plow zone, or soil disturbed by agriculture, near the mounds. Logan was able to locate a 1944 aerial photograph of the site that showed there were cotton fields in the area, but that a large stand of hardwood trees covered the hill where the mounds are located. "We showed pretty definitely that they were not made by farm clearing," says Loubser. "I think the farmers avoided the area precisely because removing the stone piles would have been labor intensive."

When the team excavated in the center of the largest raptor-shaped pile, they uncovered 61 fragments of human long bones. Immediately below the bones, they unearthed stone tools and a Wolfskin-phase bowl fragment. Similar artifacts have been found in Wolfskin-phase burial caches in natural rock outcrops. Such caches contain fragmented human remains, miniature funerary pots, and clay pipes decorated with intricate birds' heads.

The evidence the team discovered meant that the River Glen piled-stone features constitute a cemetery under Georgia law, and plans to build houses on the site were put on hold. Logan recalls a conversation he had with one of the contractors working on the development who operated heavy excavation equipment. "I showed him some of the stones and explained their significance," says Logan. "He told me, 'I bulldoze and destroy stone piles like that all the time.'"

Now protected, the River Glen stone piles join a growing body of sites in northern Georgia that are transforming how scholars think about the history of the people who lived here after Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto made his way through the region between 1539 and 1543. The archaeological record shows that after the introduction of European diseases led to social instability and increased warfare, Mississippian people moved into increasingly smaller settlements and individual farmsteads. Scholars have assumed the population also collapsed around this time. "We've always thought that this period marked an abrupt end of Mississippian lifeways and elaborate ceremonialism," says Loubser. But beginning in the 1990s, researchers noted that in northern Georgia, the population during the Lamar period actually grew, perhaps in part because people were migrating into the area. Five Lamar farmsteads that have been identified within a few minutes' walk of the River Glen site are just some of the hundreds of such sites that have been located across the counties of northwestern Georgia. Very few European artifacts have been discovered at these farmsteads, suggesting local people may have been refusing to trade for Spanish goods.

The Mississippian-period site of Dyar Mound once stood on the Oconee River south of the River Glen site. Before it was flooded by a reservoir in the 1970s, the mound was extensively excavated. Recent reanalysis of radiocarbon dates from the site by a team that included Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest archaeologist James Wettstead showed that Dyar Mound was not completely abandoned after

de Soto's expedition reached the area in the early 1540s. (See "[Enduring Rites of the Mound Builders](#).") It seems that even if inhabitants left the town to live in smaller settlements, they returned to Dyar Mound to practice ceremonies until at least 1670. "The Muscogee retained their cultural practices here for much longer than had been assumed," says Wettstead. "Loubser has shown that River Glen was a sacred site at the same time."

Their encounter with the Spanish deeply disrupted ancestral Muscogee and Cherokee peoples' ways of life, but Loubser suggests these communities eventually rallied around ancient symbols and rituals in an effort to stave off cultural obliteration. "The people in these farmsteads were carefully creating bird petroforms and making elaborately crafted bird-headed clay pipes during a period of severe socioeconomic challenges," says Loubser. Throughout history, people who have encountered colonizing powers have often responded to rapid social change by building societies that hark back to traditional ways of life. Sometimes they accomplish this by choosing key symbols from the past and adapting them to meet the challenges of the present. Loubser says that for people living along the upper Oconee River during the Lamar period, an important old Mississippian symbol seems to have been a bird with the wings and beak of a raptor, a motif that occurs on many artifacts found throughout the Mississippian world. It's possible that the raptor petroforms of Rock Eagle and Rock Hawk, which are both just a few dozen miles from Dyar Mound, were also built during the Late Lamar period as part of this revitalization movement.

Raptors are known to have played an ancient and central role in Mississippian religious life. The eighteenth-century trader Adair wrote that while Native Americans of the Southeast considered birds of prey unclean, such birds were also believed to be very powerful. The Cherokee thought that a shadow cast by a raptor could cause disease that could only be cured through the intervention of a medicine person. Eagles were especially powerful beings and

were thought to be able to either help or hinder a person on their long journey to the "Darkening Land," or the afterlife. During out-of-body experiences, medicine people were thought to accompany the souls of the dead and to do battle with raptors that sought to prevent the souls from reaching the afterlife. Shell and copper ornaments from Mississippian sites showing raptors confronting other beings, and depictions of men dressed as eagles, suggest beliefs linked to birds of prey were of great antiquity.

Loubser proposes that the River Glen petroforms could have been made by people from the surrounding farmsteads to memorialize confrontations between raptors and medicine people. The piles, especially the raptor forms, seem to have been constructed to be viewed from a great height, such as their builders might have imagined medicine people reaching during out-of-body experiences. "Their outlines weren't really clear to us from the ground until we looked at drone images," says Loubser. "Then the bird shapes jumped out."

It is also possible that families from different farmsteads came together to pile stones to mark

other important events entwined with ancient Mississippian beliefs having to do with birds and the afterlife. Loubser says that as clear as some of the bird shapes seem, the mounds probably remain unfinished. "I think they were making these petroforms until the day they left."

Jackson County has now purchased most of the River Glen site, and officials plan to preserve the stone piles as part of a historic park. Before that happens, the human remains discovered in the large raptor petroform will be reburied after consultation with the Historic and Cultural Preservation Department of the Muscogee Nation. Discussions are now underway about how to do that properly and respectfully.

Logan often recalls his conversation with the contractor who said he bulldozed stone piles as a matter of routine. "I can't help but think of the Native American history that is being lost with all the new development happening around Atlanta," he says. "We were lucky that Kevin Thomas found these stones and watched over them for so long. But there could be sites like this all over the woods of the Southeast, hiding in plain sight." ✱

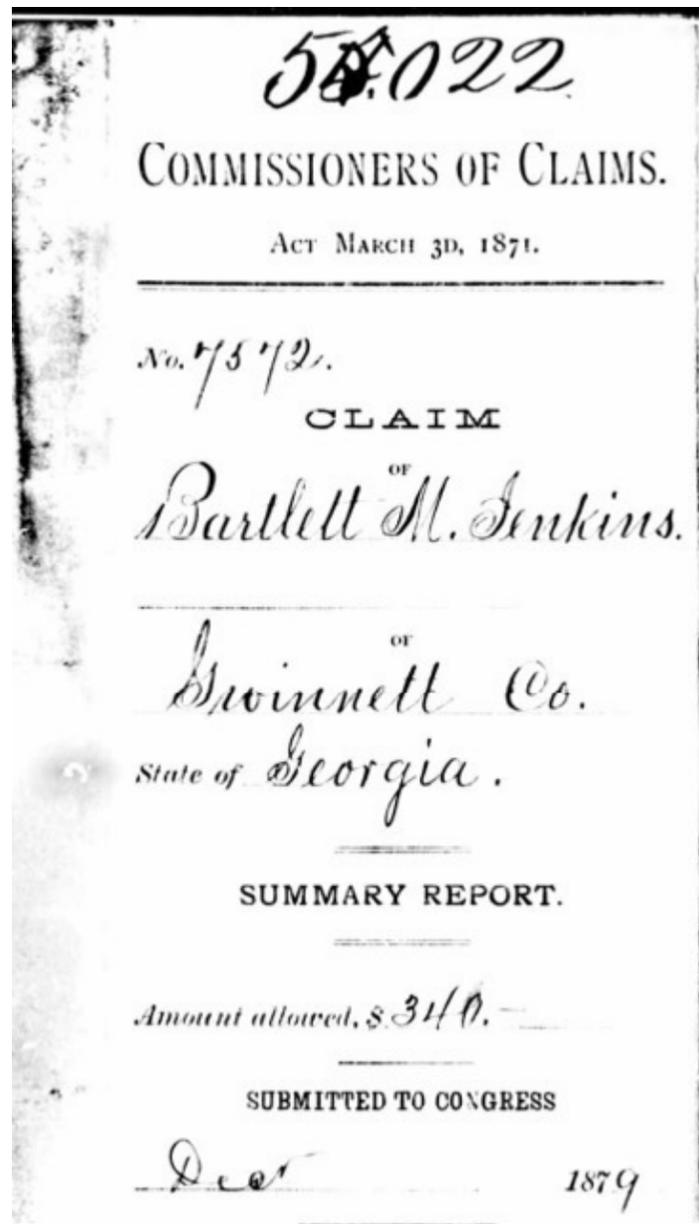
### Editor's Correction



Kathryn Baskin (second from right) with family and friends, including Sugar Hill Mayor and GHS Member Brandon Hembree

In the Spring 2023 *Gwinnett Heritage*, Brandon Hembree's role with the City of Sugar Hill was incorrectly identified as Council Member rather than Mayor. This mistake appeared in the caption for a photo associated with the article on the Gwinnett Preservation Hall of Fame awards. The photo with the corrected caption is shown to the left.

We sincerely apologize for the error. Brandon is a valued member of GHS and a Gwinnett leader who serves the community in a variety of important roles.



**Bartlett Jenkins: A Union Man in Confederate Gwinnett**  
By Gene Ramsay

While Gwinnett County was in the heart of the Confederacy during the Civil War and many men from Gwinnett served in the Confederate Army, not everyone in Gwinnett in those days was committed to the Confederate cause. If you visit the graveyard at Mount Carmel United Methodist Church on South Old Peachtree Road in Peachtree Corners, you will find a marker for the remains of Bartlett Jenkins. Jenkins, a

shoemaker and farmer by trade, lived in Lawrenceville and in the Norcross / Chattahoochee River area during and after the Civil War. Unlike many of his neighbors, he believed, and was not afraid to say he believed, that the Union among the states of the United States of America should be maintained.

We can get a glimpse of Jenkins' life during and after the Civil War by reviewing the records of the Southern Claims Commission, a tribunal that was set up after the Civil War to repay Union advocates from the Southern states whose property was taken during the war. This article explores the claim that Jenkins filed and his efforts to achieve reimbursement for property taken by the Union Army.

**Bartlett M. "Bart" and Mary Barnett Jenkins and their family**

Bart Jenkins was born in 1814 in the Edgefield District of South Carolina, located approximately 50 miles north of Augusta, Georgia. He came to Georgia as a young man and married Mary Barnett in Forsyth County in 1843. By the 1850 census, the Jenkins family had moved to Roswell, Georgia where he was working as a mechanic, and he and Mary had three children. In 1860, the census showed that the Jenkins family, which included four children at this point, was in Lawrenceville, and Bart was working as a shoemaker.

**Appropriation of property during the Civil War**

During the Civil War in the United States (1861-1865), the Quartermaster Corps and other units of the Federal [Union] Army seized food, crops and livestock from Southerners to provision the Union troops fighting in the war. Generally, there was no attempt made to pay the owners for the property taken. When the war came to North Georgia in the summer of 1864, the Federal Army continued this practice, with the Union troops carrying out foraging missions in Gwinnett County and other locations regardless of the political leanings of the owner of confiscated items.

**The Southern Claims Commission**

In 1871, the United States Congress set up the Southern Claims Commission (SCC) that allowed Southerners who had been Union supporters during the war and whose property was seized by the Federal Army without payment to apply for reimbursement. It was originally intended that the SCC would be active over a two-year time-span, but it was flooded with many more claims than its staff could process in this short a time window. As a result, the SCC did not end its work until 1880.

The legislation called for the SCC to have three commissioners, with President Grant nominating three men:

- Asa O. Aldis, a former judge from Vermont,
- James B. Howell, a former member of the U.S. Senate from Iowa, and
- Orange Ferris, a former member of the U.S. House of Representatives from New York.

The law creating the SCC also included provisions for its staff to include a clerk, a short-hand recorder and a messenger.

At first, the SCC planned to require that all claimants appear before it in person in Washington, D.C. to be examined. But when they saw the thousands of claims received, most asking for reimbursement amounts less than \$1,000.00, they changed their approach. Large claims would be adjudicated before the SCC directly in Washington, and smaller claims would be examined by a group of special commissioners who served as agents of the SCC. These special commissioners traveled around the country to interview claimants and witnesses pertinent to the smaller claims.

The agents would send a written report to the SCC with a recommendation regarding the validity of each claim and the amount owed, if any. The three members of the SCC then would review the evidence and recommendations from the agents, adjust the payments as they felt needed and forward the finalized recom-

mendations to Congress. Congress made the final decision on all payments.

To receive reimbursement, a Southern property owner filed a claim with the SCC, which is what Bartlett Jenkins did. Since his claim asked for a relatively small amount of money (\$944.00), he and his witnesses met with SCC agents in Georgia to provide testimony for the claim filed by Jenkins.

For the claim to be allowed [recommended by the agent to the SCC for payment], the claimant had to accomplish the following steps:

- Convince the agent that he or she was a Union supporter during the war and had not aided the Southern cause during the conflict.
- Document his property that was taken by the Federal Army without payment.
- Provide an estimate of the value of the goods that were confiscated.

Only then would the claim be considered through the remainder of the SCC process.

SCC records indicate that over 22,000 claims were made to the SCC but less than half of them were allowed; a far smaller number actually resulted in a payment of any amount. For example, in Gwinnett there were 57 claims submitted by men and women from the county, and it appears that all were processed by SCC special agents. Of these Gwinnett claims, about half were barred, meaning that the claimant and any witnesses had failed to offer the agent convincing proof that the claimant had been a Union loyalist during the war. Only four of the remaining claims were ultimately approved for a payment of some amount. One of these was from Bartlett M. Jenkins.

**Note on legibility of the records**

SCC records, including transcripts of sworn testimony from claimants and witnesses and written reports from the special agents, are available today in the National Archives, as well as online through sites such as ancestry.com. The claim

documents, including those for the Jenkins claim, are handwritten, and the details of these in many cases are difficult to decipher due to the style of handwriting, the faded nature of the documents and the quality of scanned documents available online. There are approximately 100 pages of documents pertaining to the Jenkins claim. The testimony stated below is in some cases my best guess as to the questions and answers provided by the various individuals named; sometimes I state a summary of their remarks.

### Claim by Bartlett Jenkins

In May 1871, Jenkins filed a claim stating that:

1. He was a Union loyalist during the war and had not aided the Confederacy.
2. He had numerous properties taken by the Union Army that included a horse, a mule, several cattle, several pigs, several fowl, corn, wheat and dried beef. These items were taken in summer/early fall of 1864 when he was farming in Milton and Gwinnett counties.
3. The items of property were taken without payment and had an estimated value of \$944.00.

An accounting of the items taken with requested reimbursements from Jenkins is given in the table below.

Item	Nature of Claim	Amount Claimed
1 and 2	Horse and Mule	300
3	400 bushels corn	400
4	50 bushels wheat	75
5	100 ? Oats	15
6	2 beef cattle	80
7	1 calf	3
8	9 Hogs	40
9	4 Hogs	20
10	60 Pounds Dried Beef	6
11	25 Fowls	5
Total		944

### SCC testimony regarding Jenkins' actions during the Civil War

Representing the SCC, special commissioners R. B. Avery, Sion Darnell and perhaps others took testimony on the Jenkins claim in 1877-1879. They spoke to Jenkins and to other persons who had direct knowledge of the events in Gwinnett and Milton counties before and during the war, including:

- Bartlett M. "Bart" Jenkins [the claimant],
- William Kirk,
- John M. Jenkins [the son of the claimant],
- Henry J. Minor,
- William Scott,
- Hiram Dean,
- George Hoyle Jones,
- Hampshire Jones,
- Mary Duncan and
- George Duncan.

The testimony of the claimant and these witnesses was taken in Georgia in Canton and Norcross.

### Jenkins' testimony in 1878 at Canton, Georgia

The SCC archives document several sessions where Bart Jenkins was examined. One of these sessions was in Canton, Georgia in 1878, when Jenkins had O.W. Putnam as counsel with him. Jenkins answers questions from his counsel in some sections of the transcript but also responds to questions from Avery and possibly other persons representing the Commission.

*Author's Note: In some cases, the transcripts state both the question and answer; in other cases, the entries in the transcript just summarize responses from the witness.*

This Canton session did not go well for Jenkins. Avery started by asking Jenkins who he voted for in the 1860 Presidential election and the details of his employment in that time frame. Jenkins responded that he was unsure who he had voted for in the 1860 presidential election and that he had worked in 1861 as an employee in a shoe

manufacturing shop in Lawrenceville owned by Maltby and Smith, but left their employ around Christmastime in 1861.

Before he got much further than these opening questions, Avery made notes in the transcript regarding Jenkins' inability [or perhaps he thought it was unwillingness] to answer the questions, with remarks such as:

"Claimant is too confused to make himself understood, any more than a drunken man."

And:

"He mumbles so I can't understand him. He don't [sic] seem drunk, but absolutely idiotic since I asked him [questions] about the shoe shop."

At that point Avery ended the proceedings, telling Jenkins, as was recorded in the transcript:

"I know nothing about your habits. Have you been drinking until you don't know what you are about? If so, go home, drink no more tonight and don't drink before coming to me in the morning. I will not examine a drunken man. Come to me sober, and in a condition to tell the truth, and tell it clearly."

In another note in the record at this point Avery further states:

"Here the claimant, who had no smell of alcohol about him, that I could perceive, attempted to get up, and fell forward on the table. I then went for the landlord, who told me claimant was a temperance man and a leading Christian, and could not have been drinking. A doctor was called and an investigation showed claimant was paralyzed in his right side. Nothing more could be done."

Following in the testimony documents is a letter to Avery from Jenkins' counsel, O.W. Putnam, who gave Avery an update on Jenkins' condition:

R B Avery, Spl Comm.

Dr. Sir

Msg [?] of Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> in hand. [?] Our old friend Jenkins is still [?] in a very critical condition. He possibly [?] will never be able to answer the interrogatories you sent me. If he revives and becomes able to answer I will attend to the matter and forward [??] at once, [??]

O W Putnam

Avery wrote a three-page report, which is included in the transcript, back to the SCC in Washington recounting his questioning of Jenkins and his interaction with Putnam. Avery stated there that he had provided Putnam with a list of questions for Jenkins but had not received the answers at that point.

### 1879 testimony in Norcross related to the Jenkins claim

By the following year, it appears Jenkins recovered to some extent from his medical issues, and a second testimony session was held by Special Agents Avery and Darnell in Norcross. The claimant and several others who knew him during the war and later were questioned regarding his asserted sympathies for the Union cause during that period, the property allegedly taken by Union troops, and the property's estimated value.

Testimony recorded in February and March 1879 detailed Jenkins' actions before and during the war. Some of the testimony from Jenkins is shown below:

Question: "Where do you now reside?"

Answer: "At Norcross, Gwinnett County, Georgia"

Question: "What was your occupation at the commencement of the war? And how long did you follow that business?"

Answer: "I was in the employment of Messrs. Maltby and Smith who were running a shoe shop [in Lawrenceville]. And had been four

years serving at the commencement of the war. At the commencement of the war Maltby and Smith [???] their work and I put up a shoe shop of my own and worked for myself until I moved to Milton County Georgia in the spring of 1862. There I went to farming and made two crops one in 1862 the other 1863. In the early part of 1864 I moved back to Gwinnett County Georgia and made another crop."

Jenkins further explains that he gave up his profession as a shoemaker when it became difficult to obtain the leather required to make shoes.

When the special commissioner questioned Jenkins, he asked about threats he [Jenkins] might have received [due to his political beliefs]:

Question: "If your life was ever threatened where, when, by whom etc."

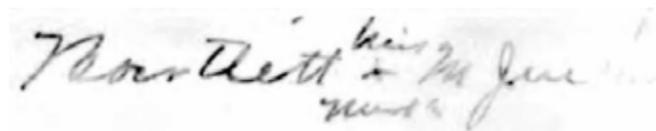
Answer: "My life was threatened. First, at Lawrenceville Georgia in 1861. Rev. Q [???] Garmony [?] informed me that threats were made against me on account of my political sentiments and warned me to keep my mouth shut."

Jenkins goes on to explain that the threats followed him to Milton County, and back:

Question: "Did you ever know of any other threats made against you?"

Answer: "Yes my life was threatened while in Milton and also when I moved back to Gwinnett County, Georgia. At the mentioned place the rebels threatened my life by cocking their guns at me in my yard."

At this point, Jenkins' testimony for this session ended, and he made his mark, swearing that his statements were true, as shown in the excerpt of the transcript below:



The claimant testified multiple times before the commission agents, stating he saw much of his property taken by the Union army and that his complaints to the officer in charge did not prevent any action by the foraging troops. He recalled that the officer told him that the army unit's orders were to gather 80 wagonloads of corn from the first plantations in the area that they found that day, and his [Jenkins'] fields were encountered while the troops were in the process of meeting their quota.

William Kirk gave testimony about Jenkins' employment at the shoe shop that was consistent with the testimony that Jenkins gave, telling how he [Kirk] had known Jenkins for two or three years before the war when Jenkins was working for Maltby and Smith. Kirk stated that, when he went back to the shoe business soon after the war started, he was surprised to find Jenkins gone. He inquired to the shop employees, and they verified that Jenkins had left and no longer worked there.

The testimony of John M. Jenkins, the son of the claimant, addressed his father's political leanings and their effect on his life in Lawrenceville and his employment at Maltby and Smith. John Jenkins had worked with his father when his father started his own shoe manufacturing early in the war years and said, in part:

"The only reason that I know of him quitting there was that he [claimant] was a Union man and they [Maltby and Smith] were secessionists and they differed on that question and they could not get along."

He also described his father's conversations with his employers as "very warm" and added that: "When father went into business for himself [he] frequently had conversations with secessionists about the war ..... which caused my father to buy a pistol which he carried with him everywhere to protect himself, in the event he was attacked on account of political sentiments."

John Jenkins said that his father had been in-

formed by friends that his life was in danger, with the younger Jenkins recalling that in 1864 his father's life was threatened by cocking guns at him in his own yard, these threats being made by Brown Lee and James and Peter Scott. The son added:

"My father ..... voted against secession. He was a strong Union man from the first to the end of the war, and advocated the Union cause all the while and [I] never heard of him being a secessionist. He never advised anyone to go to the war, that I have ever heard of. He assisted Henry Minor to stay out of the war by letting him stay at his [Jenkins'] house whenever it was bad for Henry to stay at his own house. .... It was in the years 1863 and 1864 that Minor [stayed?] at the Jenkins' house."

John Jenkins also gave testimony about the property that was taken from the Jenkins family in the summer of 1864. For instance, he stated: "The corn was standing in the field when taken in September 1864. They cut it down and threw stalks[,] fodder and all in the wagons."

John Jenkins' testimony regarding the property taken in 1864 was consistent with the claim that his father had submitted and with testimony from other witnesses.

Further details from the testimony given by various other witnesses, including Henry J. Minor and William Scott, are found in the Appendix to this article. The information supplied by these individuals is generally supportive of the Jenkins claim.

### Resolution of the Jenkins claim

R.B. Avery created the claim examination paperwork filed with the SCC, and in the "Remarks" section of the form he stated:

"Mr. Jenkins is about 64 years of age – a boot and shoe maker by trade, was in the business at Lawrenceville Georgia till the spring of 186[?], then moved to Milton County and stayed [?] till June 1864 then moved back to Gwinnett County. Previous and up to about the time of the commencement of the war

he was employed by a firm in Lawrenceville who had a contract to supply shoes to the Confederates. The testimony altogether shows very satisfactorily that Mr. Jenkins sympathized with the Federal cause and it is apparent that when the firm took the contract mentioned Mr. Jenkins left their employment. He gave no voluntary aid to the Confederacy, was known as a Union man and several times was threatened on account of his political sentiments."

The special commissioner gave the following recommendation for reimbursement as part of his report:

Item	Nature of Claim	Amount Claimed	Amount Allowed	Amount Disallowed
1 and 2	Horse and Mule	300	160	140
3	400 bushels corn	400	50	350
4	50 bushels wheat	75	50	25
5	100 ? Oats	15	15	0
6	2 beef cattle	80	20	60
7	1 calf	3		3
8	9 Hogs	40	45	-5
9	4 Hogs	20		20
10	60 Pounds Dried Beef	6		6
11	25 Fowls	5		5
Total		944	340	604

The SCC evidently accepted the recommendation of the special commissioner and forwarded the proposed claim resolution to Congress, with the additional message:

"The account which he makes out is exaggerated. During his examination by our agent, Mr. Avery, he was stricken with paralysis before much material testimony had been given. He might possibly otherwise have more satisfactorily explained some of the items of

his claim. As allowed on the opposite page we recommend the payment of \$340.00.”

This note is signed by the three commissioners (Aldis, Ferris and Howell).

The front of the Bartlett Jenkins claim documents prepared for Congress by the Southern Claims Commission, identifying it as Claim No. 7572 and recommending payment in the amount of \$340.00, is shown on page 12.

The payment of \$340.00 was approved by Congress, as was reported in the *Macon Telegraph* newspaper in a dispatch from Washington, D.C. at the end of May 1880 (shown right).

*Author's Note: It is not clear how much of payments such as these ultimately went to Jenkins and the other claimants whose claims were approved. The claimant typically had to hire counsel in Washington, D.C. to present the case to the SCC, as well as counsel when testifying before the special commissioners. These law firms were possibly working on a contingency basis, getting a percentage of any payments that were ultimately allowed. Jenkins evidently was represented in Washington by the Minneapolis-based Sanborn and King law firm.*

An 1880 article from the *Washington Star* newspaper, reprinted in the *Macon Telegraph* newspaper, stated:

“It is tedious and difficult work to get a claim approved by the commission.

A prominent lawyer from the South who has been engaged for some time in endeavoring to convince the commission of the legality of Southern claims remarked the other day, at the capitol, ‘I’m going to write my partner today not to receive another claim. The business doesn’t pay the postage required to transmit the papers to Washington.’

At the rate the commission has been allowing claims there is no danger of bankrupting the government.”

*Author's Note: Many thanks to Harriett Ann Nicholls for her help in deciphering the SCC records.*

### Appendix: Jenkins Claim Testimony Details

**Henry J. Minor** also testified before the SCC agent, supporting Jenkins’ assertion that he [Jenkins] was a Union advocate during the war and giving details on the items taken by the Union army:

“I am 40 years old – reside in Gwinnett County – and a farmer and not related to claimant and have no interest in this claim – have known claimant for the last 25 years.

Claimant was a shoemaker and moved to Lawrenceville 1857 or 1858 and was employed by Messrs. Maltby and Smith who were engaged manufacturing shoes.

He worked there with them until the war commenced. The claimant was a Union man, and his employers were secessionists. They had a falling-out about their politics.

Mr. Smith said Jenkins was too much with the Radical Party for him. This occurred at the commencement of the war in 1861. From this cause Mr. Jenkins withdrew and put up a

shop of his own; I was in Lawrenceville quite often and was intimately acquainted with Messrs. Maltby and Smith and also with Mr. Jenkins.

Whenever I was in Lawrenceville I would visit with Mr. Jenkins [claimant] after withdrawing from Messrs. Maltby and Smith and put up a shop of his own. I know of my own personal knowledge that he never was engaged in working for the Confederate government.

Frequently heard talked in the street at Lawrenceville that the claimant was in danger of losing his life on account of his politics, and I know that he left that place because his life was in great danger.”

When cross examined by the special commissioner, Minor provided this additional information:

“I cannot [recall the name of] any person who threatened the claimant’s life.

A Union boy, of the name of Smith [??] was abused on account of his Union sentiment and it was said that they intended to [??] this claimant the same way.

If claimant had an opportunity I think he would have joined the Union Army. He could not join as he would have left family at the mercy of [??].”

Minor further testified regarding his relationship with the claimant and the events of 1863 and 1864, stating:

“During the latter part of the year 1863 and all along during the year 1864 I was at his house mighty near (1/3) one third of my time. He was a Union man and so I was one too. And I sought his house as a refuge and was there or about there for all the time.

I know of the claimant sowing wheat in the fall of 1863. I knew that he had a horse, mule, three head of cattle, hogs [??] and [??]

fowls. He had [this?] property in his possession until it was [taken?] by the army.”

Minor also spoke of Jenkins growing corn and oats:

“He lived on Mr. [Thomas Jones’ ???] land so he and his son [had?] two ploughs to make his crop. I assisted him in getting the place. Terms to give one third of the corn [??] and one third of the oats made on the farm [to the owner of the land?].”

Regarding the remaining property that was listed in Jenkins’ claim, Minor stated:

“I was not present when the horse was taken in July, but was present and saw the following articles taken: the corn, the cattle, the hogs, the dried beef, the fowls.

The property was taken in the daytime openly and robbed, and I did not know of any compensation being made. [I] do not recall [??] any compensation being asked for or any given.”

Regarding the troops:

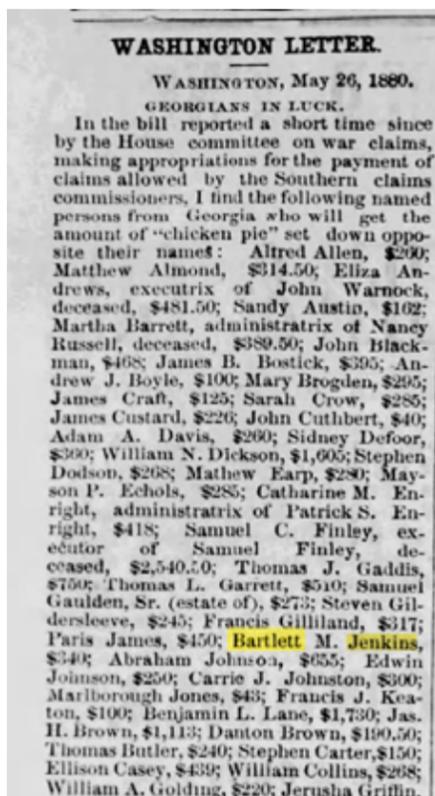
“In the vicinity, their headquarters were in Atlanta and they [were] foraging to get supplies for the army in Atlanta.”

Regarding some of the items taken:

“It was a roan horse about (7) seven years old, about sixteen hands high sound and in good work. But did not see it taken. [It] Was worth \$150.00 one hundred fifty dollars.

The mule was a medium size and not more than seven years old. In good and sound condition and would say that it was worth one hundred and [??] dollars. Did not see the mule taken but know that he had the horse and mule up to the time the army came.

Federal army had taken them that day and



the claimant did not know what he would [do??] [evidently since he [the claimant] needed the horse and mule to finish and harvest any remaining crops].

The corn was in the field and saw them carry it away in their wagons. They cut it down stalk and all and threw it in their wagons and carried it away.

I supposed that there was about 25 acres in corn and it was mostly up. It had been very well cultivated and in good condition – would say it would average between 20 and 21 bushels per acre [at a cost of] [????] per bushel if not more.

[The cattle were ?] Killed at his place and saw them carried away, there were three of them. Believe that two of them would have weighed about 60 pounds to the quarter, or 200 pounds net. One would have weighed 40 pounds to the quarter or 140 to 150 pounds net. And was worth about 6 or 7 cents per pound.

The hogs were in his lot and were killed there and carried away on wagons. Would have weighed 150 one hundred and fifty pounds each net and was worth about [???] cents per pound. I saw them getting the dried beef but do not know how much of it there was but think there must have been about 75 pounds and worth [????]. This property was taken about the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1864. I do not know the officers' names but that they came from Atlanta where General Sherman's army was stationed."

**William A Scott** testified as well. He had rented farmland to Jenkins during the war. He stated in answer to questions:

"I reside in Milton County Georgia and did during the war, am 62 years of age, am not related to the claimant and have no interest in his claim.

My occupation is farmer and I owned a farm

in Milton County GA during the war and rented the claimant land to farm on during 1863.

In the fall of the same year I furnished [claimant] with seed wheat and in the harvest time of the year 1864 he with two other hands came back to cut and harvest the wheat. Claimant moved away from Milton County in the winter of 1863 to Gwinnett County."

Scott then gave his estimate of the quantity and value of the wheat, which the claimant asserted was later taken by Union troops.

"At the lowest estimate it would have made 10 or 12 bushels to the acre. I am certain it would have made as much as ten bushels per acre, and half of this crop belonged to claimant and the other belonged to me.

When the wheat was taken by the Union army it was nicely harvested in the field at the farm three miles west of the Chattahoochee River in Milton County.

The army that took the wheat was commanded by Col. Miller of McPherson's Corps. They carried the wheat away from the field and passed my house. The army was encamped about one fourth of a mile from the [????]."

When cross examined by the special commissioner Scott gave details on the lease of land in Milton County to Jenkins:

"Mr. Jenkins lived a mile and a half from me in the years 1862 and 1863 and we were at each other's houses often.

I furnished him with seed wheat to sow the land. I only had one half interest in the wheat which was the agreement made between us at the commencement, that is I was to furnish the seed and land. Claimant was to cultivate and gather the wheat and give me one half. I regarded Mr. Jenkins a good farmer as his wheat was well cultivated. I held no mortgages or anything of the kind against

Mr. Jenkins. Know of nobody else having any interest in the wheat but Mr. Jenkins and myself.

I saw him sowing and ploughing in the wheat. He cultivated nothing else but wheat. I was not present when he was harvesting the wheat but was there the next day.

Mr. Jenkins was not present when the wheat was taken [by the army] as he had moved back to Gwinnett County."

Others testifying at Norcross included:

**Hiram Dean**, a local farmer and landowner, who stated that he was 64 years old and lived two miles from the claimant during the war and had seen him frequently. He recalled that the Federal army had taken various items from the farms in early September 1864 but did not recall any further details. He did recall that Jenkins had a horse and a mule, but was not sure what happened to them.

**George Hoyle Jones**, a local farmer and landowner who had served in the Confederate Army cavalry as a scout in the area during 1864 and then in the Georgia Legislature in the 1870s, stated that he had known Jenkins for 16 or 18 years and lived a few miles from him. Jones recalled that Jenkins was well-known for talking about his Union sympathies during the war, but to the best of Jones' knowledge Jenkins had never taken any overt actions against the Confederate cause during the period when Jones knew him during the war.

**Hampshire Jones**, a local farmer who was enslaved on the property of George H. Jones prior to and during the Civil War, testified that he lived about three quarters of a mile from Jenkins when the Union troops [part of Garrard's command] came foraging in 1864. He estimated that 100 troops dressed in blue were there that day, and he saw them take the horse, mule and some of the corn. His testimony seems consistent with that given by Minor and others.

**Mary A. Duncan** testified that she was 50 years of age and had lived with her husband about

a quarter of a mile from Jenkins when his livestock and crops were taken. She testified that the Union troops told her that there were 800 troops in the area foraging, and she noted that the troops were camped less than a mile from Jenkins' property. She said that she saw 14 large army wagons, each pulled by four mules, when they came to that area to forage. She saw the troops spend two hours or more gathering corn from the area that Jenkins farmed. She gave a detailed account of the confiscation of the corn and hogs and estimates of the value of the items taken by the troops. She said that she had no knowledge of any payments to Jenkins for the property taken.

**George W. Duncan** testified that he was 23 years of age and had surveyed the land where the corn was grown and found it to be 20 acres. \*

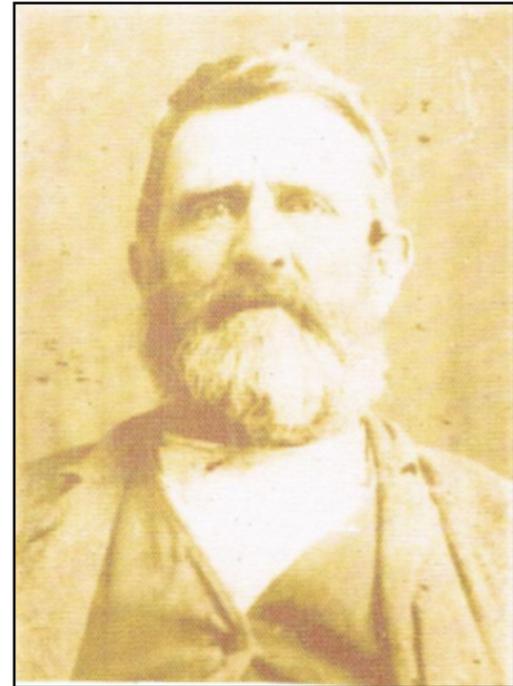


## Norcross, Georgia: A Rich History Spanning More Than 150 Years

By Julia Koslowsky, Copywriter, City of Norcross

Nestled next to the railroad tracks that put it on the map, Norcross is a rarity in the age of strip malls and shopping centers. The buildings in its center, constructed around the railroad depot and dating back to the town's earliest days, have been repurposed and recycled over the past hundred years to maintain the integrity of the historic downtown area, honoring past ventures while ushering in new businesses. Each area, person and business can claim fascinating anecdotes about the city's storied past and people, and according to the locals, the diverse and charming culture hasn't changed much over the years. People of many backgrounds — from early pioneer settlers to immigrants from around the world seeking freedom and economic opportunity — have crossed into the borders of Norcross, creating a

city that is, as its motto states, "a place to imagine" what's possible when a community maintains what matters and remembers its roots.



John Thrasher

**The Founding of Norcross**  
Gwinnett County was created in 1818 and named after Button Gwinnett, one of three Georgia signers of the Declaration of Independence. In 1821, the city of Lawrenceville was founded, and it remained the only town in Gwinnett County for the next fifty years. In the 1840s, the Georgia Railroad built tracks between Atlanta and Augusta. This train line, with its nearest stop to Gwinnett at Stone Mountain, did little to aid commerce and the distribution of goods throughout the county. An effort was made in the 1850s to build the Georgia Airline Railroad from Atlanta into northeast Georgia, the name

implying that it would be built as much as possible along a straight line. Funds were sparse after the Civil War ended, but eventually construction began. By the spring of 1870, the first 20 miles of the railroad were completed by a group of contractors that included John Thrasher; Thrasher had helped in the 1840s to build the railroad connection around which the city of Atlanta developed. The Georgia Airline Railroad later extended to Charlotte, North Carolina and helped create a national rail connection grid still active today as part of the Norfolk Southern system.

Thrasher, a pioneer Atlanta settler, bought 250 acres of wilderness where the 20 miles of tracks ended. His land stretched from present-day downtown Norcross, near the railroad depot, to the northwest residential areas of the city, near Sunset Drive and Barton Street. He thought this patch of wilderness would be a good location for a new town. In the summer of 1870, Thrasher auctioned off lots of his land to persuade businessmen and families to join him and even gave away homes to several preachers on what the locals came to call "Holy Row" (today known as Sunset Drive). Soon thereafter, Thrasher received an official town charter from the state in October 1870, and more homes and churches were built.

Thrasher named his new town "Norcross" in honor of his friend and fellow pioneer settler of Atlanta, Jonathan Norcross. He built the Brunswick Hotel — where the present-day Woods Animal Clinic can be found — to provide travelers with a comfortable place to stay when they visited. The town soon garnered the glowing reputation of "At-



A view of the Brunswick Hotel

lanta's Favorite Summer Resort." Thrasher designated a plot of land in the town center to use as a city park, and towards the end of the 1800s, it became known as Dodson Park, honoring a railroad official who was a proponent of improvements to the park. In the 1930s, the name was changed to Thrasher Park in honor of Norcross's founder. Thrasher might have moved on from his work in Norcross around 1875, but his strong legacy in Norcross lives on.

**Local Business and Commerce**  
The community that Thrasher created and drew to Norcross only continued to grow as new businesses moved to the area. George Wallace was one of the first retail merchants in what is now downtown Norcross, with many more men and women following, including: A.A. Johnson and his cousin A.A. Martin, J.R. Garner, Mrs. C.A. McKinney, Flonnie Clement, Robert Burnett, the Kent family, William Carlyle, Maybelle Cain, and others. These individuals and their families ran businesses focused on dry goods, groceries, hardware products, jewelry and watch repair, millinery goods, ready-to-wear clothing, and more. Parsons Stores also had a branch in Norcross for a number of years. In 1900, W.M. Keady established a drug store that stayed in business for over fifty years under several owners, including Dr. Arch Lietch from 1907 to 1947.

Much of the original architecture of the downtown area remains today, housing modern shops, businesses and residential areas. Antique Traditions, located on the corner of South Peachtree Street and Holcomb Bridge Road since 1999, once housed the Bank of Gwinnett in the 1910s and 1920s

as well as Hugh Twitty's gas station years later. The current B&W Burgers building in the up-and-coming South End housed many businesses between the late 1800s and the year 1969, when it became B&W Auto Supply; for the next fifty-one years it remained under the stewardship of Wayne Epps and Bob Baker. And that's just the tip of the iceberg. Dominick's Italian has been everything from animal feed storage to a dance hall to a fried fish restaurant. The original Norcross train depot, essential to the city's formation, eventually became The Crossing Steakhouse. Zapata Tacos and Tequila Bar was once Johnson's Store, a family-owned establishment that ran smoothly for a hundred years. The Johnson family also owned the alley next to their store, and Abe Johnson, proprietor and patriarch, deeply enjoyed playing checkers with friend and banker, Gus McDaniel. After the two men and their checkerboard were knocked over by a runaway horse in 1915, Johnson bricked up the popular thoroughfare to avoid further disturbance, much to the town's chagrin.

The Southern Oak Leather Tannery was established in 1903 after it moved to Norcross from Flowery Branch. The tannery survived a fire in 1911 and changed hands a couple times over the decades until permanently closing up shop post World War II. The site of the tannery is the present-day location of Broadstone Junction, a residential development that opened in 2021 with easy access to the historic downtown. A number of other businesses were drawn to the growing city over the years as well. The McElroy and Nesbit Furniture Company operated on South Peachtree Street around the turn of the 20th century. It harvested wood from the North Georgia mountains to manufacture household furniture sold to the locals as well as to people across the southeast. Later the furniture company became a feed store operated by the Ivy family from 1946 to 1972.

In 1947, General Motors opened a plant in Doraville, and many of their employees lived in the Norcross area and contributed to the city's growth. Rock-Tenn Company, one of the largest

U.S. recycled paperboard manufacturers, also came to Norcross around 1957 and kept headquarters there until 2015.

### Educational Development



*Castle on the Hill, a school building opened in 1903*

In the early 1870s, just after Norcross's founding, the community built a two-story wooden building on what is now Sunset Drive; it was used for numerous purposes: school, church services, masonic lodge meetings, and community town hall discussions. Professor James Vincent established the city's first school in the community building around 1873. Professor Norman F. Cooledge, a Vermont native, took over teaching duties from Vincent in the mid-1870s, providing education to the students there until his sudden death in 1896. A short distance away on College Street, Terrell Simmons started the Georgia School of Language Art and Science around 1880. Simmons advertised the school to contain primary, intermediate, academic and collegiate departments with a diverse curriculum that he claimed would rival typical A.B. university courses.

The development and growth of Norcross brought the need for buildings dedicated solely to education. Local resident and teacher Laura McNabb advocated in the late 1800s for a school built and run by the city. As funding such

facilities within the county was a local decision, a bond issue was passed by the City of Norcross to raise money to build a two-story brick building. The new school, attended by white students, opened in 1903 and was nicknamed the Castle on the Hill due to its location and architecture. Several years after the Castle's construction, Norcross's Black citizens petitioned the city council for a school their children could attend. Four years of delays passed until a wooden school building was finally erected for the Black students that was then used for the next thirty years.

In the 1950s, the Gwinnett County Board of Education launched an effort to reduce the number of high schools in the county. Bonds were issued in 1955 to build four new high schools for white students and one for Black students. West Gwinnett High School, which opened in 1957 on the grounds of present-day Summerour Middle School, was one of the schools built with proceeds from this bond issue. While the five high schools funded with the 1955 bond issue were built, the plan to consolidate all high schools into these five schools ultimately was derailed by active resistance in the Dacula and Duluth communities. In 1962, West Gwinnett's name was changed to Norcross High School because Duluth students were moved back to a high school in Duluth. By the 1990s, the growth of Norcross led to the need for a larger high school campus, and Norcross High was moved to its current site on Spalding Drive.

Norcross's educational legacy extends beyond its own borders and to other towns as well. In 1993, Gwinnett opened Nesbit Elementary in Tucker, Georgia, named after Norcross-area native Clara Nesbit. She taught in Gwinnett for over forty years and shared her love



*An artist at the Norcross Art Splash Festival*

of learning with children and adults alike. Nesbit Elementary was the first school in the county to be named after a Black educator.

### Music & Art

Norcross's artistic scene in the early 1900s featured mostly music acts. The popular Norcross Military and Concert Band performed at local venues, such as the pavilion in Thrasher Park, and traveled to perform at exhibitions like the Jamestown Exposition in Norfolk, Virginia in 1907. However, the arts weren't limited to those who could play in a band. Local music teacher Ida Wootten, whose father was a Baptist preacher living on Holy Row, taught lessons and organized both operettas and recitals for the town in the early 1900s. The local school put on plays, pantomimes and comedies for the community. Occasionally, the town held events such as fiddlers' conventions with a grand prize of \$5 to the winner.

Today, following the traditions of those students and teachers, the Lionheart Theatre Company performs in the old church attached to the Norcross Cultural Arts & Community Center. Outdoor concerts held by the city are regular summer events in Thrasher Park. A couple of the more popular concert series are the Jazz in the Alley series and the Bluesberry & Beer Festival, an annual blues music and blueberry event held every Father's Day weekend.

Norcross remains a bustling hub of stimulating and relevant artistic activity today. Murals grace the buildings, the most popular being the colorful "Greetings From Norcross!" mural which was designed and donated by Atomic Wash, a Norcross-based digital marketing and brand agency. Norcross Gallery and Studios,

formerly known as Kudzu Art Zone, shares visual art with the community through education and exhibitions intended to foster a love of local art. Additionally, the Norcross Public Arts Commission is essential to cultivating the growing creative arts community and promoting development of the community's cultural resources. More of Norcross's history can be experienced firsthand at the Fire Station Museum, the Welcome Center & Museum, the Historic Cotton Gin that was once owned by the prominent Summerour family, or even The Crossing Steakhouse watching trains pass by the old depot.

### Norcross's Leaders

The longevity and success of the Norcross community has much to do with its leadership throughout its existence. From teachers to pioneers to preachers, the driving forces of the city pushed for continual betterment across the city. Grady Simpson served as the police chief — and sole officer for a time — from 1937 until his retirement in 1969. Simpson is fondly remembered for his good deeds, for establishing community bonds and for carrying out his duties with kindness. Columbia-educated Anna Louise Simpson, known to most as Miss Ludie, worked as a teacher in Atlanta for many years before coming to teach in her native county at West Gwinnett High School in the 1950s. In 1946, Gaines Ivy and his family purchased a feed store in downtown Norcross and ran it for almost thirty years. Ivy served as mayor, city council member and a justice of the peace during his time in Norcross. He was also a member of the Masonic Lodge and an elder and Sunday school teacher at the Presbyterian Church. The Ivys can trace their lineage back to the beginnings of Atlanta. Gus McDaniel, another elected council member, worked at the Norcross bank and was involved

with the Masonic Lodge and the Norcross Baptist Church. The McDaniels were early settlers in Norcross, being some of the first to ship bales of cotton from Gwinnett.



*Lillian Webb, first woman elected Mayor of Norcross*

A few iconic leaders of Norcross even have parks named after them. Lillian Webb, the first woman to be elected Mayor of Norcross, served eleven terms as mayor and made it her mission to improve the city through the addition of fire stations, upgraded sewage systems, roadwork, and the general beautification of the city and its downtown area. Lillian Webb Park, adjacent to downtown Norcross, serves as a reminder of her tireless efforts and deep love for her community. Lillian Webb was also the first woman elected as Gwinnett County Commission Chair and served two four-year terms in that role. Betty Mauldin served as city clerk for many years,

actively fielding police and fire calls. Her legacy as a servant of Norcross lives on through Betty Mauldin Park. Rossie Brundage, whose park can be found off Autry Street, served as a dedicated city employee for almost fifty years as a water and electrical operator and repairman. The park named in his honor became an important part of the local Black community and is located on the grounds of the original Black school that existed prior to the desegregation of Gwinnett schools.

Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church was founded in 1865 by former enslaved persons. It has operated over the years as a Black community center and has been led by Bishop William Sheals since 1980. The church has grown substantially during his 43 years of service and leadership. Rufus Dunnigan, a Hopewell deacon until his passing in 2018, was born and raised in Gwin-

nett, growing up in Norcross and attending the local public schools. He served honorably during the Korean War period and worked at Westvaco Company, the Big Apple grocery store and Northside Baptist Church. Also involved at Hopewell Baptist, Nathaniel Brown was a passionate civil rights advocate in Norcross who aided the integration of the city's schools and the creation of Rossie Brundage Park. He held many jobs over the years and dreamed of being the first Black city council member. Brown never won an election across thirty years of attempts, but his nephew, current Mayor Craig Newton, succeeded in his uncle's place in a 1995 election.

Newton is both the first African American elected to public office in Norcross and the longest-serving elected official in Norcross. Elected to the city council in 1995, he also has served as Mayor Pro Tem, as well as actively participating in numerous associations and serving on many boards in Gwinnett County. Recently, he began his second term as Mayor of Norcross. A Norcross resident for his entire life, Newton grew up on Buford Highway and can trace his family lineage in the area back to the early days of the city's founding. The mayor's love of community service started during his tenure as a Boy Scout, where his personal project was to clean up his neighborhood. He rallied the locals and orchestrated a neighborhood cleanup, which still occurs today thanks to support from the city and county across the years.

### Celebrating Our Veterans

Norcross is the proud home of many veterans, and its Veterans' Park is filled with memorials to honor their service and sacrifice. This park was designed by local veterans to be a place of

solace and reflection for their fellow veterans. In 1917, the U.S. Army established a rifle range in Norcross for the purpose of training soldiers during World War I. Charles Windham is the only one of 162 people honored in the Georgia Military Veterans' Hall of Fame to hail from Norcross. Honored for his selfless acts of heroism and bravery, Windham served as a U.S. Army Staff Sergeant and a team leader for a five-man Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969. Carl Gresham was a World War I veteran and took the time each year to draw the community's attention to remembering and celebrating Armistice Day each November. Carl



*Mayor Craig Newton, first African American elected to Norcross public office*

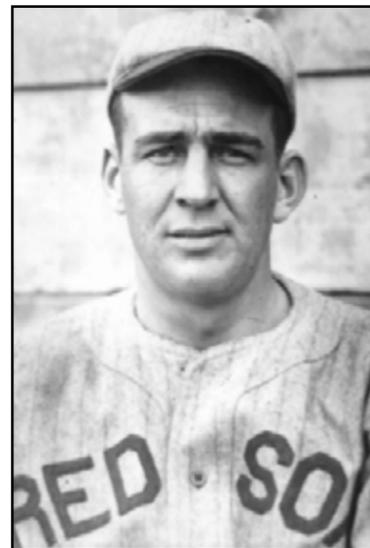
Garner, Sr. and his son Carl Garner, Jr. served in different branches of the U.S. military, and both men later served terms as Mayor of Norcross. Both Ed Moulder and Fred Graves served during World War II. Moulder was stationed in Africa and Europe and fought in the Battle of the Bulge, while Graves served in the Pacific campaign. In 2009, Thrasher Park rededicated plaques of honor to servicemen who were killed in action during World War II.

### A Longtime Sports Town

Home to the man who hit the longest home run in history, Norcross has sent more baseball players to the major and minor leagues than anywhere else in Gwinnett County. Famous major leaguers

include brothers Ivey and Red Wingo — who played for the Cincinnati Reds and the Detroit Tigers, respectively — and brothers Cleo and Roy Carlyle. Roy played for the Red Sox, the Yankees and the Senators between 1925 and 1926. Roy Carlyle hit the longest home run measured in history during a minor league game on the Pacific Coast. It measured 618 feet and created a Guinness World Record. Ivey Wingo played and won in the historic 1919 World Series against the

White Sox. Frank Robertson played for the Atlanta Crackers, though his career was cut short due to his service in World War I, and was later elected Mayor of Norcross. Lillian Webb Park in downtown Norcross is the site of the city's original baseball field, where the local Norcross Nuggets practiced and played.



Roy Carlyle

In 1963, Norcross High School won the state baseball championship. Norcross High continued to win in other sports over the years. In 2012, its football team won the state championship for football, with Alvin Kamara as their star player. Kamara went on to play at the collegiate level for Alabama and Tennessee and to play professionally for the New Orleans Saints. From 2009 to 2013, the Norcross High girls' basketball team won the state championship three times.

### Norcross Today

Present-day Norcross continues its own tradition of thriving growth and success. Over the years, it has boasted many winners and hopefuls including Tamyra Grey (4th place winner of American Idol, Season 1); Nona Johnson, owner and chef at The Local Peach (Hell's Kitchen winner, Season 8); and many major and minor league baseball stars. In 1992, President George H.W. Bush made a speech at the Norcross depot when there on a "whistle stop" tour by rail during his 1992 reelection campaign, donning a Braves jacket to show his support for the greater Atlanta community.

2020 marked the 150th anniversary of Norcross's founding, but pandemic restrictions limited community activities until the following year when the 151<sup>st</sup> anniversary was celebrated in person. Norcross's events are some of the most numerous and well-attended in the area, with over 30% more individual events than neighboring towns. Cultural events like Dia de los Muertos, Juneteenth Celebration, Irish Fest, and multiple Historic Norcross events celebrate the city's diversity. Veterans and servicemen are honored

on Veterans' Day, Memorial Day and 9/11 Remembrance Day. Car shows, nature celebrations and movie nights are just a few more of the gatherings that happen in the city throughout the year.

Norcross celebrates its historic heritage in almost every event. To name a few, the annual summer concert series is still held in Thrasher Park, just like the Norcross Military and Concert Band, and annual events like "Red, White, & Boom!" are held in Lillian Webb Park to honor Webb's love of community spirit. Trolley tours and cemetery

tours guide visitors through the city's history and highlight the citizens who made the city what it is today. October brings ghost tours with the Lionheart Theatre Company, and the start of the winter holidays kicks off tree lightings, carriage rides and seasonal treats.

Norcross has also become a leader in sustainability in recent years as a Platinum Certified Green Community, and the city holds a Bee City



The Local Peach

USA accreditation for its work in creating a pollinator-friendly environment. It even holds workshops to teach the community how to keep the landscape of the city attractive to pollinators like butterflies and bees. For the last eighteen years, Norcross has been recognized as a Certi-

fied Tree City by the Arbor Day Foundation. Norcross encourages its residents to utilize free curbside recycling, use compost in their gardens, and make use of garden plots in the public green-space. In addition, the ability to reduce emissions and have fun by cycling around the city is highlighted by the annual Pedal Norcross's 2.5-mile ride through town.



Discovery Garden

and citizens. ✨

Throughout its existence, the City of Norcross

All photos courtesy of City of Norcross.

## Volunteer Opportunity

We have the opportunity to introduce the Elisha Winn House property and its history to a group of Gwinnett teachers on Monday, June 5, 2023 from Noon to 2 p.m. Gwinnett Community Services has designed a week-long program for a small group of teachers that is intended to give the participants a sampling of important sites, events and factors in Gwinnett's history that have helped shape the community we call home. Hopefully, this year's pilot program will lead to the Gwinnett History Immersion Program for teachers becoming a regular offering. Gwinnett Historical Society is proud to support this effort to share knowledge and appreciation for Gwinnett's history with those who are teaching our future leaders.

If you are able to help with the teachers' visit on June 5, please let Betty Warbington know.



The Knight family has deep roots in Gwinnett County and thanks to a generous donation of more than 100 items by Mrs. Patricia Manderson Southerland, the family's history is now on display at the Isaac Adair House, providing a glimpse of everyday life in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Lawrenceville. Most of the donated items have a history of use in either Lawrenceville or Dacula. Items include the cane George used later in life, a mantel clock, furniture, musical instruments, a family Bible and much more.

## Donation Highlights Family Life in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Gwinnett

By Brian Boggs, Program Supervisor Community Services, Gwinnett County

Editor's Note: As many of you know, the Isaac Adair House that is mentioned in this article was built about 1827 and originally sat near the intersection of Pike Street and Hurricane Shoals Road. The house was saved from destruction by Phyllis and Marvin Hughes, GHS members for whom the Society's Preservation Award is named. In the 1980s, this couple dismantled the house and re-assembled it on their property on Chandler Road outside Lawrenceville. They lived in the house for years until it

(Photo above shows items from the Knight Family collection on display in the Isaac Adair House.)

Both born in Gwinnett County, George Knight (1845) and Isabella Drummond (1847) were married during the Civil War in 1864. Throughout the almost 51 years of George and Isabella's marriage, their lives and those of their large family were much like others of the era. They worked the land and harvested the crops; they interacted with their neighbors and worshipped with their community; they celebrated the births of children and grieved the losses of those who died; they prayed and read from the family Bible; they rejoiced over marriages and the arrival of grandchildren; they faced hardship and challenges as they came.

Ten of the 14 children born to George and Isabella survived to adulthood. One of their sons, George Calvin, went on to take photographs of the family. A number of these photographs were included in the donated collection and provide a stunning look into the life of the Knight family.

was threatened by the extension of Sugarloaf Parkway. In conjunction with the acquisition of the Hughes' property in 2008, the county agreed to move and preserve the house.



Knight Family from 1900 at their home in Dacula

The majority of the items in the collection tell the story of two of the daughters of George and Isabella. Although 14 years apart in age, the lives of sisters Janie and Ida were interwoven in numerous ways.

Marthy E. Janie was born November 28, 1875. She married Jack Hinton, also born and raised in the Harbins District of Gwinnett County. During the early years of their marriage, Jack worked at the cotton gin in Dacula. A newspaper article, published sometime around 1900-1901, described a "frightful accident" that occurred while Jack was working there, resulting in the loss of one of his arms.

Because of this accident, the Hintons moved to Lawrenceville in 1901. The move was set in motion by the election of Jack Hinton as Gwinnett County's tax collector. Having previously earned his income ginning cotton, Jack began a new

occupation that required the use of his mental faculties rather than physical ability.

The Hintons were well suited to life in the town of Lawrenceville. Having no children, Jack and Janie turned their attention toward becoming active participants in the Lawrenceville community. Janie, known as "Miss Janie," was a charter member of the Eastern Star and a member of the Lawrenceville Garden Club. "Mr. Jack" was an active member of the Kiwanis Club for 30 years and a charter member of the Order of Odd Fellows.

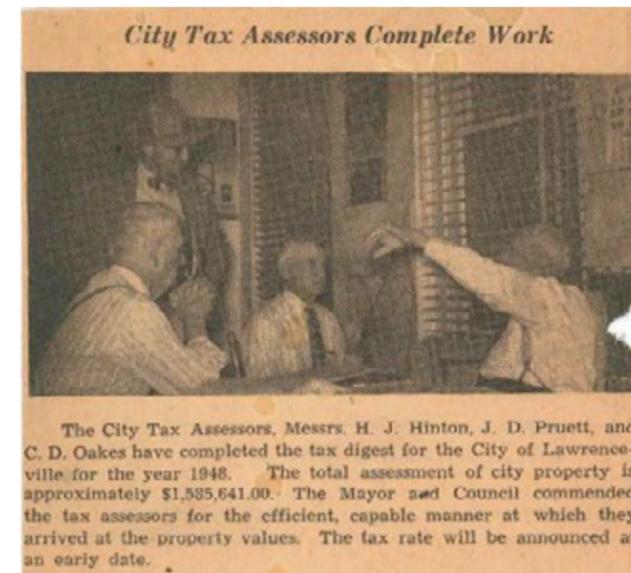
As for sister Ida Knight, she began married life on August 18, 1907, when she became the wife of Dock Abram Thomas Butler. Ida was 18 and Tom was 23. They settled near their families in the Harbins community.

Ida gave birth to the couple's first daughter the following year on July 17, 1908, and the baby was named Ina Mae. Ida Lucile arrived on December 7, 1909, adding a second daughter to the young family.

Sometime during 1910, Tom and Ida made the decision to leave the familiar surroundings and people of their childhoods and embark on a life in the city of Atlanta where Tom could find work to better provide for their growing family. He was hired by the Georgia Power Company to work in the transportation department on the trolley system in Atlanta.

The couple's third daughter, Annie Lee, was born on February 25, 1911, in Fulton County and began her life in the family's new home. In 1917, Ida and Tom moved back to Harbins to work on the family farm and to provide care of Grandpa Knight and Ida's sister, Della.

There were no schools in nearby Dacula that offered classes beyond the eighth grade for the three girls. The only high school in the area that provided an education through twelfth grade and a high school diploma was in Lawrenceville. It was too far for the family to navigate daily trips with a horse and buggy.



1948 newspaper clipping showing Jack, his left arm gesturing in the air, seated at a table with two other city tax assessors: J. D. Pruett and C. D. Oakes.

The three have just completed the tax digest for the city of Lawrenceville for the year 1948, having arrived at the approximate figure of \$1,585,641.00 as the total assessment of the city property. The Mayor and Council commended them for the efficient, capable way they arrived at the property values.

The solution was found in an offer made by Ida's sister Janie and her husband Jack. Ina could spend the week with them, so she could attend classes at the Lawrenceville High School. She would come to their house on Sunday afternoon and return to her parents' house on Friday evening.

The three Butler sisters went on to work around the area, however, they were never far from their

Aunt Janie in Lawrenceville. Lucile eventually took a job working in Jack Hinton's tax office and living with the Hintons in Lawrenceville. During this time, the Butler sisters kept in touch with each other by way of written correspondence. Both Ina and Annie Lee sent letters from their home, then on Landsdown Avenue in Decatur, addressed to Miss Lucile Butler, at the home of H.J. Hinton, Lawrenceville, Georgia.

One of those letters, postmarked October 7, 1932, indicates that Grandpa Knight was living with the Butlers in Decatur. Annie Lee writes, "Grandpa said to hurry up and come home, because he wanted to go to Lawrenceville sometime in the near future." When Lucile would come home to Decatur, Jack Hinton would drive her in his car. Grandpa could then ride back to Lawrenceville with Jack, where he would visit with his daughter Janie.



*Jack and Janie Hinton sitting on a bench in front of their house that once sat on Crogan Street*

According to the family, Janie's home was kept immaculately. The hard wood boards of the floor in her parlor were covered with a dark gray rug. Around the edges was a floral border. Great niece, Patricia Southerland, recalls visiting with her family as a child and being instructed by Aunt Janie not to walk across the middle of the rug, thus leaving footprints on its freshly vacuumed surface. Instead, she was told to walk

around the edges of the border. Although the rug did not survive, many of the key features of Mrs. Janie's parlor are now on display in the parlor of the Isaac Adair House.

A picture made February 17, 1939, shows Jack and Janie sitting on a bench in front of their Crogan Street house, ironically just a few blocks away from the current location of Isaac Adair house, which presently houses many of their furnishings.



*Photos from the Knight Family Collection showing items that are now on display in the Isaac Adair House*

The various pictures taken to document family occasions at the Hinton house serve as evidence of the long and precious history of the furniture seen in the background of the photos.

Visitors are encouraged to stop by the Isaac Adair House and see the collection. The house and the adjoining Lawrenceville Female Seminary are open

for tours Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. The paper documents, letters, family Bibles and other archive material are kept in storage and are available for viewing by

request to [GwinnettHistory@GwinnettCounty.com](mailto:GwinnettHistory@GwinnettCounty.com). \*

## July General Membership Meeting

Mark your calendars for the General Membership meeting on Monday, July 17, 2023. We are still in the process of finalizing the speaker for this meeting, so watch the GHS website for an announcement on this. You can be sure, though, that Vice-President Gregory Bailey will arrange an interesting program for us.

The meeting begins at 7 p.m. but bring a snack and join us at 6:30 p.m. for social time. Remember that the location for all our general membership meetings in 2023 is Rhodes Jordan Park Community Center. The park entrance is at 100 East Crogan St, Lawrenceville, GA. Once in the park, follow the signs to the community center.



## Way Back Winn Event a Success!

No matter where you live, there is usually an opportunity to remember “way back when,” but in Gwinnett County we have the unique privilege to remember “way back Winn.” And that is exactly what a new event at the Elisha Winn House is designed to encourage.

On Sunday, April 23, Gwinnett County Community Services and the Gwinnett Historical Society (GHS) partnered to initiate a new spring tradition, Way Back Winn, where the public is invited to join us at the Elisha Winn House to take a stroll through history and have some fun along the way. The event harkens back to an earlier time when families and friends gathered for Sunday afternoon picnics



Cake walk winners

with refreshments, music and games. In addition, there is a chance to learn about Gwinnett’s early history by touring the Elisha Winn House and grounds, as well as enjoying demonstrations of old-time skills like blacksmithing.

This first Way Back Winn event was very special, since it provided a way to highlight some of the improvements that have been made at the Winn property over the last few years by both Gwinnett County and the Historical Society. These include the construction of a restroom facility, bus parking and permanent stage by the County and floor restoration in additional rooms of the Winn House by the Historical Society.

However, the highlight of the entire Way Back Winn event was the “surprise” announcement that the stage at the Winn House property has been named for Betty Warbington in recognition of her years of devotion to caring for the Elisha Winn House and property. In a letter to Gwinnett County recommending Betty for this honor, former GHS President, Beverly Paff, described Betty’s pivotal role and her many contributions. As Beverly put it, “I have witnessed first-hand the amount of time and love Betty has invested as GHS Assistant Treasurer in charge of the Winn Restoration Account, as GHS Chair of Winn House Restoration and Preservation and in the everyday upkeep of the entire Winn Property site.”

Congratulations to Betty on this well-deserved honor, to her husband Charles who supports Betty in her work at the Winn House, and to the entire Warbington family for managing to keep this announcement a secret until the sign was unveiled on April 23. It was good to have all of Betty’s children and their spouses there to celebrate with us and witness the true surprise on Betty’s face when the *Betty Warbington Stage* sign was revealed.

Thank you to County staff for all the work they did in planning and preparing for Way Back Winn. We especially appreciate their help in protecting the surprise when the *Betty Warbington Stage* sign was installed earlier than scheduled. A crew was dispatched quickly to place a Way Back Winn banner over the sign, miraculously before Betty could see it.



Betty Warbington and family

were clean and secure before they went home for a few hours of rest as the weekend came to a close.

Finally, thank you to all GHS members who attended and, especially, to those who helped with tours of the property and demonstrations, as well as those who brought yummy refreshments to share. The event would not have been a success without you! ✨



Newly dedicated stage at Elisha Winn House

All photos courtesy of Gwinnett County.

Not only were the grounds in top-notch shape, but Community Services had arranged for good music and a wide variety of old-fashioned games of all types for children and the young-at-heart to enjoy. A number of staff spent most of their Sunday afternoon at the event and then stayed after it ended to ensure the grounds

## Chairs

African American History: Bernice Bailey  
[african-american@gwinnetths.org](mailto:african-american@gwinnetths.org)

Archives: Frances H. Johnson  
[archives@gwinnetths.org](mailto:archives@gwinnetths.org)

Cemeteries: Bobbie Wilson Tkacik  
[cemetery@gwinnetths.org](mailto:cemetery@gwinnetths.org)

First Families: Peggie Johnson  
[first-families@gwinnetths.org](mailto:first-families@gwinnetths.org)

Communications: Donna Peeples  
[communications@gwinnetths.org](mailto:communications@gwinnetths.org)

Genealogy: Peggie Johnson  
[genealogy@gwinnetths.org](mailto:genealogy@gwinnetths.org)

Historian: Hugh McMillian  
[historian@gwinnetths.org](mailto:historian@gwinnetths.org)

IT/Website: SureLock  
[website@gwinnetths.org](mailto:website@gwinnetths.org)

Library: Richard Lux  
[library@gwinnetths.org](mailto:library@gwinnetths.org)

Membership: Priscilla Failmezger  
[membership@gwinnetths.org](mailto:membership@gwinnetths.org)

Newsletter: TBA  
[ghs@gwinnetths.org](mailto:ghs@gwinnetths.org)

Preservation: Diane McCormic  
[preservation@gwinnetths.org](mailto:preservation@gwinnetths.org)

Publications: TBA  
[ghs@gwinnetths.org](mailto:ghs@gwinnetths.org)

Winn Property: Betty Warbington  
[winn-property@gwinnetths.org](mailto:winn-property@gwinnetths.org)

## Reports from Chairs

### Archives

Volunteers have been busy with the on-going work of processing items donated to the Historical Society, including the Cofer collection and the Mary Long collection. One of the time-consuming tasks underway is the digitizing of negatives from a large photo collection. A Georgia Gwinnett student interning with GHS has been working with the extensive Alford-Kelly collection; his efforts have been temporarily interrupted but hopefully will resume soon.

We appreciate the generosity of the Baggett family in donating a large collection of blacksmith tools that is being handled by the blacksmith shop at the Winn House property. Additionally, a new collection of early period clothing has been offered to GHS and will be reviewed and evaluated for acceptance.

Besides processing collections, the Archives Committee has been involved with the transition to the new website and updating records.

### First Families

We anticipate recognizing a number of individuals with First Families of Gwinnett designation this year at a presentation ceremony in the Fall. The First Families of Gwinnett Program is designed to provide special recognition to members of the Historical Society whose ancestors lived in Gwinnett County between the county's creation in 1818 and the year 1850. While there is no set deadline for submission of an application, it does take some time for the Committee to review and verify information that must be submitted to prove eligibility. Now is a good time to start the process if you are interested in designation as a member of First Families of Gwinnett. More information is available on the GHS website.



### Whaley Cemetery Project

In March, the Philadelphia Winn Chapter, NSDAR collaborated with GHS in a cemetery project at the Whaley Cemetery in Lilburn. The project included cleaning the cemetery, cataloging graves and planting flowers. It was an astounding change from a cemetery that was overgrown and full of weeds, with fallen and hidden headstones, to one that is clean and tidy, with re-glued and upright stones. Thanks to the members of the Philadelphia Winn Chapter for planning the project and benefiting all of us in cemetery preservation.



Whaley Cemetery before cleanup project



Whaley Cemetery after cleanup project

### Higgins Cemetery

The Higgins Cemetery on Brooks Road between the Harbins Community and Bramblett Shoals on the Alcovy River, has experienced some

challenges lately. The development of a new subdivision and roadwork at its entrance have caused access problems as well as a need for a new fence and some other issues. GHS was pleased to alert county staff to the concerns of Higgins descendants and advocate for ways to address these. At this writing, county staff have met with the family and the developer at the cemetery site, and changes and fixes for problems were discussed and agreed upon. Hopefully, weather permitting, the work should be complete with everyone's approval by the time the 2023 Summer *Gwinnett Heritage* is published.

### Clack Cemetery

The Clack Cemetery off Clack Road in Auburn also faced potential effects from a proposed residential subdivision for which a rezoning request had been filed with Gwinnett County. As part of the staff review process for the requested rezoning, GHS provided comments regarding protection of the cemetery during construction, adequate screening of the cemetery from the subdivision and its mailbox kiosk, and provision of access to the cemetery from the nearest street in the new subdivision.

While county staff recommended denial of the proposed subdivision, they incorporated these concerns into recommended conditions should the proposed subdivision be approved. Additionally, discussions with the developer were productive in obtaining agreement on the access and landscaping/screening requests. However, on May 2, the applicant requested that the Planning Commission deny the rezoning without prejudice, and the Planning Commission voted to do so. The Board of Commissioners is expected to take the same action when it considers the rezoning request.

*All photos courtesy of Bobbie Wilson Tkacik.*

### Sugar Hill's Gold Mine



The gold mine can be viewed via an overlook that is accessed by a spur trail off the greenway. The mine shaft itself is not accessible.

Back in January 2016, GHS received a request from Rachel Schmalz, Sugar Hill Historic Preservation Society, to look at a possible cemetery site on property that the city was purchasing for greenspace. Several of us met our

guide, Councilman Brandon Hembree (now Mayor Hembree), who led us to the suspected gravesite. Archaeologist Dr. Jim D'Angelo, however, determined the suspected cemetery to be a dump of discarded monuments rather than an actual burial site. In consolation, Brandon asked if we cared to see an abandoned gold mine shaft that was also on the property. Of course, we could not turn this opportunity down.

Brandon led the way. Arriving at the shaft entrance, we could see that dirt had been piled up leaving only a hole large enough for an adult person to slide through. It was immediately apparent that getting dirty was a part of the bargain. The inside was dark but fortunately the narrow shaft was free of bats, snakes and spiders. Preferring not to venture too deep into absolute darkness, I stayed within sight of the lighted exit. That was seven years ago. On Monday, March 20, 2023, Sugar Hill had a ribbon cutting ceremony for the opening of its newest recreational destination, Gold Mine Park. This park will offer greenspace and access to the Sugar Hill Greenway and remind the community of Sugar Hill's not so apparent gold mining past. The public can view the shaft only through a grated barrier, but it is still worth a visit. The park is located at 440 Level Creek Rd in Sugar Hill.



Suwanee Creek Chapter, NSDAR Historian Donna Bowlick (center) designates team assignment and gives instructions to GHS participants, Brandon Hembree and Kathryn Baskin, also a DAR member, are to her left.

### Island Ford Baptist Church Cemetery Cleanup

On Saturday, April 15, 2023, the Suwanee Creek Chapter, NSDAR held a cleanup day at the Island Ford Baptist Cemetery in Sugar Hill. Teams were designated to

clean headstones, map the cemetery and add GPS headstone locations to FindAGrave.com.



Suwanee Creek Chapter, NSDAR and Sugar Hill Preservation Society previously worked on an adjoining wooded section thought to hold graves of enslaved persons, based on the yucca plants growing in this area; yucca was commonly used in the past by African Americans to mark graves. Wooden crosses also had been placed at these unmarked graves by a member of Island Ford Baptist Church. The memorial stone shown above was installed to acknowledge the likely presence of graves of enslaved persons.



Michael Gagnon, PhD. presenting his lecture

### Salem Missionary Baptist Church – Heritage Hall Public Engagement Series

Also on Saturday, April 15, the Salem Missionary Baptist Church launched its

2023 Public Engagement Series. Michael Gagnon, PhD. of Georgia Gwinnett College presented his lecture, "Slavery in Gwinnett County, Georgia." The two-hour lecture proved to be an enlightening and emotionally cathartic experience.

### Development Encroaching on Dunagan Dairy Site



Development adjacent to Dunagan Dairy

The remains of the old Dunagan Dairy are a familiar bucolic landmark on Sweetgum Road between Lawrenceville and Dacula. The properties under development now do not include the parcel on which the barn and silos are located, but these reminders of Gwinnett's agricultural past soon will be totally surrounded by subdivisions.



Barn and silos at Dunagan Dairy

### Suwanee Horse Farm Rezoned for Residential Development by City of Suwanee

GHS Member, Phyllis Davis, called the GHS office to alert our team to keep an eye on the planned Larkabit Farms residential development proposed by Toll Brothers Alliance Engineering and Planning. The property, a former horse farm, is located on Settles Bridge Road and lies northwest of the intersection with Moore Road and along the Chattahoochee River. The 120-acre parcel is now zoned R-100 for 174 single family homes, as conditionally approved by the City of Suwanee on January 25, 2022, despite residents' objections. The historic Connally-Strickland Cemetery is located on the property, and developers plan to build a 3.1-acre amenity area next to it. No permits have been filed yet.

### Poole Mountain Dig



On March 18, 2023, the Gwinnett Archaeological Research Society (GARS) gathered along the creek that flows beside Lindsay Paul's Auburn property. Their mission was to find evidence of Indigenous habitation through shovel testing and surface collection/examination.



Archaeologist Leslie Perry displays one specimen found from lithic scatter which could possibly be a partial projectile point from the Archaic or Woodland periods.

### Profiles in Preservation

Poole Mountain Development Pressures This is the section in my committee report where I like to recognize members of the community who are doing something noteworthy in the area of preservation in Gwinnett County.

In this issue, I want to recognize Lindsay Paul of Auburn. Lindsay has taken the lead in organizing opposition to the proposed development of

property off Mineral Springs. The Poole Mountain area has numerous rock structures that resemble those that are now protected in Little Mulberry Park. Their origin is still under debate, with no consensus on whether they were constructed by Indigenous peoples or by colonial settlers.

Recently, it appeared that the Poole Mountain rock structures were destined to be bulldozed when land disturbance activities began on a portion of the property without proper permits from the county. Additionally, a rezoning application has been filed for denser development than is currently approved for the property.

Lindsay Paul has made opposition to development pressures and rezoning requests in the Poole Mountain area her personal crusade. She has started a neighborhood action group and is the administrator for the Facebook page, "Keep

Mulberry Great." She has further spread the message through the FOX 5 I-Team and other media. Lindsay established a dialogue with Gwinnett's Planning and Development Department and met with Gwinnett Commission Chairwoman Nicole Love Hendrickson to discuss the matter.

Through her initiatives and the actions taken by the county, the immediate danger to the rock piles has abated. However, the battle will continue as the rezoning request is considered by Gwinnett County leadership. Even if the new proposed rezoning is not approved, much of the Poole Mountain property is already zoned for over 950 homes, so the fate of the rock piles remains uncertain.

*All photos courtesy of Diane McCormic.*

computer, which started her expertise in computers. When she and her family moved back to Gwinnett County in 1987, Susan put her two "careers" together and started developing and selling computer billing programs to medical practices.

Susan was loved by so many people. Susan was always the "Mother Bear" for her family. She was the person that held the family together thru thick and thin, and nobody better mess with one of her "cubs". Susan was the most caring person you could imagine. She has so many friends because of how she always tried to take care of others. After her retirement, Susan was the primary care giver of her parents until their passing. For many years Susan would have a "Camp Narnie" (her grandmother's name) teaching her granddaughters to sew and do crafts. It was looked forward to and enjoyed by Susan as much as her granddaughters.

Susan's main hobby was helping others, but she had many interests. She became an expert at genealogy. She traced her family back to their European origin. She was proud to be recognized by the Gwinnett Historical Society as a "First Gwinnett Family" meaning she had family in Gwinnett prior to 1835. She then became President of the Gwinnett Historical Society. Susan was also a member of the DAR. She went to many classes and taught some on embroidery. She made many beautiful gifts for family and friends.

Susan was a true Child of God. Susan was a member of First Redeemer Church where she sang in the choir, and previously at Johns Creek Baptist Church and Choir, as well as Norcross First Baptist. She had a great Spirit and no fear of death. She was looking forward to going home to be with her Savior, Jesus Christ, and past loved ones. Her only concern was leaving her loved ones behind and causing them sadness. She always wanted to live her life to bring glory to the Lord, especially after her cancer diagnosis.

Susan would like to thank her friends and Church family for the many meals, and most importantly prayers during her illness. Our family would also like to thank caregivers Anita Garland and Brenda Ramirez.

Reverends Danny Henderson and Calvin Haney will preside over Susan's service. Donations will be appreciated to Susan's favorite charity, Eagle Ranch, 5500 Union Church Rd. Flowery Branch, GA 30542.

## Sympathy

### **Susan Emily Youngblood Gilbert**

*August 14, 1951 - March 7, 2023*

*Editor's Note: First Families of Gwinnett member and former Gwinnett Historical Society President Susan Youngblood Gilbert passed away in March after a lengthy battle with cancer. Flanigan Funeral Home of Buford, Georgia handled arrangements and published the obituary notice below.*

Susan was born in Buford General Hospital and preceded by Mary Frances (Merritt) and Samuel Perry Youngblood, Susan is survived by her husband of 51 years Richard. She is also survived by sons, Tony (Sandra), Sean (Sheri), grandchildren: Mackenzie Clack (Dustin), Meredith, Mitchel, Hannah, Emily, Grayson Gilbert. Great grandchildren; Paxton and Kyenzie Clack. Brothers Sammy (Julie), and Kevin (Amy) Youngblood, and sister Jennifer (Bryan) Callaway, Aunts Runelle Youngblood and Sara Mullinax, cousins, especially Joan Beard, who visited her almost daily, as well as nieces and nephews.

Susan spent a lot of her youth participating in 4-H club and made many lifelong friends through it. She graduated from North Gwinnett High School ('69) and Gwinnett Hospital School of Nursing. She was the nurse of the first OB-Gyn practice in Gwinnett County. Susan and her family moved from Georgia to Moody, (Birmingham), AL in 1974 and to Charlotte, NC in 1981, and back to Georgia in 1987. Susan continued her nursing career as she moved. In Charlotte, she became the office manager of a 5-doctor practice. Susan "volunteered" to take that practice from print to



# Calendar of Events

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General Membership Meetings and Annual Meeting held at  
Rhodes Jordan Park Community Center  
100 East Crogan St., Lawrenceville

## July

July 17, 2023 • 6:30 p.m.  
General Membership Meeting

## September

September 18, 2023 • 6:30 p.m.  
General Membership Meeting

## October

October 7 & 8, 2023  
44th Elisha Winn Fair  
908 Dacula Rd., Dacula

October 21, 2023

15th Annual Frontier Faire  
Fort Daniel Archaeological Site  
2505 Braselton Hwy./GA 124, Buford

## November

November 20, 2023 • 6:30 p.m.  
General Membership Meeting

## December

December 18, 2023 • 6:30 p.m.  
Annual Meeting & Christmas Party

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## Thank you to our sponsors

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