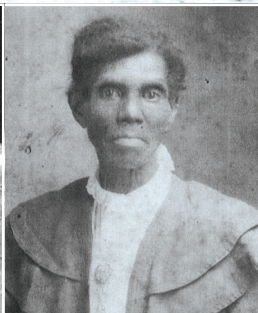


AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE TRAIL

Bartow County, Georgia

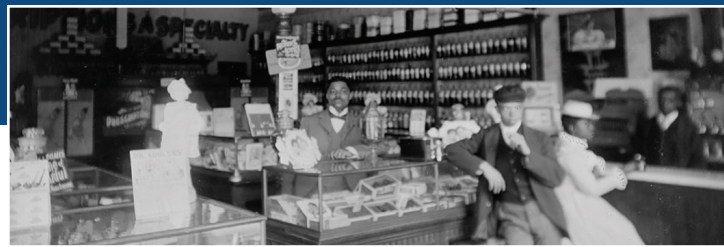
Adairsville • Cassville • Cartersville • Euharlee
Kingston • Lake Allatoona • Summer Hill



INTRODUCTION

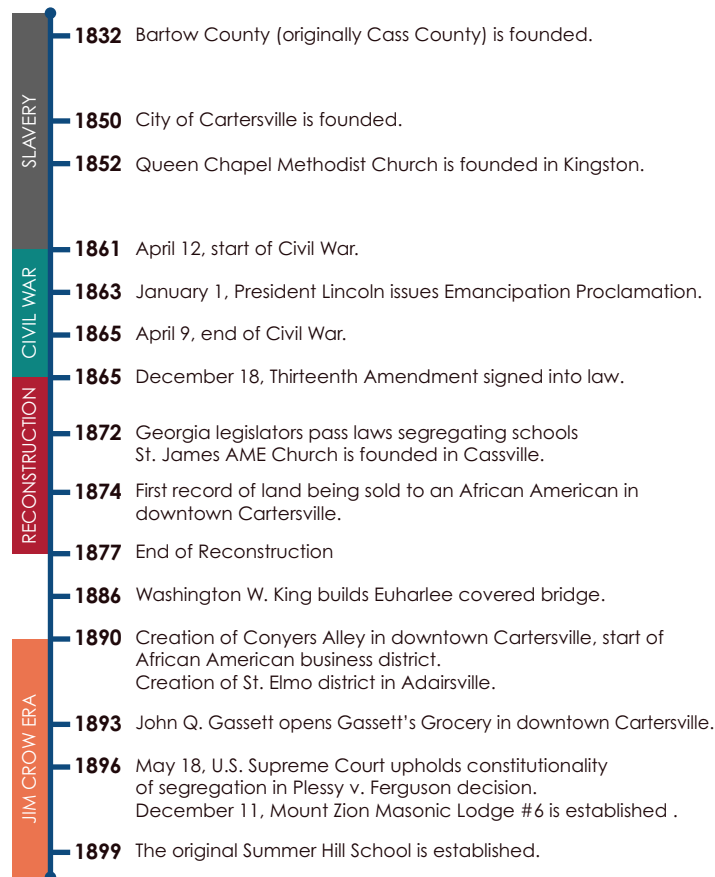
African Americans have been part of American history for many centuries, with reports of free and enslaved Africans traveling to the Americas as early as the 1400s. It has been a fraught, tumultuous, and difficult history but one that also stands as testimony to the power of perseverance and the strength of the human spirit.

Local African American history begins, as it does throughout the South, with slavery. Slavery was already present in Bartow County – originally Cass County – when it was chartered in 1832. Cotton and agriculture were the primary economic drivers but enslaved laborers were also used in the timber, mining, railroad, and iron industries. After emancipation, a strong African American community emerged, which worked to support and empower its members even as they collectively faced the pressures of Jim Crow laws in the segregationist South. Many of the families that established themselves in Bartow County during that time remain here today and have dedicated themselves to preserving that same legacy of community support and empowerment.

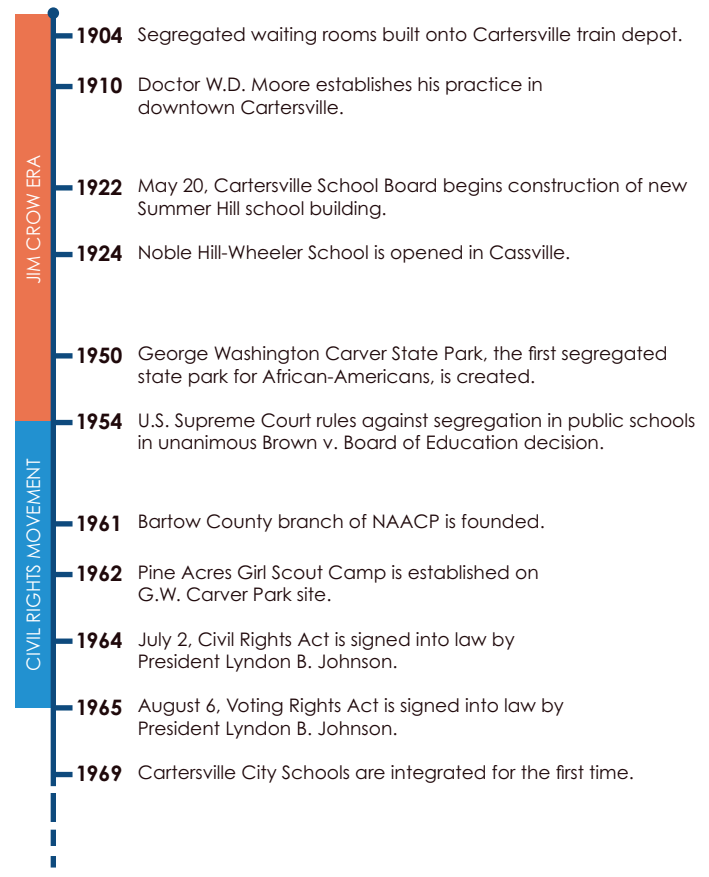


What this brochure hopes to make clear, is that one cannot fully consider the history of Bartow County without understanding the history of its African American citizens. This history has been found embedded in the stories of individuals who witnessed its unfolding. It has been found in the historical record, a trail of breadcrumbs left by those who bought land, built businesses, and established themselves in spite of staggering odds. It has been found in the recollections of those who left Bartow County in search of a better life, and it has been found in struggles and achievements of those who stayed. This brochure is an effort to introduce what is known and share what has been discovered. It is not the definitive guide, but rather, a starting point for further research as the body of work on local African American history continues to grow.

TIMELINE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN



HISTORY IN BARTOW COUNTY



BARTOW COUNTY

Downtown Cartersville

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1 THE RISE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN BARTOW COUNTY

10 N Public Square | Cartersville, Georgia
at “Pathways to Freedom” sculpture

As Cartersville emerged from the 1860s, the central town in war-ravaged Bartow County, a new social order also started to develop. In it, formerly enslaved African Americans began to take an active place in the young community. They established businesses, built homes, worked, and socialized on the streets of downtown; claiming space alongside their white neighbors, although not yet sharing full legal equality.

In downtown Cartersville, a black business district developed on the north side of West Main Street, west of Erwin Street, primarily around land initially owned by black businessmen Jackson Burge, Ellis Patterson, and Henry Saxon. Here, in the area around what is now the intersection of Noble Street and Main Street, as well as along Conyers Alley – what was once a street connecting West Market Street (now Cherokee Street) and West Main that is now just a driveway – was the heart of the African American business community from the 1880s until the late 1920s.

After the abolition of slavery, which officially took effect on December 18, 1865 with the passing of the Thirteenth Amendment, formerly enslaved African Americans – as well as the rest of the South – were introduced to an entirely new post-war economy. By 1870, a majority of the recently freed African Americans, called freedmen, who lived in and around Cartersville continued to do jobs they had done during slavery: working as farm hands, day laborers, and – for women, especially – as domestic workers such as cleaners, cooks, laundresses, and seamstresses. As they began to collect wages for their work, the rise of the African American entrepreneur was born. The most prosperous freedpeople were those who practiced skilled trades, such as blacksmiths and barbers, occupational niches that were among the most lucrative professions for an ambitious black man in the late 1800s.

Once African Americans were able to engage in the formerly all-white economy, real estate investment began. This was particularly true of the skilled tradespeople who needed to invest in the tools of their trade: barbers and blacksmiths, as well as colliers (coal miners), brick masons, shoemakers, carpenters, and well diggers -- all of which required both capital and skilled labor. Some African American workers were able to accrue significant land holdings in Cartersville during that first quarter century after emancipation and, in so doing, established themselves as notable members of the Cartersville professional community.

Black women played a significant role in this burgeoning business community. Some ran their own businesses, while others shared a business as co-proprietor with their husbands or brothers. Mary Mills, an unmarried seamstress, was one of the early black landowners in Cartersville in the 1880s. Martha Hutchinson, born in South Carolina, ran a boarding house here in 1880, at the age of 61. Alice Gassett worked hand-in-hand with her husband, John Q. Gassett, at their long-standing grocery store on West Main Street, while Mary Eliza Young, born 1872 in Georgia, partnered with her husband at their restaurant on West Main, next to Gassett’s Grocery. Annie Craig, born in 1886, worked with her husband Oscar at their pressing club and then continued to manage it after his death, while Lucy Bell, born in 1895, was a barber in her father Ed Bell’s barber shop.

One of the most entrepreneurial and potentially lucrative careers for early black businesswomen was that of an independent sales agent. Cora E. Sidney was a book agent in 1900, at the age of 22; Eliza Jackson, born 1870, sold accident insurance in the early 1900s; and Marie Sheppard was an agent for toiletry (beauty) articles in 1930.

At the same time that the black business community was growing and developing in downtown Cartersville, African American residential areas were being established as well, mainly in three areas close to downtown: the neighborhood known as West End, on West Main Street past Fite Street; the area that became known as Summer Hill, just to the northwest of downtown; and a neighborhood north of downtown along the east side of the railroad tracks.





2 THE CLOTHING TRADES: TAILORS, PRESSERS, CLEANERS, AND SHOEMAKERS

East Church Street, Railroad Street | Cartersville, Georgia

Until the widespread mechanization of clothing manufacturing, tailors were an important part of the fabric and textile economy in Cartersville. African American men like Emory Coleman, Robert Shepard, Jessie Pitts, Lon Scott, and Willie O'Neal had tailor shops downtown, while many women continued to find employment taking in piecework and sewing clothes. Most of these seamstresses worked from their homes rather than from shops but their work still found a niche in the local economy.

Around the turn of the century a new profession arose in Cartersville and across the South: pressing clubs, which were precursors to the dry cleaning industry and which were an occupational niche dominated by African Americans. They mainly pressed suits, with the average price being \$1 for five to eight suits. Alonzo "Lon" Scott, born in 1885, began his career as a tailor with his own shop on West Main before World War I and by the 1930s ran his own pressing club. John Walker, born around 1898, along with his wife Rose, ran the Johnny Walker Pressing Club.

Then, as technologies changed, pressing clubs gave way to dry-cleaners and laundries. James "Happy" Younger, born in 1902, and his wife Sara, born in 1911, spent their entire lives in the world of fabric and textiles. Happy started his professional life as a tailor, while Sara was a laundress. In the late 1940s, they opened their own dry cleaning business on the south side of East Church Street, which was a fixture in town for many years. The building has since been torn down.

Another important niche was that of shoemaker, a necessity in the era before department stores and ready-to-wear shoes. Early black shoemakers were Alex King, Bob and Charlie Parrott, Walter Fletcher, and Sidney Luther. Charlie Parrott had his shoe shop along Railroad Street in the area where the Booth Museum stands today.

3 SEGREGATION

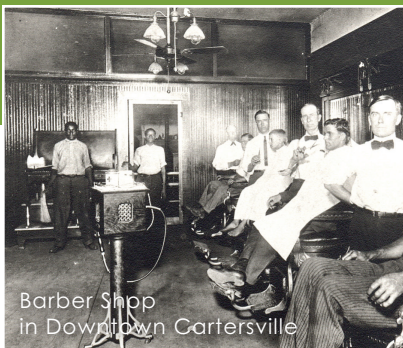
1 Friendship Plaza | Cartersville, Georgia

Racial segregation was an institution that started shortly after the end of the Civil War in Georgia. In 1872, state legislators passed laws segregating schools, then in the mid-1890s, Georgia, along with many other Southern states, passed a series of laws known as Jim Crow laws that broadly supported racial segregation and codified it into law. When the U.S. Supreme Court later introduced the idea of "separate but equal" with the 1896 case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, it further legitimized segregation and encouraged Southern states to expand the scope of their enforcement. This period, known as the Jim Crow era, officially lasted until the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

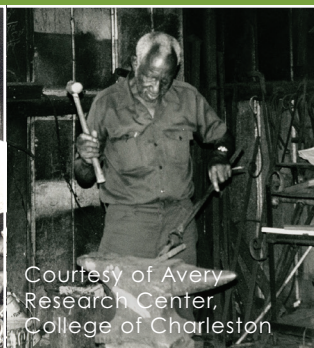
Many buildings in Cartersville still carry vestiges of our segregated past. If you enter the train depot you can still see a remnant, in the back hallway, of the separate black and white ticket windows and waiting rooms.

Other buildings in downtown Cartersville bear witness to this history of racial segregation as well. Both of Cartersville's historic courthouses had segregated balconies where African Americans were required to sit. The Grand Theatre had a separate entrance for black movie patrons, which led to a segregated seating section. At both Ross's Diner and 4-Way Lunch, one can still see the separate entrances designated for African American diners, who were required to sit at segregated counters at the rear of the buildings adjacent to the kitchen areas. Pharmacies, gas stations, grocery stores, retail shops, parks, libraries--virtually no place existed where African Americans could occupy equal space or expect equal treatment during that period, which lasted nearly 100 years after emancipation.





Barber Shop
in Downtown Cartersville



Courtesy of Avery
Research Center,
College of Charleston

4 THE SERVICE TRADES: BLACKSMITHS, DRAYMEN, AND BARBERS

101 West Main Street | Cartersville, Georgia
corner of Main and Erwin Street

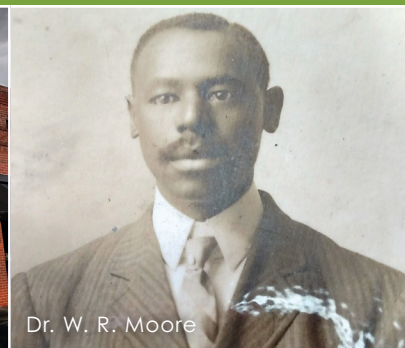
These two blocks of Erwin Street, on either side of Main Street, were heavily populated with liverys, smithies, and warehouses. Blacksmithing was an important way that freed black men used their skills in the local economy. It involved considerable investment in equipment as well as shop space; and was a profession often passed from father to son, or shared by brothers in a family. Historic Sanborn Maps indicate where blacksmith shops were located but do not provide the names of the proprietors. We know that African American blacksmiths operated along West Main and Erwin Streets as well as on East Church Street (now under the bridge), often near the livery stables and carriage shops. Early African American blacksmiths in Cartersville included Henry Saxon, Ellis Patterson, Peter Murray, Haynes Milner and son Henry, the Elijah Henderson family, Frank Erwin, and Will Goode.

In addition to blacksmithing, another occupational niche was that of the draymen, who drove the delivery trucks of the day: horse-drawn, flat-bed wagons (known as drays) that were used to transport many types of goods. The draymen who owned their own dray and team were entrepreneurs who could provide services to various businesses as needed and who became financially independent. Notable early draymen included Jackson Burge and his son-in-law Robert Peacock, while the Wofford family subsequently established their dominance over this profession in the early 1900s. (Drayman John Wofford and his wife Carrie, a laundress, were the grandparents of Nobel-Prize-winning author Toni Morrison, born Chloe Wofford in 1931, whose father George migrated from Cartersville to Ohio in the 1920s to work in the steel mills.)

Skilled barbers were also in demand by both white and black customers, and this profession became a significant occupational niche for African American men in the late 1800s. Barbershops only required a small amount of space but flourished in the black business district along West Main Street. Early barbers who also owned their own shop were Essex Choice, Ashmon Potts, Ed Bell, David Williams, Jerry Hannon, Robert Grant, John Early, and J. C. Scott.



127 W Main Street



Dr. W. R. Moore

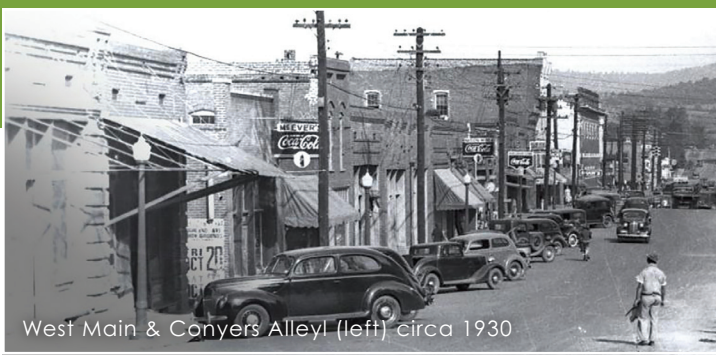
5 GASSETT'S GROCERY AND DR. W. R. MOORE

127 West Main Street | Cartersville, Georgia

The African American business district around West Main Street was developed by Jackson Burge (drayman), his daughter Angelina Peacock, Ellis Patterson and Henry Saxon (blacksmiths), and John Q. Gassett (grocer) on the north side of West Main Street, midway between Erwin and Bartow Streets. Gassett's Grocery Store, which opened at 127 West Main around 1893 and operated until Gassett's death in the early 1920s, was one of the first major black-owned businesses to anchor this district, creating a customer base that allowed other nearby businesses to thrive.

Gassett, born in 1854, was the son of an unmarried white mother and, probably, an enslaved father. He was raised in Sullivan County, Tennessee, as part of his mother's white family, and received an exceptional education as a teacher from the Freedman's Institute where he majored in Latin and the Classics. One of his first teaching positions was in Cartersville where he is listed in the 1880 census as a schoolteacher, age 22, living as a boarder with Angelina Peacock. Shortly thereafter, he married his wife Alice and started building a large family, who later lived in a big house on the corner of Main and Fite Street. He was also a real estate entrepreneur, actively engaged in developing lots from the former Lewis Tumlin estate to help settle black families into what would become the Summer Hill residential district, northwest of the downtown business district.

John Gassett also provided space for the first African American doctor in Cartersville – Dr. William Riley Moore – to establish his practice. Dr. Moore rented the space above Gassett's Grocery from roughly 1910 until Gassett's death in 1921, when he moved his practice to an office near Summer Hill. Dr. Moore, born in Florida in 1881, was the only black physician in Cartersville from 1910 until he brought in a partner not long before his death in 1954. Both Gassett and Moore are buried at the Oak Hill Cemetery on Erwin Street among other prominent Cartersville citizens.



West Main & Conyers Alley (left) circa 1930

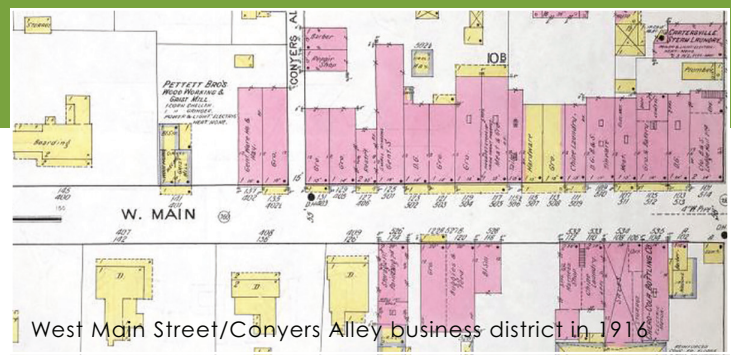
6 CONYERS ALLEY, RESTAURANTS, AND EATERIES

Between 139 & 135 West Main Street | Cartersville, Georgia

Today, Conyers Alley is just a remnant; a driveway between two buildings that marks where a road used to be. But in the early 20th-century, Conyers Alley was the center of the black business district downtown. This alley formerly connected West Main Street with what was then known as West Market Street (now Cherokee Avenue). First seen on the Sanborn Maps in 1890, a well was drilled there by 1895, and buildings sprang up around 1900. The 1909 Sanborn Map shows a barber shop and a restaurant in the alley, and there is a good chance that the restaurant in question was the original Blue Front Café, which moved around the corner to Main Street within a decade and operated well into the 1940s.

The earliest black-owned public eating establishments grew up in the 1880s. According to the 1884 “Colored Department” of the Cartersville City Directory, Carrie Alexander (born 1852) ran a restaurant on Railroad Street, while an 1884 newspaper article cites Alex Kennedy (born 1845) as running a “first-class eating house for colored people” in downtown Cartersville (although the location has been lost to history). Pomp Johnson (born 1854) was a saloon keeper as early as 1880, and an 1890 newspaper article noted that he had moved his restaurant to Main Street. Local oral history also reports that Angelina Peacock ran a restaurant adjacent to Gassett’s Grocery, possibly the Blue Front Café, which may be the same restaurant as one run by Mary E. Young in the 1910 census.

Mary E. Young and Dave Sullivan were noted as restaurant proprietors in the 1910 census, but it is Charlie “Big Doc” Richardson whose name is frequently associated with the Blue Front Cafe in popular memory. The entire district around this area was known as Blue Front during that time, likely as a result of the bright blue paint that enhanced the front of the building. Later, this area became known as Bull Neck.



West Main Street/Conyers Alley business district in 1916

7 AFRICAN AMERICAN REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS

145 West Main Street | Cartersville, Georgia
corner of Main and Noble Street

From this corner down to Erwin Street were some of the earliest sites of African American property development. The earliest deed that has been found to a black owner downtown was in 1874 from Josiah Parrott (white) to Jackson Burge, for a lot on West Main Street to the east of Conyers Alley that was later subdivided into several stores. The lot was bordered on the east edge by Henry Saxon’s blacksmith shop, which predated the sale of the lot.

Jackson Burge was among the wealthiest black property owners in Cartersville. Born in 1815 in North Carolina, and enslaved by Nathaniel and Nancy Burge, he was brought with them when they established a plantation in the Stilesboro/ Euharlee area in the decades before the Civil War. On July 20, 1867, he signed an Oath to the Union as a qualified voter residing in the 4th electoral district of Bartow County, and is noted in the 1870 census as a gardener. Burge is not listed as a property owner in 1871, but by 1872, he owned \$1,200 of property (over \$24,000 in today’s money) which was extraordinary for a black man of the time. The two areas where he owned property were on West Main Street in the downtown business district, and on West Main Street at Lee Street in what became one of the city’s first African American residential districts, West End. He appears to have settled in a neighborhood of wealthy white lawyers and business owners not far from the home of African American grocer John Q. Gassett.

When Jackson Burge died in 1881, he bequeathed to his daughter Angelina Peacock (wife of Robert Peacock) his downtown lot fronting Main Street. He also bequeathed his personal possessions to her “not subject to the debts of her husband” and then to her heirs. This set up Angelina to become a prominent businesswoman in her own right, running a boarding house, a restaurant, and selling the property to John Q. Gassett that allowed for the creation of Gassett’s Grocery.





8 JUDICIAL HISTORY

194 West Cherokee Avenue | Cartersville, Georgia

The judicial history of African Americans in the South shows many examples of unequal treatment under the law. Historically, African American men were disproportionately represented in the jails and prisons of Georgia and also more likely to be sentenced to death for their crimes. Cartersville saw a number of legal hangings such as that of Will Jackson in 1901, when thousands of spectators reportedly gathered to observe the proceedings, and it has also been the site of three known lynchings that received national attention: those of John Jones in July 1904, Jessie McCorkle in February 1916, and John Willie Clark in October 1930. After the Clark lynching, most of the African American businesses moved out of the downtown Cartersville district, and tucked themselves into largely segregated and primarily residential neighborhoods such as Summer Hill and West End. By the 1940's, little remained of what was once a thriving community of black entrepreneurs along Main and Church Streets.

However, in spite of those dark beginnings, Cartersville has also had the privilege of giving rise to the first African American judge ever appointed to the Georgia Supreme Court, Justice Robert Benham. Justice Benham was raised in Cartersville, son of Jesse Knox and Clarence Benham, and is married to Nell Dodson. As a young man, Benham attended Summer Hill High School, which was the segregated school for blacks. Active in the Civil Rights Movement, he later became the first African American to establish a law practice in Bartow County. Benham proudly graduated from Tuskegee University in 1967, attended Harvard University, received his Juris Doctor from the University of Georgia in 1970, and his Master of Laws degree from University of Virginia in 1989. Benham also served in the U.S. Army Reserve. In 1989 Cartersville native and then-Governor Joe Frank Harris appointed attorney Robert Benham to the Supreme Court of Georgia. Justice Benham subsequently won a statewide election to serve a full term on the court and was later elected, by his peers, to serve as Chief Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court from 1995-2001. Justice Benham has always been a proponent of the fact that we, as people, have more in common than we have things that separate us.



9 VINNIE'S CABIN

118-B North Erwin Street | Cartersville, Georgia

Only one original slave cabin remains on the property of what is believed to be the first home built in Cartersville. This simple one-room, wood-framed structure can be seen from Erwin Street and is located to the rear of the main house.

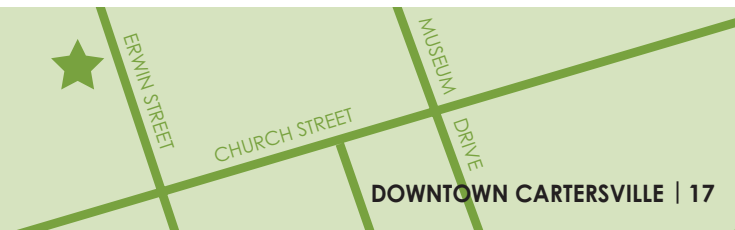
This cabin, as well as the main house, was in danger of collapse in 2018 when the property was bought and rehabilitated by its current owner. Originally, the main house was owned by Elijah Murphy Field and Cornelia Maxey Harrison Field and was considered the family's "townhome" property. They also owned a large plantation on Pumpkinvine Creek, along with numerous enslaved people.

During the Civil War, the house was commandeered for use as a post office and Union headquarters by General Benjamin Harrison of Indiana, who served in Sherman's Campaign through Georgia. Mrs. Fields, a cousin of General Harrison's, was furious, refusing to ever again welcome the General inside her home. Harrison later became the 23rd President of the United States and advocated strongly for voting rights for freedmen. The cousins split bitterly over the issue of slavery, as did the nation.

Nevertheless, post-Civil War society changed as formerly enslaved African Americans joined the economic landscape. By 1880, when this cabin came to be occupied by Mrs. Vinnie Salter Johnson, the Field family no longer enslaved African Americans, but provided a paid wage for their labor.

Vinnie Salter Johnson

Born in September, 1855, in Early County, Georgia, to slaves Berry and Rachel Salter, Vinnie grew up with 5 brothers and 2 sisters, married, had a family, and relocated to Cartersville. Between 1880 and 1900, she worked as a paid cook in the Fields' home and lived in the cabin with her son Cafaries Johnson. By 1910, she had earned enough money to rent her own home and live independently on nearby Bartow Street. Though her life was challenging, her legacy includes successful doctors and entrepreneurs among her descendants.





10 GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER PARK

3900 Bartow Carver Road | Acworth, Georgia 30101

During WWII, many African Americans found themselves at war on two fronts: overseas, where famous all-black military divisions fought valiantly beside their white counterparts, and in America, where the “Double V for Victory” campaign was being waged for equal rights on the home front. It was in this environment that John Loyd Atkinson, a former Tuskegee Airman, sought to establish a place for regional black recreation, with a beach.

Newly created Lake Allatoona near Cartersville, which opened to the public in 1950, offered a likely spot, but no one would give Atkinson a lease. However, Governor Talmadge had recently secured a lease for the state to create Red Top Mountain State Park, a segregated park for whites only. Talmadge recognized that returning black veterans were demanding more services for people of color, and addressed the request from Atkinson by leasing him adjacent property to form blacks-only George Washington Carver State Park for Negroes, a “sister park” to Red Top.

Carver Park became fondly known in the Atlanta Metro region simply as “The Beach.” Famous black recording artists of the era such as Ray Charles and Little Richard performed live at the park; it also served as the summer home of the St. John’s Ski Bees, the only black water ski team in Georgia. Carver was where a young Coretta Scott King spent weekends at church outings, and where Reverend Andrew Young and his family learned to water ski.

Due to state budget cuts, George Washington Carver Park was removed from the state park system and its operation turned over to Bartow County in 1975, becoming known as Bartow Carver Park. In 2017, the park returned to its original name and was renovated under new management by the Cartersville-Bartow County Convention & Visitors Bureau. The park is open for day use and is available for reservation making it an ideal site for reunions, corporate picnics, and other large gatherings.

770-387-1357 Visit CartersvilleGA.org/gwcp

11 CAMP PINE ACRES

3963 Bartow Carver Road | Acworth, Georgia 30101

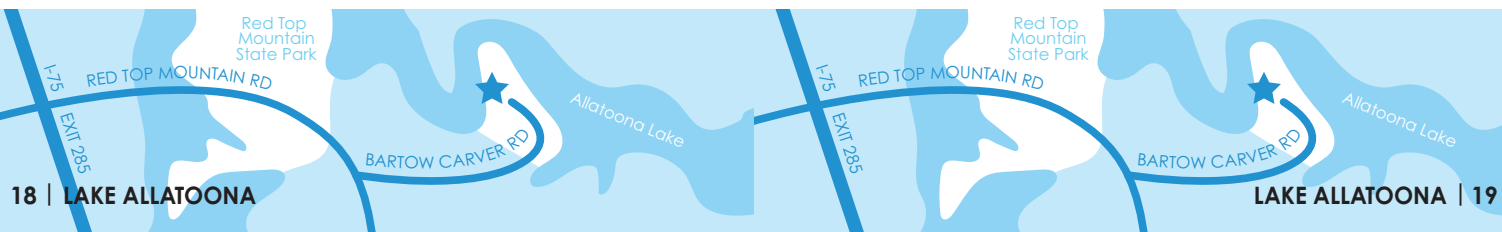
Carver Park’s John Atkinson hoped to share his love of the great outdoors with the larger African American community, but he faced challenges. Very few African Americans could swim, and no organized lessons were offered for people of color. After a tragic drowning at the park, Atkinson reached out for help. After much searching, the Red Cross in neighboring Rome agreed to train the park’s first black lifeguards. Swimming lessons soon followed for both sexes, although they were taught separately. During this time, Atkinson became aware that Scouting was a great program to develop youth, so he and other local leaders organized troops.

Scoutmaster Robert Cotton led Negro Scout Troop 80 in activities such as hiking, camping, fishing, and water safety. Girls also were forming troops; Atlanta’s District V “Camping For Me” brochure lists George Washington Carver State Park as their official camp in 1963. Girls were taught skills such as archery, swimming, and arts and crafts. Those programs grew and took over certain portions of the park as they gained in size and popularity. Group camping was established for these new boy scouts and girl scouts, and hiking trails linked the camps back to the main Carver clubhouse.

In 1962, a sublease was agreed upon between the Department of State Parks, Historic Sites, and Monuments and the Greater Atlanta Girl Scout Council to establish and construct a 210 acre Negro Girls Scout group camp on the Carver Park site. In the 1970’s, this camp became fully integrated. In 2018, the Girl Scouts negotiated to end their lease, and Bartow County took over the site.

The camp has now been reopened as Pine Acres Retreat on Lake Allatoona. Operated by the Cartersville-Bartow County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Pine Acres Retreat features two special event venues, camping, cabins, a dock, pool, and picnic pavilions.

Go to Visit CartersvilleGA.org/PineAcresRetreat/ for more information, or call 770-387-1357.





12 SUMMER HILL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

129 Aubrey Street | Cartersville, Georgia 30120

Established by Ronald Johnson in 1889, the original Summer Hill School was a wood framed Rosenwald structure of white clapboard with only a few rooms. The original student body numbered 55 students in first through sixth grades. The property was acquired by the city of Cartersville in 1892. By 1893, enrollment had grown to 250, and by 1920, served 358 students. Parents, who had petitioned repeatedly for more grades over the years, were still dealing with discarded desks and worn-out textbooks from the whites only Cartersville City East Side and West Side schools.

Many students continued their schooling after finishing their early grades at Summer Hill. In 1925, Thomas Kiser reported to the *Atlanta Independent*, a black newspaper of the era, that Annie Hutcherson, Ada Thompson, and Harriet Edwards were off to Spelman Seminary, while Florence Gassett, Eva Gassett, and Robert Morris were headed for Atlanta University.

On May 20, 1922, the Cartersville School Board accepted a proposal by the Colored Committee and the Julius Rosenwald Foundation for \$3000 total from the Foundation and Summer Hill parents to build a much-needed new school. The structure was completed in late 1922; the school continued to expand until all grades through high school were finally added by 1951.

The Cartersville School Board hired J. Stanley “Fess” Morgan in 1925. “Professor” Morgan, as he was known, and his wife, teacher Beatrice Morgan, introduced a range of extracurricular activities—including band, choir, interest clubs and men’s and women’s sports—to develop well-rounded, civic minded students. In January 1956, less than two years after the Supreme Court declared school segregation unconstitutional (*Brown v. Board of Education*), the brand new Summer Hill High School was opened. It was enlarged in 1961 to accommodate the lower grades, and the original school was vacated. The school closed in 1968.

The current campus operates a museum, library, youth and alumni programs, auditorium, nature trail, and sports complex that includes the historic Blue Devil Stadium, hand built by parents in the community. **770-331-9135**
www.summerhillheritagegroup.org

13 MASONIC LODGE

21 Aubrey Street | Cartersville, Georgia 30120

Masonic Lodges were established in at the end of the 14th century in Europe, for meetings of stonemasons who formed a “spiritual brotherhood” based on belief in a Higher Power. They also shared secret rituals based on symbolism found mainly in the manual tools of the trade, such as the square and compasses, level, plumb rule, and trowel. They also sought to perform charitable works. The first American Lodges were founded in Pennsylvania in the early 1700’s.

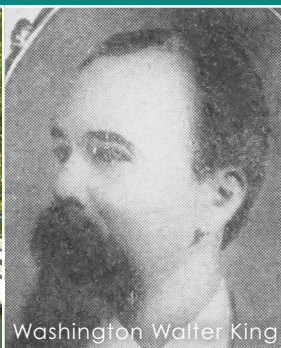
In 1775, an African American named Prince Hall, along with 14 other free men of color, was initiated into a British Military Lodge, The Grand Lodge of Ireland. These men, after many trials and setbacks, established African Lodge #1, in 1784 in Boston. Prince Hall Freemasonry soon grew and organized a Grand Lodge System for each state. Widespread racial segregation in 19th and early 20th century North America made it difficult for African Americans to join lodges outside of Prince Hall jurisdiction.

First established locally as Mount Zion Lodge #6 on Dec. 11, 1896, this lodge remains one of the oldest continually active African American lodges in the state. W.H. Hendrick served as the Worshipful Master of the Lodge in 1913, at the time the cornerstone was laid. Secret “members only” Masonic ceremonies were held upstairs, while social events and community meetings occupied the downstairs hall.

The Benevolent Brotherhood Society, the charitable arm of the Lodge, was established on Nov. 16, 1898 by Ben Tomkins, an illiterate black man from the Mechanicsville Community, “to provide for the needs of the sick, poor, hungry, homeless, shut-ins, and downtrodden.”

Every person in the Summer Hill community, from schoolchildren up to senior citizens, contributed a nickel or dime a week to the fund. Most had no other form of “insurance” available in case of disaster. If someone had need of funds for an emergency, they could request aid from the Benevolent Brotherhood, as the charitable arm of the Lodge.





Washington Walter King

14 EUHARLEE COVERED BRIDGE

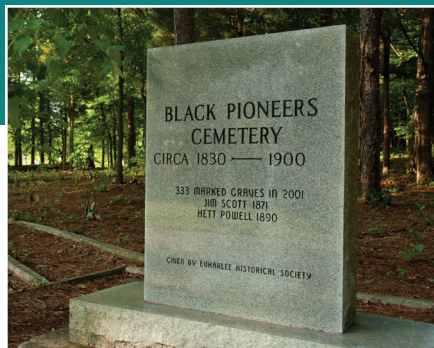
114 Covered Bridge Road | Euharlee, Georgia 30120

Built in 1886, the covered bridge is the most recognizable landmark in Euharlee. The bridge spans 138 feet to cover the Euharlee Creek and cost \$1300 to construct. Washington W. King, son of famed bridge builder Horace King, and resident Jonathan H. Burke were hired by Bartow County for this job. Earlier bridges were destroyed by floods, but this town-lattice style structure is sturdy enough for heavy loads and high enough to avoid flood damage. The foundation of local stone was embedded deep into the creek bed, and the pine timber trusses were crafted off-site, numbered, and assembled on-site with wooden pegs called trunnels (tree nails). Heavier automobiles and increased traffic endangered the bridge, so a concrete bridge was built in the late 1970s, and auto traffic on the covered bridge was stopped. The bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is one of the oldest remaining covered bridges in Georgia.

Washington Walter King

Washington King was born in Alabama, in early 1840s, to famed bridge builder Horace King and his wife, Frances. Washington, like his mother, was born as a free person of color. His father was enslaved at the time of his birth. As a young man, Washington ran pole-boats on Chattahoochee River until the outbreak of the Civil War. He cut timber and learned the bridge building trade with his father before taking jobs of his own. Following the war, he and his siblings joined their father in the King Brothers Bridge Company.

In 1875, Washington set up a firm in Atlanta. He continued to build with his family, including an 1883 bridge over the Etowah River elsewhere in Bartow County. Washington married Georgia Swift and had two children, Ernest and Annadell. Georgia graduated from Atlanta University in 1874. Annadell taught classical languages at Atlanta University, and Ernest became a civil engineer. He carried on the King legacy; in one instance, Ernest worked on the same bridge at Fort Gaines in 1913 that his grandfather built in 1868 and his father repaired in 1888. Washington died in 1910. Several of his bridges remain intact, including the bridge at Stone Mountain, Georgia and, of course, Euharlee.



Het Powell

15 BLACK PIONEERS CEMETERY

61 Covered Bridge Road | Euharlee, Georgia 30145

The Black Pioneers Cemetery is a one-acre burial ground that lies between the Euharlee Presbyterian and Euharlee Baptist Churches. The cemetery was used for the burial of enslaved members of the Euharlee churches prior to the Civil War, and for African American residents of the area through the early 1900s. Most of the graves were originally unmarked. By the 1990s, the cemetery was overgrown and virtually forgotten by many in Euharlee.

The Euharlee Historical Society, the Etowah Valley Historical Society, and the City of Euharlee undertook the task of clearing the cemetery and identifying graves in the late 1990s. EVHS member, Carl Etheridge conducted an archaeological investigation to determine the location of the graves in the cemetery. Using dowsing rods and probes, over three hundred graves were found.

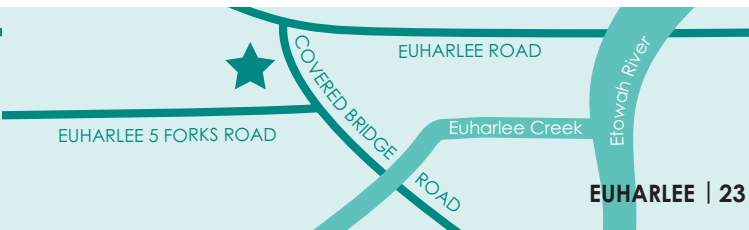
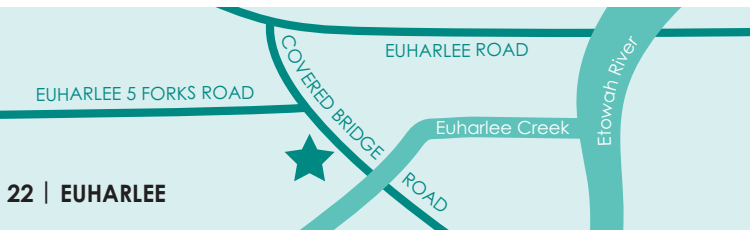
Of the 333 known burials in the cemetery, only three individuals have been identified: Het Powell, a former slave, midwife, and housekeeper, her daughter, Ada, and a local man named Jim Scott. In August 2002, the Euharlee Historical Society erected and dedicated a permanent marker in memory of those buried. In 2007, Eagle Scout John Daniels and his troop placed wooden crosses at each grave.

Het Powell

Het Powell was born in 1830 into slavery in South Carolina and brought to Euharlee with slaveholder, Mrs. Meek Powell. With her came her husband Johnson and three of her four children. Her son, Lee, was sold to a different slaveholder and Het never saw him again. After emancipation, "Aunt Het," as she was called by many in the area, worked as a midwife and housekeeper. Her descendants indicate that she is buried in this cemetery, along with her daughter Ada.

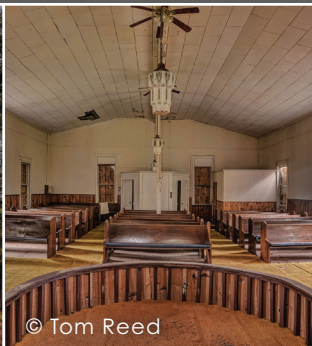
For more information, please contact:

Euharlee Welcome Center and History Museum
770-607-2017, 33 Covered Bridge Road, Euharlee, GA 30145,
Euharleehistory.org, kodom@euharlee.com





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16 SAINT JAMES A.M.E. CHURCH

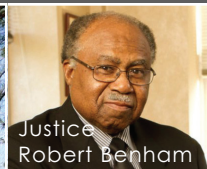
1718 Cassville Road | Cassville, Georgia 30123

This simple church, although modest in appearance, has a complex and important history. First organized as Cassville Presbyterian in either 1833 or 1844, the building displays a wood-truss construction method also seen in New England barns of the era. The true age of this building is unknown, however, as records addressing the early history of the church are scarce, and original deed books were burned – along with the rest of Cassville – by Federal Troops in 1864.

It was November 5, 1864 when the Fifth Ohio Regiment of the Federal Army, under command of Colonel Heath and Major Thomas, burned the city of Cassville. They acted on orders from General Sherman “that not a house be left within the limits of incorporation, except the churches”, which was the only thing that ultimately spared this building. The rest of Cassville was completely destroyed and, as a result, the county seat eventually moved to Cartersville with the construction of a new county courthouse. This turn of events caused local Presbyterians to dissolve their congregation in Cassville and, in 1872, give the church building to the black families living in Cassville on a handshake deal.

These families then went on to found the St. James AME Church in that location. AME stands for African Methodist Episcopal and it is the oldest independent Protestant denomination founded by African Americans in the world. Originally organized in 1816 by Reverend Richard Allen in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania as a response to discrimination from white Methodists the AME church has since advocated for the civil and human rights of African Americans through social improvement, religious autonomy, and political engagement. For recently emancipated African Americans this religious community helped them to establish their own space within the swiftly changing social and political landscape. The church and grounds are maintained by remaining A.M.E. Church members and the St. James A.M.E. Church Committee of the Noble Hill Wheeler Foundation. (770)382-3392/www.noblehillwheeler.org.

Photos courtesy Historic Rural Churches of Georgia. www.hrcga.org/church/st-james-ame/.



17 NOBLE HILL-WHEELER MEMORIAL CENTER

2361 Joe Frank Harris Parkway | Cassville, Georgia

The Noble Hill School is located in Cassville, a northwest Georgia community. This wooden building was the first Rosenwald “Community School Plan” building constructed in Bartow County. Noble Hill was built through partnerships, as African Americans, whites, the Bartow County Board of Education and the Rosenwald Fund contributed financial and human capital to provide an elementary school education to local black students. When Noble Hill opened in 1924 African Americans contributed 47% of the building costs, and 33% was provided through the Rosenwald Fund.

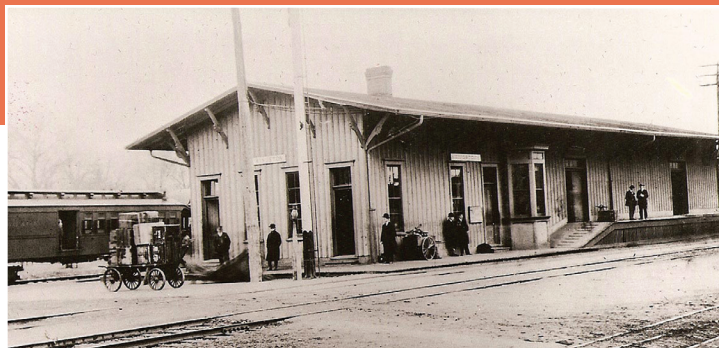
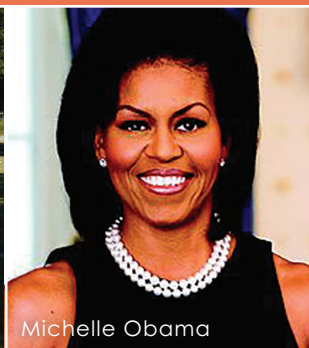
At Noble Hill, students sat at wooden desks, had an industrial training room, two cloakrooms, and separate vestibules. Wood stoves provided heat in the winter, and there were no indoor bathrooms. The curriculum offered classes from grades 1-7. In 1955, the county consolidated Noble Hill and all African American schools to form the Bartow Elementary School, and Noble Hill closed, standing vacant for over 25 years.

Dr. Susie Wheeler was an early graduate of the Noble Hill School. While in school she was impressed by her teachers that she would later to aspire to become an educator. Eventually she returned to Bartow County as a teacher, Jeanes supervisor, and curriculum director. In 1983, Dr. Wheeler worked with her sister-in-law, Bertha Wheeler, to donate the school and land to the trustee board. With this act Dr. Wheeler began a 5 year effort to achieve her dream of preserving Noble Hill and reopening it as an African American heritage museum.

The trustee board that Dr. Wheeler recruited included Georgia Supreme Court Justice Robert Benham, a native of Bartow County, who successfully saved the school by raising over \$200,000 in donations, including a planning grant from the National Trust. Noble Hill was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on July 2, 1987.

Today, the Noble Hill-Wheeler Memorial Center operates as a cultural heritage museum. The Center is open Tuesday – Saturday from 9am-4pm. For more information, call (770)-382-3392/www.noblehillwheeler.org.





18 MELVINIA SHIELDS GRAVESITE MEMORIAL

74 Johnson Street | Kingston, Georgia 30145

Melvinia “Mattie” Shields McGruder Gravesite at Queen Chapel Church

Born into slavery in 1844, on a large South Carolina plantation, Melvinia was bequeathed, at age 6, to Henry Shields, of Rex, Georgia. Henry’s wife was the daughter of the plantation’s owners, so they sent three enslaved people to Georgia to work for the couple. As one of these people, Melvinia spent most of her time working inside the Shields’ house, much as she had done in South Carolina. In that position she was required to provide care for her elderly owners, a role she also took on with Henry’s son, Charles, 12, who was crippled and unable to work the farm with his brothers. At age 16, Melvinia gave birth to a son, Dolphus Shields, fathered by Charles, then a teacher by trade. She and her children took on the surname Shields, and lived alongside Charles and his family. A decade after the end of the Civil War, Melvinia moved away with her family, to Kingston, Georgia, where she spent the remainder of her life as a midwife. In Kingston, residents knew her fondly as “Mattie” McGruder. She had four children, three of whom were listed as mulatto/mixed race.

Dolphus Shields could read and write, a rarity among the African American community at the time, and was skilled in carpentry. He moved first to Kingston with his mother, then married and moved to Birmingham, Alabama, where he became a successful businessman and leader in the church community. Later, Dolphus’ descendants settled in Chicago, where his great-great-granddaughter, Michelle Robinson, was born. Michelle married Barack Obama, who was elected President of the United States in 2008, serving two terms in office.

A marker is placed in honor of Melvinia Shields at Queen Chapel Methodist Church Cemetery, where she was laid to rest in 1938. This incredible story was researched and reported by Megan Smolenyak for the New York Times article of October 8, 2009 and for her book, *American Tapestry, The Story of the Black, White, and Multiracial Ancestors of Michelle Obama*. Mrs. Obama, upon discovering through genealogical research and genetic testing that her roots were tied to both slaves and white slave owners in the Deep South, said, “An important message in this...is that we are all linked.” (Thanks to Nellie Margaret Harris Applin, Historian.)

www.michelleobamasgeorgiaroots.org.

Site of Railroad Depot and Railroad “Y” Junction

After the Civil War, African American families such as the Woolleys and Gordons moved to Kingston to work in the city’s burgeoning railroad industry. The freed black families of Woolley plantation near Kingston formed a settlement on the northern part of that land, according to Kingston historian Larry Posey. Many descendants of those families remain here and celebrate their legacy through regular family reunions.



Queen Chapel Methodist Church and Cemetery

This historic congregation was founded in 1852 and continues to serve Kingston families. The cemetery is the resting place of prominent ancestors such as Charles Phinizy, revered tool craftsman for nearby Barnsley Plantation, and Melvinia Shields, great great grandmother of former First

Lady Michelle Obama. Shiloh Baptist Church was also founded during the post-Civil War Reconstruction Era in Georgia, in 1865. Both churches still serve the community today.

Historic African American Sites

Kingston’s African American population provided labor in both the cotton and rail industries, which fueled Kingston’s growth throughout the 19th century. These sites expand Kingston’s story and attract visitors seeking a multi-faceted history.

Other illustrious African Americans in Kingston’s history include past mayor Dexter Jones, (2010-11), current mayor Elbert “Chuck” Wise, Jr., (2016-present), and Councilwoman Louise Young Harris. More information on African American history can be found at the Kingston Women’s History Museum, open on Saturdays and Sundays from 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. For more information, contact Kingston City Hall (770)-336-5905.

Source: “Georgia Department of Economic Development Tourism Product Development Resource Team Report, 2017”





19 ADAIRSVILLE DEPOT MUSEUM

101 Public Square | Adairsville, Georgia 30103

The 1847 Adairsville Depot History Museum houses artifacts from life in Adairsville from the mid-19th century through mid-20th century. The African American experience in Adairsville begins with photos and narratives on the 1890s neighborhood known as St. Elmo, located about a quarter-mile east of downtown Adairsville.

As that neighborhood developed, a successful African American business owner's story was also unfolding. Arthur Butler arrived to the booming railroad town of Adairsville from Easley, South Carolina, to work on the W&A Railroad's maintenance crew. One evening, Arthur slipped as he jumped off a rail car and his leg was crushed. Unable to continue working for the railroad, Arthur became a cobbler and set up shop in downtown Adairsville, thus becoming the town's first African American business owner. The original building for Butler's Cobbler Shop still stands at 107 Gilmer Street on the downtown public square and is visible from the Depot. Butler's descendants still live in Adairsville and are active members in the community. His great-great-grandson, Ahmad Hall, became the first African American chair of the Adairsville Downtown Development Authority in 2015.

The Depot structure itself illustrates life after the 1896 Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which protected the existence of Jim Crow Laws. Two separate ticket windows and waiting rooms survive as a testament to life before desegregation. Other highlights within the depot displays include the first African American woman, Mary Carreathers, to be elected to the Adairsville City Council, which occurred in 1990.

History marches on as new displays will undoubtedly feature Adairsville's first African American Mayor, Kenneth Carson, elected to term in 2014.

The Adairsville Depot History Museum is open Tuesday – Saturday from 11am – 3pm with free admission. Shopping and quaint dining is available within walking distance.



Arthur Butler



RAILROAD STREET

PUBLIC SQUARE

OLD U.S. 41

WOOD STREET

PARK STREET

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

The Cartersville-Bartow County Convention & Visitors Bureau would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their help with this project:

Justice Robert Benham, *Interviewee*

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Lara Jeanneret, *Lara J Designs*

Adairsville's Sans Souci Club

Etowah Valley Historical Society

City of Cartersville

Bartow County

Georgia Humanities

All of the people who encouraged, informed, supported, or otherwise helped us along the way. **There were many.**



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