



THE ATHENS STROLLER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
ATHENS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
FALL 2018



AHS FALL PROGRAM — OCTOBER 21, 3:00 PM — ACC LIBRARY

MICHAEL THURMOND

"A Story Untold: Black Men and Women in Athens History - The 40th Anniversary"

The AHS fall program will be held in the Appleton Auditorium of the Athens-Clarke-County library at 3:00 pm on Sunday, October 21. Our speaker, Michael Thurmond, will discuss his 1978 book, *A Story Untold: Black Men and Women in Athens History*, from the fortieth anniversary perspective. The book itself, originally published by the Clarke County School district, is a must-read for anyone interested in the rich heritage and history of African-American Athenians. The Athens Historical Society will re-issue the 40th Anniversary edition in the fall of 2018. Fred Smith, co-chair of the Athens Black History Committee, will introduce the speaker. The talk will be illustrated with Power Point images.

The youngest of the nine children, Michael Thurmond was raised as a sharecropper's son in what is now the location of the Sandy Creek Nature Center. He was a member of the first graduating class of the newly integrated Clarke Central High School in 1971, where he was co-president of the student council. He graduated cum laude with a B.A. in Philosophy and Religion from Paine College in Augusta, and researched and wrote *A Story Untold* while attending the University of South Carolina School of Law. He also completed the Political Executives program at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

In 1986 Thurmond became the first African American from Athens elected to the Georgia House of Representatives since reconstruction and one of the first two African

Americans elected to a statewide office in the state of Georgia. His work since then has included heading the state Division of Family and Children's Services, lecturing at the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government, and serving as commissioner of the Georgia Labor Department. He also served as superintendent of the DeKalb County School District and currently as DeKalb County's Chief Executive Officer.

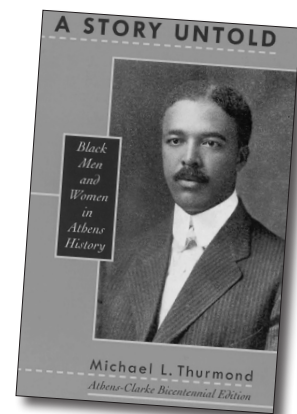
Thurmond's 2003 book *Freedom: Georgia's Antislavery Heritage, 1733-1865*, was awarded the Georgia Historical Society's Lilla Hawes Award. In 2004 the Georgia Center for the Book listed *Freedom* as one of "The 25 Books All Georgians Should Read."



Michael Thurmond

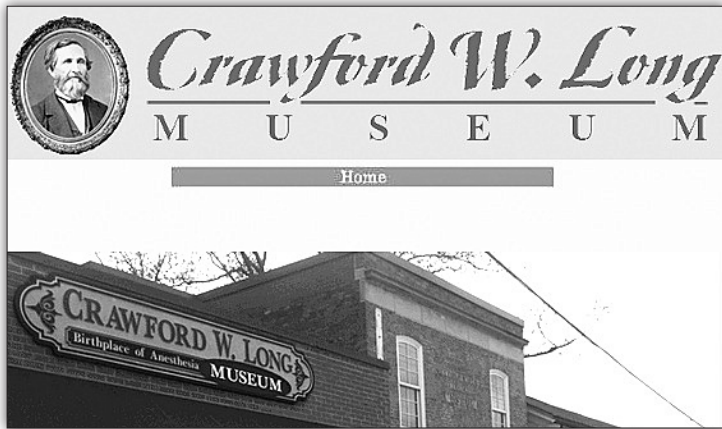
There will, as usual, be a reception after the program where attendees can talk with the speaker. This program is co-sponsored by the Heritage Room of the Athens Clarke County Library. ■

Cover of
*A Story Untold: Black Men
and Women in Athens History*



AHS FALL RAMBLE ON OCTOBER 28

HISTORIC JEFFERSON GEORGIA



Our fall ramble will take place in Jefferson, Georgia on Sunday, October 28, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. It will begin with the Crawford W. Long Museum. Dr. Crawford W. Long was the physician who, on March 30, 1842, first used ether for surgical anesthesia. Born in Danielsville, Georgia on November 1, 1815, Long entered the University of Georgia, then known as Franklin College, at the age of 14. Upon graduation five years later, he apprenticed under Dr. Grant of Jefferson, Georgia, before leaving the state to attend the Medical Department of Transylvania University and the University of Pennsylvania Medical School. It was here that he received his surgical training. Following one year's internship in New York City, Crawford W. Long returned to Jefferson and purchased the practice of his former mentor, Dr. Grant.

Dr. Long was a bachelor of twenty-six when he noticed that participants under the recreational use of ether (so they did "recreational drugs" then too!) felt no pain from injuries received during their "frolics." He reached the conclusion that ether could make surgery painless. The opportunity to test his theory came when James Venable requested that Dr. Long remove a cyst from his neck. Three witnesses reported that, on March 30, 1842, the operation was successful and Venable felt no pain.

Personal artifacts and documents highlighting the life of Dr. Long, as well as early anesthesia equipment are displayed in the Medical Museum. The 1858 Pendergrass Store building houses a recreated 1840's doctor's office and apothecary shop. Exhibits on making medicine and early treatments focus on the obstacles the early country doctor was forced to overcome. Changing exhibits in the Pender-

grass Store offer visitors a unique view into the life of the 19th century.

Next we will visit the Historic Jackson County Courthouse, home of the Jefferson Historical Society and archives. Built in Jefferson, Georgia in 1879, this beautiful building was actually the third structure built to serve as the county courthouse. The first was a small wooden structure built in 1806 when Jefferson became the County Seat of Jackson County, Georgia. The second bigger structure was built in 1817 and served for over 60 years. Finally in 1879, this incredible landmark was constructed and served for 125 years until 2004, when the new courthouse complex was built. Ten years later, the "new" Jackson County Historic Courthouse opened, serving as the Jackson County Welcome Center and Historic Archives. Our visit will include the second floor, which is currently under renovation.

Then (optional) we will tour the nearby Woodbine Cemetery, located on the hilltop just south of the town square. This large cemetery was once site of the Jefferson Methodist Church (1806-1845). Many of the town's founders are buried here as well as civil war veterans. Finally (optional), we will visit the Lawrenceville Street neighborhood, an historic district that includes an African American cemetery. Participants can walk (distances are short) or take cars, and there will be places to sit at the Museum and courthouse. Each part of the tour will be about 45 minutes. There will be an optional dinner for \$10 after the ramble at Cream 'n Suga, a local restaurant located in the old Jefferson jail.

We will meet and park at 1:00 p.m. at the Long Museum (28 College St, Jefferson, GA) and can walk or drive to the other locations of the tour from there. You might wish to carpool to Jefferson. Plan on a half an hour to get there from Athens.

This ramble will be limited to **30** participants. AHS members can bring one guest. Sign up by **October 27** by emailing Athenshistorical@gmail.com. **Tell how many will be in your party and specify if you wish to attend the dinner, as we must preorder. We will email you any updated directions.** AHS will make a contribution to the Jefferson Historical Society and the Crawford W. Long Museum in gratitude for their hospitality; participants in the tour may wish to contribute something also. ■

THE GAVEL REPORT by Sam Thomas, AHS President



Sam Thomas

I am extremely pleased and honored to serve as the President of the Athens Historical Society this year. It is particularly gratifying to serve an organization whose members I have deep respect for—many of whom I know well from various collaborations—but all of whom are interested in preserving and presenting the broad, rich history that is Athens.

I am often asked how I came to be interested in history. Like one of my favorite people here in Athens, I've always liked dead people. Their stories are often much more interesting to me than are those of the living. I was a diligent student who studied hard (all things history and sports related – other studies just seemed to get in the way) and read a lot (again, history and sports). Both my parents, as strong Presbyterians, always stressed the importance of education. They influenced my approach to history by encouraging the necessity of evidence in formulating historical arguments.

My family background further influenced my keen interest in history. I was taught to honor my ancestors, particularly the seven great-great grandfathers who served in the Confederate Army (although only one rose beyond private to sergeant!). As the grandson of a woman raised by her Confederate veteran grandfather, I heard many stories of “The War” second-hand. Till the day she died at the age of 93, she referred to Washington, DC as “Washington City” and Richmond, VA, where her middle daughter, my aunt, resided, as “The Capitol.”

My parents' cultural background influenced me as well. While my mother was a product of upper middle-class, “big city” (Columbia, SC) upbringing, my father, born in Wilmington, NC, came from the black dirt of the tobacco fields of eastern North Carolina. He went to Davidson College, and then on to Union Theological Seminary and the ministry. He was politically progressive. One of my earliest recollections is of standing at a window in my house one evening, straining to peer over the sill, looking

out at the cross burning on our front lawn. As a young boy, that was an exciting sight until my mother grabbed me up and took me away. It wasn't until I was much older that I found out the cross wasn't meant to entertain us, but was a statement about something my father said the previous Sunday from the pulpit. This was my first experience in things not always being as they seemed. I realized that gaps existed in some aspects of my personal history and needed more thorough research.

Today I see that history shapes all of us. What we believe and think and how we act and react is influenced not only by our environment—where we were raised and live—but by its *history*. And I believe the job of a historian is not to judge the past, but to pull from the past to judge the present.

Organizations like the Athens Historical Society help us know ourselves by identifying our history and passing it on. So, when you contribute your yearly dues, attend the presentations offered each year by the Society, or read its publications—the *Athens Historian* and this *Athens Stroller*—you are contributing to the study of local history. You are helping to pass that knowledge on. I look forward to working with all of you as we—both Athens natives and newcomers—learn and understand more about the rich history that is shaping us. — Sam Thomas ■

AHS DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

AHS has adopted the following statement of inclusion and diversity: “The Athens Historical Society is committed to the preservation of a collective history of the people of Athens, Georgia. We are guided by the belief that an inclusive perspective of the past must uphold historical truths, must encompass multiple voices, and must not suppress uncomfortable information that helps explain why we are the way we are today. In pursuit of these goals, we will actively work to appeal to all Athens citizens through a wide array of historical topics and by fostering external partnerships that expand our perspectives.” ■



AHS HOLIDAY PARTY

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2018

TRR COBB HOUSE 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Wine, non-alcoholic punch, and catered refreshments

MEMBERS ONLY; GUESTS \$5

The 2019 Hull Award winner will be announced!

Eat, drink, and be merry with your fellow Athens history buffs. And here's a chance to buy AHS merchandise (books, note cards, maps, video) for holiday gifts!



2018 *ATHENS HISTORIAN* NEARING COMPLETION

Editors Larry Dendy, Theresa Flynn, Pat McAlexander, and designer Eve Mayes announce the contents of the 2018 Athens Historian:

“The Finest Cook in All the South!': Aunt Laura Billups of Athens” by Eve B. Mays

“Evelyn Neely and the Athens Model Cities Program,” by Martha Debeaugrine

“Portrait of a Legend: Edward Baker Mell,” by Mary Bondurant Warren

“A Vivid Picture of Neglect: East Athens Prior to the Model Cities Initiative,” statistics compiled by Maxine Easom and Patsy Arnold

“The East Athens Night School,” by Maxine Easom and Patsy Arnold (This article and the one above are excerpted from the Easom and Arnold’s upcoming book, *Across the River*, about the history and people of East Athens.)

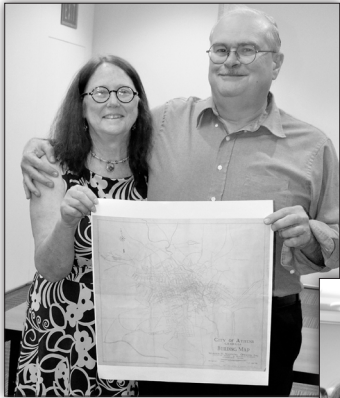
“The Death and Funeral of Brigadier General Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb,” by Gary L. Doster

AHS hopes to mail copies of the Historian to members at or near the end of the year. ■

THEY'RE NOW HISTORY!

AHS PROGRAMS - SPRING AND SUMMER 2018

On April 15, Steven Brown and Beth Whitlock presented “Yesterday’s Vision: The Athens City Master Plan of 1925.” With pictures of then and now, the duo told the story of city planner Warren H. Manning, who visited Athens in 1924-25 and created a detailed, richly illustrated report analyzing the existing situation and proposing bold new solutions.



April program speakers Beth Whitlock and Steven Brown pose holding a Manning Report map.



One of the fascinating images from the Manning report. This photo is taken from the corner of Reese and Newton Streets, looking NW, with the Camack house visible just over the right-hand end of the roof of the cabin. Note outhouse to the left.

John Barrow (right) talking with Blair and Betsy Dorminey after the program.



On July 22, James Lineberger presented “Antebellum Architecture in Athens.” His talk included eighteen Greek Revival buildings and often stories about the people who had lived in them.



An exciting moment at the July program was when Mary Bondurant Warren, pictured here with AHS Treasurer Harry Neely, unveiled Mary Jett Franklin’s portrait of Edward B. Mell. AHS, under the leadership of Mrs. Warren, is facilitating a project to restore this painting.



James Lineberger, July presenter, on stage, holding a pointer for his slides.



At the reception following the program: Nelle Brunson and AHS President Sam Thomas. Nelle, an intern at the TRR Cobb House, is a recent graduate of UGA with a degree in accounting now working on her Masters in History under Dr. Steven Berry. ■

HISTORY NOTES

History Discovered. Mary Bondurant Warren, researching for her article on E.B. Mell for the 2018 historian, wrote to Laurie Reitsema, assistant professor of anthropology at UGA, asking about Edward Mell's archaeological collection of Native American artifacts found in Georgia. Reitsema forwarded Mary's query to Dean Wood, Principal Archaeologist, Southern Research, Historic Preservation Consultants in Ellerslie, who was doing research on the Mell collection. It turned out that Wood also had personal knowledge of Mr. Mell: His parents had purchased the Mell property off the Atlanta Highway from Mr. Mell in 1954 when Wood's father was a ROTC Instructor at Athens High. Wood had grown up on that property in the 1950s and 1960s. Wood met with Ms. Warren and shared stories of "Mr. Ted" and his archeology collection. Some of these stories will be included in Mary Warren's article on Mell in the 2018 Athens Historian.

History Saved. Middle Georgia Regional Library in Macon—considered by many the "best genealogical library in the Southeast"—was almost closed due to a lack of funding by Macon-Bibb County Commissioners. However, at the last minute it was funded after all, and we are glad to say the library and its excellent resources remain available to researchers. ■

GIVE US YOUR LATEST EMAIL ADDRESS!

We do not have email addresses for some of you, and sometimes our emails to what is listed as your address bounce back. If you are not getting emails from us (we don't send many), please notify Jordan Shoemaker at jshoemaker7618@gmail.com with your current email address. We want to keep in touch with you regarding our programs, projects, and other activities (to supplement our newsletter)—and sometimes to thank individuals for donations to AHS.

THE WHITE DAM: THE REST OF THE STORY

In the Fall 2017 *Athens Stroller*, we had a story about a resident from Albany, Georgia, who wrote AHS asking for information regarding a "memory that has haunted [him] since 1975," when he and a friend biked to a place then Tallassee Road called "Hole in The Dam." The dam was," he wrote, "three to four feet thick, probably thirty to forty feet high, and the entire center section had been blown out." He had been told that it was "what remained of a stone dam that had been built in the early to mid 1800's on the Oconee River" and that "Sherman's army had blown the dam."

AHS Historian Stephen Brown corrected this myth. He replied that the dam had in fact been "built [about] 1902 to supplement the power generated by the Athens Electric Railway Company's original plant downstream, near the Mitchell Bridge Road crossing. Later the AERC was acquired by Georgia Power. When [the dam] no longer was considered economically viable to operate, Georgia Power dynamited part of the dam with no help from General Sherman....."

Now there are a few more details and a P.S. to this story, thanks to an article by Lee Shearer in the *Athens Banner-Herald* ("Current Event," July 18, 2018, pp. 1 and 4). Here we learn that the dam, located just above the intersection of the North and Middle Oconee Rivers, once contained turbines that sent power to a Whitehall textile mill; hence it was called "the White dam." When the turbines were removed, breaching the dam, water rushed through the holes with such force that small fish couldn't get through; moreover, the breaches regularly became clogged with floating debris. Now UGA owns the dam, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Aquatic Habitat Restoration Team "are removing most of . . . the dam" to improve "aquatic habitat." With the dam removed, small fish will be able to move upstream for an additional eleven miles beyond where they've been blocked." Further, "kayakers and canoeists can move past the dam without a difficult portage." The "Hole in the Dam"—indeed, most of the dam—will be no more, but the old power house on a nearby bank nearby . . . will remain for historic purposes." And that seems to be a happy ending to the story. ■

ST. MARY'S CHURCH, ATHENS, GEORGIA

The following article, sent to us by O.C. Carlisle, was transcribed from O.C.'s mother's notes.

Robert Lee Bloomfield, Olivia Carlisle's great-great-grandfather originally from Rahway, NJ, owned the Athens Manufacturing Company (Athens Check Factory) which manufactured cotton check fabric. Bloomfield, realizing the operatives' (factory workers') spiritual needs, designed and commissioned the construction of St. Mary's Church just west of the factory on Oconee Street.

The church's design was based on Ancient Norse and Anglo Saxon churches and specifically included elements similar to Bloomfield's church in New Jersey. The foundation was laid in 1869 and in 1870-71 the building was constructed, made of hand-hued board and native stone and overlaid with scored plaster to imitate stone bricks. The church included an impressive steeple with belfry. Mr Bloomfield purchased a bell, which he christened "King David," for the belfry.

The operatives elected the Protestant Episcopal faith for their church, which was consecrated on Easter Sunday, 1871, with twenty-five baptisms taking place. In 1873 the Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of Atlanta gave Canonical Consent to the organization of the new parish, named St. Mary's.

Robert Lee, who was married to Ann Warren Rodgers of Boundbrook, New Jersey, and their daughter Annie taught Sunday school at St Mary's. In addition, with Mr. Bloomfield's encouragement, the workers attended night school in the small church.

St Mary's Church prospered until 1892, after which the congregation dwindled when the mill had closed. After the final service, the church doors closed and St Mary's was "surrendered" to the Bishop of the Diocese of Atlanta. In 1945, the Bishop permitted the Athens Chapter of the American Red Cross to occupy the church for a number of years. As of July 2005, only the steeple remains.

The "King David" bell was later loaned to the University of Georgia after the church closed and subsequently given to an Episcopal church in North Georgia. ■



Text and Color Pencil Drawing of St. Mary's © Dec 2005
by C. Olivia ("O.C.") Carlisle

If you wish to order AHS merchandise, email us at athenshistorical@gmail.com with your request. The cost may involve postage.

AHS MEMBERSHIP LIST

(continued from the Spring 2018 *Athens Stroller*)

The following have joined AHS or renewed their membership since the last issue of the *Stroller*, or their names were inadvertently omitted from the last issue. Please send corrections to Pat McAlexander at patmcalex@gmail.com. (Note: The PATRON level was mistakenly listed as \$100 in an earlier newsletter. It is \$150.)

INDIVIDUAL (\$35)

Louis B Crow
Blair Dorminey
Lawrence F. Jones
Ted LaMontagne
Nan Leathers
James Lineberger
Leslie Morris
Elaine Collier Neal
Bill Paul
Elizabeth Randolph

Janet G. Smith
Valdon Smith
Frank Thornburg
Correction from last issue:
David Turner should be
D. Devant Turner

FAMILY (\$50)

Dan and Judy Aldridge
Allan and LaVerne Barber
Bobby and Marilyn Bowden

William and Amanda Dopson
Nancy and Steve Everett
Edward Head
John and Jane Inscoe
Tom and Carla McDonald
Harry and Celeste Neely
James and Carol Reap

SUPPORTING (\$75)

Kelly Girtz

PATRON (\$150)

Lucy and Buddy Allen
Charles B. Bonner
Ricky and Betsy Chastain
Mark and Helen Constantino
David Sweat

AHS DONORS

Maxine Eason and Patsy Arnold have made a donation to the Athens Historical Society in memory of Gary Doster's sister, Carol Gillespie.

Those listed below have donated to the Mell Portrait Restoration Project, which is being facilitated by AHS under the leadership of Mary Bondurant Warren. An asterisk by the name denotes a donation of \$100 or more. We thank you all for your support of this project. Plans are moving forward for the restoration, to be done by Master Framing & Conservation Studio in Chamblee, Georgia. Mrs. Warren reports that, once the painting is restored, the frame has to include not only the painting, but air space between the painting's surface and the hard plastic protective cover which will be added. Donations are still needed; if you, too, wish to donate, send your check, designated Mell Portrait Fund, to Athens Historical Society, P.O. Box 7745, Athens, GA 30604-7745.

Lucy and Buddy Allen*
Anonymous (2)
Athens High School Class of 1947*
(Marguerite Burch)
Marguerite and Charles Burch*
Elizabeth and Rick Chastain*
Lee Epting*
Nancy Everett

Peggy Galis*
Gisela and Thomas Gresham*
Patsy Hogan*
Jane Marston*
Patricia and Hubert
McAlexander*
Elaine Neal
Janet and Alex Patterson

Nancy and George Smith
Mary Bondurant Warren*
Nancy Watts
Dean and Karen Wood*
Beth Whitehead
Beth Whitlock and Steven Brown
Thomas Wilfong*

JOIN AHS

Our membership year is from March 1 to March 1. To join or renew for the March 2018 to March 2019 year, send your name, address, email address, and telephone number with your check payable to The Athens Historical Society, P.O. Box 7745, Athens, GA 30604-7745. Membership levels: Student \$20, Individual \$35, Family \$50, Supporting \$75, Patron \$150.

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