



THE ATHENS STROLLER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
ATHENS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
WINTER 2019



ANNUAL MEETING – SUNDAY, JANUARY 27, 3:00 TO 5:00 PM

GARY L. DOSTER TO RECEIVE HULL AWARD

Richard B. Russell Library, Special Collections Auditorium

Hull Award Presentation

At the Athens Historical Society's program on **Sunday, January 27, 3:00 pm at the Richard B. Russell (Hargrett) Library**, the Athens Historical Society will present its prestigious Augustus Longstreet Hull Award. This award, in the form of an engraved crystal book, is given to an individual who has contributed significantly to knowledge of Athens history and to the advancement of AHS. The recipient of the award, as announced at our holiday party, will be **Gary L. Doster**.



Gary L. Doster

Gary is very modest about his accomplishments—but there are many. To begin, he has been an amazing asset to AHS. Between 1990 and 1994 he served on its board, including a term as vice president, and in 1999 he was on the AHS Publications Committee. In 2002 AHS published Gary's *Postcard History of Athens*, which over

the course of two printings raised \$30,000 for the Society. From 2007 to 2009 Gary was a key force in fact-checking, researching, and editing the AHS publication *Oconee Hill Cemetery, Athens, Georgia, Volume I* by Charlotte Marshall. He has provided AHS with a variety of enlightening programs over the years, contributed essays to the *Athens Historian* and the *Athens Stroller*, and suggested several successful AHS projects. Gary has been equally amazing in his other contributions to the knowledge of Athens and Georgia history. Many collections of his vintage postcards have been published, as well as a book, *Dear Sallie: The Letters of Confederate Private James Jewel* (2011). Gary also played an important role in producing *The Tangible*



The Crystal Book

Past – not only contributing essays, but assisting other authors with their research, finding images, indexing, and proofreading. He has also assisted the University of Georgia libraries for years with their collections. The booklet to be given out at the Hull Award program will provide further details of all Gary has done.

After the program, there will be a catered reception to honor Gary. AHS merchandise, including the 2018 *Athens Historian*, will be for sale before and after the meeting, and you may join or renew your membership at the Membership Table. Dues for 2019-2020 are due March 1.

AHS Business Meeting

Before the presentation of the Hull award, there will be a brief business meeting. Members will vote on the slate of nominees to fill openings on the AHS Board from January 2019 to January 2021. (See the nominees' biographies in this newsletter.)

We will also plan to display the portrait of Edward Mell, which now, thanks to the many generous donations of members and friends, has been restored by Susan Jones, Master Framing & Conservation Studio in Chamblee. When the frame and protective glass have been added, the portrait will be hung in the Mell Auditorium of Clarke Central High School. ■

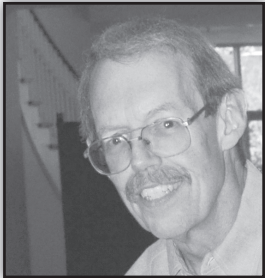
Directions to the Richard B. Russell Library: Going toward downtown on Lumpkin Street, turn left at the light at Baxter Street, then take the first right. The parking deck, which is free on Sundays, will be the first turn to the left. Handicapped parking is located on level 3 of the deck; also on level 3 is a pedestrian bridge connecting the parking deck to the quad in front of the library.

MEET THE 2019-2021 AHS BOARD NOMINEES

Note: Nominees with an asterisk (*) before their names have already been serving on the Board. They have agreed to be nominated for another term.



***Dan A. Aldridge, Jr.**, is a semi-retired business consultant who currently serves as president of the Friends of Georgia Libraries. He received the American Library Association's 2016 national White House Conference on Libraries and Information Services award for his volunteer work with Georgia public libraries. Dan earned a BS degree in Commerce from the University of Virginia and a JD degree from the University of Georgia School of Law. He is author of *To Lasso the Clouds*, *The Beginning of Aviation in Georgia*, which won the 2016 Excellence in Documenting Georgia's History Award, presented by the Georgia Archives. He has been in charge of AHS merchandise and has also been working with Michael Thurmond on the Society's re-issuing of Thurmond's 1978 *A Story Untold: Black Men and Women in Athens History* (Fortieth Anniversary Edition).



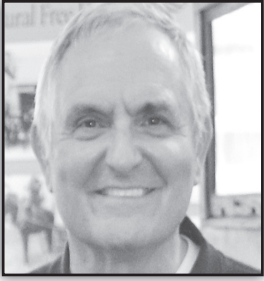
***Larry Dendy** graduated from UGA with a journalism degree in 1965, then served in the Peace Corps in India and worked as a newspaper reporter and editor in Winston-Salem, NC, and Tifton, GA. In 1972, he joined the UGA Office of Public Affairs where he worked for 37 years as a writer, editor, News Service director, speechwriter and special projects manager. After retiring in 2009, he wrote a book, *Through the Arch: An Illustrated Guide to the University of Georgia Campus*, published in 2013 by the UGA Press. The book won the Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation's 2014 Preservation Award for Outstanding Publication. He has served as AHS Vice President this past year, as chair of the *Athens Historian's* editorial committee 2016-2018, and often as proofreader of the *Athens Stroller*.



Bill Mann is a Professor Emeritus at UGA, and a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects. He taught in the College of Environment and Design at UGA for 38 years, and also at Michigan State University and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in Australia. He earned a BLA from Michigan State and an MLA from Harvard and has worked in Boston, Toronto, Montreal, England and Italy. He has lectured at many universities and conferences in the US, Canada, Europe and Australia. He has published many papers as well as two books on landscape architecture history. Currently, he is working on a book about the 1830s UGA Botanical Garden and its founder, UGA professor Dr. Malthus Ward. Bill and his wife Barbara lived in Cobbham for twelve years and were founding members of the Historic Cobbham Foundation. They now live in Watkinsville.



***Pat McAlexander** earned a bachelor's degree from the State University of New York at Albany, a master's from Columbia University, and a doctorate from The University of Wisconsin, Madison, all in English. As a professor in UGA's Division of Academic Enhancement, she published articles on teaching and American literature and co-authored three books. After her retirement, Pat has become active in OLLI@UGA, serving as editor of its newsletter for seven years. She is also interested in photography, local travel, and Athens history, and has recently had *Second Wives*, a work of historical fiction, accepted by Black Opal Press. She served as AHS secretary for one year. She is the editor of the *Athens Stroller* and on the *Athens Historian* editorial committee.



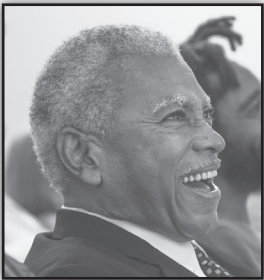
***Harry Neely** was born and raised near Pittsburgh, PA. He has finance degrees from Johns Hopkins University and the University Chicago Graduate School of Business. Harry is also a Vietnam veteran, having served as a military intelligence agent. He has held financial positions at two regional banks in Baltimore and Richmond. Harry was also treasurer of a Fortune 500 company headquartered in Cincinnati. In 2000 he and his wife Celeste purchased the Nicholson House Bed and Breakfast in Athens (built in 1820, originally known as Gum Springs Inn) and successfully operated it for eight years. He has served two terms as treasurer of AHS.



Ashleigh Oatts is Education Coordinator at the T.R.R. Cobb House. She grew up in Knoxville, Tennessee and received her bachelor's degree in History from Maryville College in Maryville, Tennessee and her master's in Public History from Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro. Before moving to Athens, she worked at several museums in Knoxville. In her spare time, Ashleigh enjoys running, reading, and knitting.



Ashley Shull earned a bachelor's degree in Literature and master's degree in Secondary Education from Georgia College and State University and a master's in Library and Information Science from Valdosta State University. A daughter of a military veteran, Ashley spent her childhood travelling the world. Moving to Athens seven years ago was the best choice Ashley could have made. Now serving as the Archives and Special Collections Coordinator at the Athens-Clarke County Library Heritage Room, Ashley works every day to preserve the history of the Athens-Clarke County community for future generations.



Fred Otis Smith, Sr. was a member of the first graduating class of the integrated Clarke Central High in 1971. In 1975, he earned his BA in sociology from Augusta's Paine College, where he served two terms as editor of the student newspaper. In the summer of 1975, he and Michael Thurmond started the *Athens Voice* newspaper. In 1978, he completed his master's degree in Journalism and Mass Communication from the University of Georgia. He was a co-founder of the Creative Visions Foundation, which provided educational enrichment activities to mostly minority youth from 1989 to 2003. During the 1990s, he served two terms as president of the Clarke County NAACP. A retired District Director of the Georgia Department of Labor, Fred now is, among other things, the co-chair of the Athens Area Black History Committee, an organizer of the annual Athens Area Black History Bowl (a popular youth-centered program), and a Heritage Walk Tour guide for the West Hancock National Register District. (photo from Ryan Cameron's, *The Red and Black*, on p. 4)

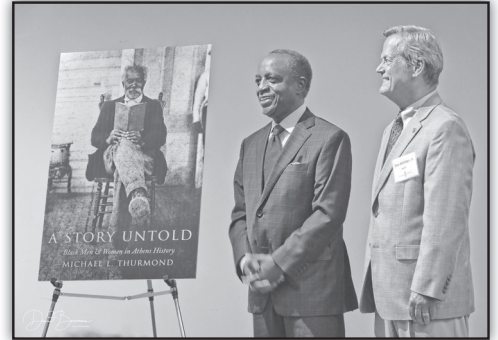
Stepping down from the Board are Steven Brown, Cindy Galt, Janet Gregory, and Beth Whitlock. Steven served for four terms, Beth for three, Cindy and Janet for one. Steven has throughout his terms held the position of AHS historian; Beth was for two years AHS secretary and formatter of the *Stroller*. These two have also given several wonderful programs for AHS—and we hope they will continue to do so. Cindy served a year as secretary and Janet has been an amazing director of social media for her term, as well as serving for a year as Web coordinator and membership co-chair. Their work is much appreciated! Continuing the second year of their two-year term are **Steve Armour, Svea Bogue, James Lineberger, Randy Reid, Jordan Shoemaker, Donnie Summerlin, and Sam Thomas.** ■

THEY'RE NOW HISTORY: A PROGRAM AND A RAMBLE

OCTOBER 21, 2018: MICHAEL THURMOND, "A STORY UNTOLD: BLACK MEN AND WOMEN IN ATHENS HISTORY"



◀ Unveiling the cover of the third edition of Thurmond's book are Jan and Bob Babcock of Deeds Press, Michael Thurmond, and Dan Aldridge (Pat McAlexander)



Michael Thurmond and Dan Aldridge stand by the unveiled portrait (Daniel Borremans) ▶



◀ Fred Smith, who introduced Thurmond, in the front row during the presentation. Mr. Smith is on the slate for the 2019-2021 AHS Board (see page 1). (Ryan Cameron, *The Red and Black*)

Thurmond giving a lively presentation that kept the audience alert and laughing (Daniel Borremans) ▶



One hundred and eighty-seven people in the Athens-Clark Library's Appleton Auditorium plus forty-eight more in the overflow room came to hear former Georgia Assembly representative and current Chief Executive Officer of DeKalb County Michael Thurmond present the story behind his book *A Story Untold: Black Men and Women in Athens History*.

Thurmond, who was born in 1953, one year before the Brown vs Board of Education case, was in the first class to desegregate Athens High in 1971. There Thurmond was the co-president of the student council and a student in educator Elizabeth King's black history class. Since she had no textbook, King would photocopy materials from black publications like *Ebony*. Although the Rotary Club purchased *The Encyclopedia of Black History* to supplement these materials, Thurmond said that Miss King told him, "If you want a textbook, why don't you go write one?" Beginning to do research to find black men and women who were prominent in Athens history, Thurmond convinced the Superintendent of Schools of the value of the project—enough so that the Board of Education paid Thurmond to continue the research. Later Thurmond decided to take time off from law school, do more research, and in fact write a book on the subject.

Much of Thurmond's talk was infused with humor. For example, he described one of his "creative marketing strategies" when *A Story Untold* came out: he would *pay* people to go into bookstores and ask for the book. Ultimately the book caught on and all copies were sold. Al and Connolly Hester published a second edition for the Athens Bicentennial; now AHS will be printing a third edition for the book's fortieth anniversary. "We recognize that black history is American history," Thurmond concluded. "People of all races and colors understand that defining and documenting our history [benefits us all]... As southerners, we are connected."

After the presentation, a reception was held in the adjoining activity rooms. Audience members were encouraged to speak with Thurmond there—but he was so besieged in the hall that he never made it into the reception room! ■

OCTOBER 28, 2018: A RAMBLE TO JEFFERSON, GEORGIA



Mural across from the Crawford W. Long Museum

There were a few changes to the published schedule for the ramble—the time and order of visits—but we saw everything that was promised. The weather was perfect, cool and sunny, as a group of Athens Historical Society members gathered in front of the Crawford W. Long Museum and chatted with curator Vicki Starnes about such subjects as the difference between ether and laughing gas and the types of visitors to the Museum. Vicki told us there were three types: Sprinters (rushing through), Strollers (casually perusing), and Students (interested and asking questions).

The Crawford W. Long Museum, a three-building complex located on the site of Long's office, commemorates the first use of ether as

a surgical anesthetic in 1842. First we entered a 1936 one-story commercial brick building which contained a diorama of that surgery: witnesses watching as the anesthetized patient, a student, had cysts removed from his neck. (When he woke up, he asked, “When will you start?” and Dr. Long showed him the removed cysts.) This building also contained Long's desk, portraits of Long, and medical memorabilia. The second building was constructed in 1879 by Dr. J.B. Pendergrass for his office and drug store. It contained a sample office with gurneys and more medical memorabilia, such as pill-maker boxes. Upstairs were anesthetic machines dating to modern times. The third building was the 1840s Pendergrass General Store, housing the counter and goods for sale; it was incorporated into the museum in 1987. When we left, wishing we had more time to explore, our guide Vicki Starnes told us that she would classify our group not as Sprinters or Strollers, but as Students.



Vicki Starnes, curator of the Crawford W. Long Museum, greeting us at the door

Next was a visit to Woodbine Cemetery with graves dating back to 1817, including the grave of Long's sister, then a visit to the former Jackson County Courthouse built 1879. Designed by Athens architect W.W. Thomas in the Italianate style, it was topped by a neoclassical clock tower added in 1908. Finally, we walked through the historic Lawrenceville Street neighborhood. Thank you to the tour leaders and to Jordan Shoemaker for arranging this fascinating ramble.

The ramble was of special interest to Harry and Celeste Neely, because according to folklore, in August 1864 Crawford Long's daughter, Frances Long Taylor, buried the ether formula in the spring by the present Neely house in anticipation of Stoneman's Raid, a part of Sherman's march through Georgia. Fortunately, the raiders were stopped and captured twenty miles east of Athens.



The Neely house was once the Gum Springs Inn, built in 1820 to accommodate travelers along the 1805 Federal Road. At that time the Inn was five miles from Athens. The road went right past the inn. Farmers stopped there on their way to market in Athens, watered their horses in the spring, stayed the night, then went on to market. There they sold their goods, returned and again stayed at the inn. Both the springs and the building are still in fine condition, and the stone steps leading to the door remain today. ■

Gum Springs Inn (1820), today the home of Harry and Celeste Neely. Note original stone steps.

FAIRHAVEN TUBERCULOSIS SANITARIUM *by Gary L. Doster*

Many of you may not know that the pink stucco building at the entrance to Memorial Park, now the park's Operations Center and home to the Athens Creative Theater, began as the Fairhaven Tuberculosis Sanitarium in 1926. On October 21, 2018, at the dedication of an historical marker commemorating the sanitarium, Doster told the building's story. The talk is reprinted here with Gary's permission.

Tuberculosis, commonly abbreviated as TB, is caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. It is commonly found in the lungs but can infect other organs of the body as well. The disease has been with us since ancient times and occurs worldwide. In the nineteenth century, it was commonly called "consumption." TB is highly contagious, and many years ago severe cases could take as long as two years to treat and cure. Although tuberculosis still rages in many parts of the world, modern medicine and better sanitation have greatly reduced the occurrence of the disease in this country.

In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, tuberculosis became common in the United States and developed into a major health issue nationwide. The disease was more prevalent among poor people because they generally lived under inferior sanitary conditions.

In an article in the *Athens Banner* on December 22, 1916, it was reported that there were more than 30 cases of TB in Athens at that time. Six years later, in November 1922, an Athens newspaper article reported that in 1921, 37 people died from tuberculosis in Clarke County. According to our population numbers, this was a higher rate than any other county in Georgia; in fact, it surpassed the rate for most of the rest of the United States. In the first part of the next year, the rate was even higher, showing that the frequency of death from the disease was increasing.

At this time, there was a state tuberculosis sanitarium located in Alto, Georgia, that had opened March 15, 1911. Even though it could accommodate 120 patients, it was overcrowded, and it took months to gain admittance. Besides, most people preferred to be hospitalized closer to home and objected to being shuttled off to that little town located 20 miles northeast of Gainesville, Georgia.

By 1924, the spread of tuberculosis had reached epidemic levels in Athens. At that time there were 100 active cases ongoing in this area, and more than 160 people had died. This caused our public health officials to request that a hospital be built in the county to fight the disease. The *Athens Banner Herald* of May 22, 1924, contained an article entitled "County TB Hospital and Community Pride." The article was as follows:

Something must be done about the tuberculosis situation in and around Athens. The number of cases is becoming alarming. Evidently the sources of infection should be controlled. The state can render little aid, because as everyone knows Alto has long been overcrowded. Many who would willingly seek treatment elsewhere are forced to remain at home because of the expense involved.

The problem of tuberculosis control has narrowed down to a local problem. Either a county sanitarium must be provided or conditions will keep on growing from bad to worse. If you aren't personally acquainted with the facts, ask your family physician. He may open your eyes to the menace of tuberculosis in our community.

We Athenians are proud of our city and county. We have a right to be. Few communities in the United States can boast of such culture and refinement, such educational opportunities, and fine idealism. Surely we won't permit our heritage of the past and prospect of the future to be endangered by an insidious enemy, the tuberculosis germ.

No! We have too much civic pride. Athens and Clarke County will rise to the occasion and build a suitable sanitarium. Show your interest in community welfare by using your influence towards obtaining a county hospital for the treatment of local TB patients.

In the fall of 1924, the county issued \$50,000 in bonds to erect the hospital building and asked for financial help from the public to assist in operating the facility. The county bought a 76-acre tract of wooded land on the Athens-Princeton Road, known as the Wright-Bramblett property that was near the city and had all the conveniences, including sewerage, water, and electricity.

FAIRHAVEN TUBERCULOSIS SANITARIUM *continued*

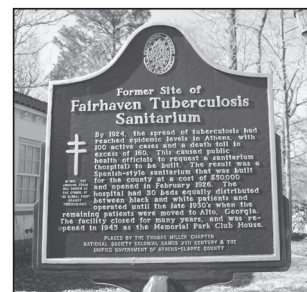


Today's Memorial Park Club House, once a tuberculosis sanitarium

The hospital was named Fairhaven Tuberculosis Sanitarium. It opened in February 1926 with 30 beds – 15 for white patients and 15 for black patients. Although each patient who could afford it was charged a nominal daily fee during their stay in the hospital, in fact, the hospital was operated almost entirely on donated funds. There were many fund-raising events held in Athens for this purpose – mostly by the various women's clubs – as well as a number of individual civic-minded Athenians. Also, some support was received through the sale of Red Cross Christmas Seal Stamps.

In addition to a small professional staff, volunteer workers helped out all they could. But there were financial difficulties from the beginning. Fairhaven Tuberculosis Sanitarium turned out to be a rather short-lived facility. In 1928, just two years after its 1926 opening, the Clarke County Tuberculosis Association, Inc. was created for the purpose of taking over the operation of the hospital from Clarke County. The property was transferred to the corporation on January 1, 1929. The financial difficulties continued and were greatly exacerbated by the onset of the Great Depression later that year when the stock market crashed in October. The Fairhaven Sanitarium struggled on for a while, but finally succumbed to the financial crisis and was closed in the late 30s. The last patients were transferred to the State hospital in Alto.

The old hospital was no more, and the property sat unused for several years. However, in 1945, Athens businessman William Howard Benson, owner of Benson's Bakery, arranged for Clarke County to donate the building and the land to the City of Athens for a park. Then Benson, Carter Daniel, Harry Hodgson, Sr., John Stiles, W. G. Thornton, Ed Wier, and Paul Williams donated \$500 each and established Memorial Park, which, of course, remains today. But that's another story for another day . . . ■



The new historical marker

THE GAVEL REPORT *by Sam Thomas, AHS President*



With another successful year of the Athens Historical Society under our belts, we look to build upon that into 2019. My goal as President of the Athens Historical Society is to work with our Board to ensure that we are constantly moving forward in preserving, protecting, and promoting the rich history of Athens.

The health of the Society is strong. Our membership continues to grow, with new members joining monthly. Financially, the Society is on sound footing. We continue to offer programs that are of wonderful interest, as the attendance at events attests. Our publications continue to be sought out by folks near and far. But the strength and health of any organization is due to a strong membership and an equally strong Board. Without those two strengths, a volunteer organization cannot last long.

Your Board is a hands-on Board that takes an active part in the operation of the Society. Board members spend hours each month, not just in meetings, but in making arrangements for the next event, making phone calls trying to line up presenters, running from place to place picking up or delivering items, recruiting new members, even in preparing some of the tasty tidbits that everyone enjoys at our events. So, it is with deep regret that we say good-bye to the following four members as they retire from the Board: Steven Brown, Beth Whitlock, Cindy Galt, and Janet Parker. Each has been a tremendous supporter and worker for the Society. To each of them, I personally say "Thank you! You will be very much missed."

Thank you also to everyone who volunteers time to make this amazing organization work. I look forward to seeing you at our annual general membership meeting on Sunday, January 27 at 3:00 in the auditorium of the Russell Library at the University of Georgia. ■

CONFESSIONS OF THE STROLLER EDITOR

In “The White Dam” story on page 6 of the fall issue of the *Stroller*, two different Middle Oconee River dams were conflated. The dam Steven Brown wrote about in the Fall 2017 *Stroller* was the Tallassee Dam at Tallassee Shoals, erected in 1902 by the Athens Railway and Electric Company to supplement its plant further down river at Mitchell Bridge in today’s Ben Burton Park. As Steven Brown told us, “After years of being a challenge for canoeists and kayakers, the Tallassee Dam was repaired and now generates power for Georgia Power.” Brown goes on that, in contrast, “The dam that Lee Shearer wrote about, [most of which] was removed, is commonly known as White Dam #2. It was probably constructed some ten years later by James White just above the point where the Middle Oconee flows into the North Oconee. This, along with White Dam #1 on the North Oconee, provided power to the Whitehall Yarn Mill still standing on Milledge Avenue between the railway and the water tank. These early hydroelectric plants were also used to light White’s nearby mansion, now used by the UGA Warnell School of Forestry.”

Gary Doster also wrote us about the conflation and pointed out something else: “There were no turbines located in White’s Dam [#2] – the turbines were in the power house next to the bank. The dam was merely a solid concrete structure that stopped the flow of water, which could be diverted through a raceway to the power house to turn the turbines.”

When Steven Brown contacted us, he proposed writing an article for a future *Athens Historian* on the many dams on the Oconees. His proposed title: “The Whole Dam Story.” So, with the clarifications from these two historians and Steven’s idea for an article, perhaps some good has come of this error.

One other correction: In the last issue, our capitalization was off in the listing of the author of “Evelyn Neely and the Athens Model Cities Program” in the 2018 *Historian*. It’s Martha deBeaugrine. ■

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NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

SUPPORTING

David and Elizabeth Lyle

STUDENT

Beth Higgins

INDIVIDUAL

Valerie Babb

John Nicholson

Jill Biskin

Mark Reinberger

Ariel Gordon

Ashley Shull

William A. Mann

Martha W. Sutton

DONATIONS

We received a generous contribution to the Mell Portrait Fund from Carlton Mell and a generous charitable grant from the JP Morgan Security Charitable Gift Fund, recommended by David and Katherine Rush. Also Kat Farlowe donated her time and expertise to design our three *Stroller* issues in 2018. These contributions are greatly appreciated!

AHS MEMBERSHIP – TIME TO RENEW!

Our membership year is from March 1 to March 1. To join or renew (indicate which) for March 2019 to March 2020, 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**. Be sure to send *all* this information so that we can send you the *Athens Stroller*, the *Athens Historian*, and information and emails regarding our events. Your dues help pay for the operating expenses of the organization and for projects that preserve the history of Athens and the surrounding area. **Note: The memberships of those joining during and since October 2018 will carry over to March 2020.**

Membership levels:

Student \$20 Individual \$35 Family \$50

Supporting \$75 Patron \$150