

# Reflections



## Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network



A Program of the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources

### Volume II, No. 3    **SPRINGFIELD VILLAGE PARK DEDICATION**

June 2002

Augusta lies on the banks of the Savannah River in Richmond County. For 17 years, Augusta Tomorrow has implemented major redevelopment projects to promote tourism, linking Riverwalk Augusta to the city's downtown historic resources. Springfield Baptist Church, located on the southeast corner of Twelfth and Reynolds, is a critical component in Augusta's plans for downtown development. In 1994, Augusta Tomorrow formed a partnership with the Springfield Village Park Foundation, a nonprofit corporation, to secure contiguous land around Springfield Baptist Church and develop a park commemorating the church and the historic African American village that once surrounded it.

Springfield Village Park Foundation, under the leadership of president Robert P. Kirby, Augusta Tomorrow, Historic Augusta, and the trustees of Springfield Baptist Church, acquired parcels on



The Tower of Aspiration is the centerpiece of Springfield Village Park. Richard Hunt designed a stainless steel sculpture to symbolize the struggle for achievement in the historic African American community in Augusta.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

Jones and Reynolds streets to increase the church and park grounds to 2.5 acres of land. In February 2002, Springfield Village Park was dedicated, featuring fruit trees, a granite winding path, lampposts, reflecting pools, and the *Tower of Aspiration*, a 35<sup>th</sup> stainless steel sculpture designed by Richard Hunt, a renowned African American sculptor, and graduate of the Art Institute of Chicago. Hunt has created gallery-scale sculptures for exhibits displayed nationwide at major museums, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Examples of Hunt's public commissions are *Freedmen's Column* at Howard University and

*Wisdom Bridge* at the downtown Atlanta Public Library.

Springfield Village Park will be expanded by 2003, adding another Hunt sculpture on the lower plaza. This sculpture, "*and they went down both into the water*," symbolizes baptisms once performed in the river. The sculpture will be placed in a basin beneath

the *Tower of Aspiration*. Reflecting pools opposite Springfield Baptist Church evoke the springs that once provided water to the community, and the name of the village and the church. Other planned enhancements to the park include plaques depicting life in Springfield Village in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Walking tours are planned linking Springfield Village Park to the Georgia Golf Hall of Fame and historic buildings near Riverwalk Augusta.



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A walking path leads visitors to the Tower of Aspiration.



Five reflecting pools capture the image of the bell tower at Springfield Baptist Church.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

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## SPRINGFIELD VILLAGE PARK DEDICATION

The village of Springfield began with the story of David George, an enslaved African who escaped from Essex County in Virginia. George migrated to the Pee Dee River district in South Carolina, where he lived and worked among whites for two years until he was warned to take refuge in the Savannah River area to avoid slave hunters. Blue Salt, a Creek Indian chief, captured David George; around 1766, he sold him to the son of his former master in Augusta. George escaped again, penetrating further into Indian country, and lived on the colonial frontier until he was enslaved by John Miller, a trader who worked for George Galphin. Each year, David George drove a caravan of horses laden with deerskins 400 miles to Galphin's plantation and trading post at Silver Bluff, on the South Carolina side of the Savannah River. On a third trip to Silver Bluff in 1769, George asked Galphin if he could continue working on his plantation, preferring it to frontier life. Galphin allowed preachers to visit his plantation, and George was baptized by Wait Palmer, a white preacher. He encouraged George and other slaves to form a congregation at Silver Bluff.

David George received his calling to preach after a visit by George Liele, an African American preacher. When the American Revolution began, visiting preachers were not allowed at Silver Bluff, and David George became the preacher for the African American congregation. During the war, slaves from the Galphin plantation escaped to the British camps. David George ultimately escaped to Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, where he founded Baptist churches. Jesse Peters, an associate of David George, returned to Silver Bluff after the American Revolution, and preached in Augusta and Savannah. He formed the Springfield Baptist Church congregation in 1787. Jesse Peters and Abraham Marshall ordained Andrew Bryan in 1788, the founder of First African Baptist Church in Savannah. In 1798, the village of Springfield was included in the new city charter of Augusta.

Jesse Peters' congregation in Springfield continued to grow during the next decade. By 1803, the church listed 497 members, and joined the Georgia Baptist Association. From 1819-1846, Springfield's pastor was Jacob Walker, and the congregation worshiped freely in a brush arbor. This was an unusual practice in the antebellum era, when most slaves worshiped in balconies at white churches led by white preachers. Enslaved Africans participated in the economy through "tickets" issued by slaveowners. These passes allowed slaves to earn money while providing skilled trades and services to the city's diverse population. Their occupations included blacksmiths, barbers, seamstresses and house servants. By 1819, there were 176 persons listed in Augusta's *Register of Free Persons of Color*, an indicator that some had successfully bought their freedom.



*St. John Methodist Church was a traditional New England style meeting house, constructed circa 1801.*  
Springfield Baptist Church Archives

Other religious denominations were present in the Augusta cultural landscape. The white Methodists erected a New England style meeting house in 1801. As this congregation eventually outgrew the building, the free African American community acquired the meeting house from St. John Methodist Church. In 1844, the congregation moved the building by wagons to its present location, and it became Springfield Baptist Church, the oldest African American church currently in use in Georgia. Springfield's first daughter church, Thankful Baptist, was established in 1840, and Central Baptist was established in 1852. Springfield's next pastor was Kelly Lowe. In 1859, he established



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*The bell tower of the St. John building was damaged and removed from Springfield Baptist Church.*

*Drawing by Glenda Gunn*

the first African American Sunday School in the nation. The congregation purchased his freedom in 1860, paying him an annual salary of \$1,000. When he died in 1861, over 1,200 persons marched in his funeral procession.

Springfield Baptist Church, under the leadership of Pastor Henry Watts, hosted a political convention with 38 delegates from 11 Georgia counties in 1866. General Davis Tillson, head of the Freedman's Bureau, attended the convention. The delegates requested inclusion on juries and the right to vote in a petition to the Georgia legislature. At the conclusion of the meeting, the delegates established the Georgia Equal Rights Association, the forerunner to the Republican Party of Georgia.

In 1867, Pastor Watts and William J. White organized the Augusta Baptist Institute in the basement of Springfield Baptist Church. Within one year, enrollment grew from 36 to 60 students. By 1879, with enrollment steadily increasing, the school moved to Atlanta, changing the name to the Atlanta Baptist Institute. Under the presidency of John Hope, a native Augustan, the school became Morehouse College in 1913. Every five years, Morehouse College, the only African American all-male college in the nation, celebrates its beginning at convocation services in Springfield Baptist Church.

Another advancement with ties to Springfield was the 1870 act that created a system of public schools in Augusta. This law required "separate, but equal" schools for white and black children. By 1879, William J. White and the Georgia Education Association opened Ware High School on the same block as Springfield Baptist Church. Ware was the first public high school for African Americans

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in Richmond County. The school's principal was Richard R. Wright, Sr., who later became the president of Georgia State Industrial College (presently Savannah State University). The Richmond County Board of Education closed Ware High School in 1897, while providing funds to white schools. The African American community rallied to contest this decision, and took their case to the U.S. Supreme Court, who found no "desire or purpose to discriminate" on the part of the Board. This decision would affect schools until 1954, when segregation finally ended.

George Dwelle became the pastor of Springfield in 1885. Under his leadership, the brick church was constructed by 1897. Reverend James Nabrit succeeded Dwelle, serving Springfield from 1912 to 1921. Pastor Emmett T. Martin, a native Augustan, began his Springfield ministry in 1971.

Reverend Martin attracted the interest of preservationists and historians in his stewardship of Springfield Baptist Church. When he began his ministry, he inherited roof problems in both buildings, stained glass windows requiring restoration,



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Rev. Emmett T. Martin

and a community that had moved away from downtown Augusta. While Martin and church trustees responded to these structural challenges, they also assumed a leadership role in the 1976 national bicentennial. Members diligently worked on assembling historic photos and exhibits, and held



Isaac Johnson is the treasurer of Springfield Baptist Church, secretary of the Springfield Village Park Foundation, and vice chair of the Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

special services and a candle-light procession. Historic Augusta secured a National Trust for Historic Preservation grant for an architectural study of the St. John building. The study was completed by Atlanta architect Norman Askins, who noted the building's architectural significance. Askins' report stated that Springfield Baptist Church "would be an obvious choice as a center for interpretation of black history and culture in Augusta."



Springfield Baptist Church and the Tower of Aspiration represent Augusta's revitalization vision, promoting heritage tourism, historic resources, and downtown development. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque



The St. John building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on June 17, 1982. On July 5, 1990, the 1897 brick building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The 1801 St. John building was turned to face Reynolds Street when the 1897 brick church was completed. A walkway inside connects both churches today. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

What lies ahead for this historic church? When the park is completed, the Springfield Village Park Foundation envisions yet another achievement, as the partnership has applied for designation of the historic buildings and the park site as a National Historic Landmark. As visitors come to the park, view the *Tower of Aspiration* and Springfield's historic churches, this African American congregation and the villagers that once lived there simply say, "We were here. We are here. We belong."

## GEORGIA HERITAGE GRANT PROGRAM

Cherie Bennett, Grants Coordinator  
Historic Preservation Division

Since 1994, the Georgia Heritage Program has offered matching funds on a statewide competitive basis to local governments and nonprofit organizations for the preservation of Georgia Register and National Register-eligible historic properties. Each year, approximately 15-20 projects are selected for funding, based on need, degree of threat to the resource, project planning, and community benefit from the resource. Geographical and demographical distribution and variety of resource types and uses are also considered in award decisions.

During the last funding cycle for State Fiscal Year 2002, two African American historic resources received grant assistance from the Georgia Heritage program. The Sapelo Island Cultural and Revitalization Society (SICARS) received \$8,100 to produce a rehabilitation plan for the Farmers' Alliance Hall. In Forsyth, Monroe County, the Hubbard School received \$9,000 to produce a rehabilitation plan for the Women's Dormitory building on the historic campus of the State Teacher's and Agricultural College, the official state school for the instruction of African American teachers during the 1930s.

For State Fiscal Year 2003, a total of \$307,000 is available for the Georgia Heritage Program to provide matching grants for development and predevelopment projects. Development projects include stabilization, preservation, rehabilitation and restoration activities. Predevelopment projects include plans and specifications, feasibility studies, historic structure reports, or other building-specific or site-specific preservation plans. The maximum grant amount that can be requested is \$40,000 for development projects, and \$20,000 for predevelopment projects.

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## GEORGIA HERITAGE GRANT PROGRAM

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For project eligibility, applicants must be a local government or private secular nonprofit organization and have documentation of matching funds (equal to at least 40% of the project cost). The property must be listed in or eligible for listing in the Georgia Register of Historic Places, and be listed prior to reimbursement of funds. All grant assisted work must meet the applicable Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for Archaeology and Historic Preservation."

Grant applications for SFY 2003 are currently available with a submission deadline of July 8, 2002. Grant awards will be announced September 3, 2002. For further information about the grant process or to be added to the mailing list for an application, contact: Cherie Bennett, Grants Coordinator, Historic Preservation Division, Department of Natural Resources at 404/651-5181.



*The Farmers' Alliance Hall on Sapelo Island was built by the Colored Farmers' National Alliance and Cooperative Union in 1929. The building was used historically as a brokering agency for farmers and meeting place for fraternal organizations. The beautiful landscape surrounding the building provides an outdoor setting for annual "Cultural Day" activities. It is a contributing building in the Hog Hammock Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1996. HPD File Photo*

### HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION ANNUAL PRESERVATION AWARDS

On May 30<sup>th</sup>, as a final celebration during Historic Preservation Month, the Historic Preservation Division (HPD) presented its sixth annual Preservation Achievement Awards. Each year, staff nominate preservationists who have contributed to HPD's mission, vision, and goals. Seven recipients or organizations were honored at the annual awards ceremony. C. Donald Beall, treasurer of the Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network (GAAHPN), was one of this year's award recipients.

Since 1996, Donald Beall has demonstrated commitment to a number of preservation initiatives in Georgia. When he retired from a career in mental health and education, he returned to Georgia, his birthplace, and began a second career in volunteerism. Settling in Columbus, Beall became involved in the community, and chaired

a conference on mentoring in cooperation with Big Brothers, the Urban League, and Columbus State University. Each year, Beall mentors students at Stewart-Quitman Middle and High Schools, preparing them for annual Georgia/National History Day competition.

Beall became interested in preserving African American history in Stewart County while taking frequent trips to his native Lumpkin. He is president of the Stewart County African American Heritage Society and is a member of the Board of Directors of Westville Historic Handicrafts, Inc.

During Black History Month, Beall secured a grant from the Chattahoochee Valley Community Foundation to sponsor a rag doll maker exhibit.

Beall assisted the Green Grove Missionary Baptist Church and School in landscaping the grounds surrounding church buildings and the adjoining cemetery. He is currently chairing the strategic planning committee for GAAHPN.

Donald Beall has consistently advocated African American preservation in Columbus, Lumpkin, and various statewide and regional initiatives. He is a devoted member of GAAHPN and volunteers for other preservation programs, including the Georgia Association of Museums and Galleries and the Georgia Humanities Council.



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*Donald Beall, GAAHPN treasurer, receives his award from Ray Luce, director, Historic Preservation Division.*

### CAIRO REMEMBERS JACKIE ROBINSON

Only a chimney remains at the birthplace of Jack Roosevelt Robinson, born in Cairo, Grady County, on January 31, 1919. He is known to the sports world as Jackie Robinson, the African American athlete who integrated Major League baseball in 1947. This native Georgian is not forgotten by the Jackie Robinson Cairo Memorial Institute. In 1997, Dr. Linda Walden founded this



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*Reverend Lessye Charlow, a cousin of Jackie Robinson, recalls his early interest in baseball, while he played with yarn balls as a toddler. Charlow presented her remarks at the dedication of the Jackie Robinson Georgia Historical Marker in Cairo.*

*Photo by Jack Hadley*

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nonprofit corporation to construct a museum near the chimney that once was his birth home, creating a site to display Jackie Robinson memorabilia, while providing a facility for seminars and community cultural events in rural Grady County. Dr. Walden was instrumental in renaming Georgia state highway 93 the "Jackie Robinson Memorial Highway," a first step to commemorate this site.

The nonprofit established a Youth Leadership Institute, headed by Chief Judge W. Louis Sands, Middle District of Georgia. The Institute promotes academic excellence and ensures the development of a cadre of youth ambassadors from southwest Georgia. Each year, the Jackie Robinson Cairo Memorial Institute sponsors a banquet to establish a scholarship fund for these future leaders. The 2002 banquet preceded the installation of a Georgia Historical Marker near the chimney and future museum site to honor Jackie Robinson. Representative Sanford D. Bishop, Jr. (Congressional District 2) introduced the keynote speaker, Max Cleland, U.S. Senator from Georgia.

"Ultimately we are all judged by the impact we have on others," Senator Cleland said, as he recaptured Jackie Robinson's sports and civil rights accomplishments. "Conceive, believe, achieve," were themes Senator Cleland explored with the youth leaders, as he challenged them to "prepare yourself for greatness, and believe in yourself and your goals."



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Dr. Linda Walden, a cousin of Jackie Robinson, concluded the banquet with a slide presentation highlighting her recollections of Jackie Robinson. When Walden received her M.D. from Mercer University in 1992, she decided to establish the Cairo Family Medical Center. Dr. Walden, who attended Mercer because of the university's commitment to serving rural communities, became the first

African American female physician in Grady County history, and the first African American doctor to establish a practice there in over 50 years. Through her family medical practice, Dr. Walden witnessed the alarming increase in dropout rates in Cairo, and focused on this project as the impetus to improve the self-esteem and educational aspirations of local African American youth.

Jackie Robinson was the fifth child of Mallie McGriff Robinson. When Jackie was 18 months old, she moved the family to Pasadena, California, in search of better employment opportunities. While working as a domestic servant, Mallie bought a house for her children, and instilled a spiritual foundation and self-discipline that impacted Jackie's values immensely. Jackie Robinson often recollected Mallie's influence, as he lettered in football, track, basketball, and baseball at UCLA. During World War II, the U.S. Army drafted Robinson. Though he was initially rejected as a candidate for an officer, he was encouraged to pursue a leadership position by a fellow draftee, Joe Louis, the boxing champion of the world. Robinson eventually earned his commission, and, when the war ended, he began his professional baseball career as the



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*Dr. Linda Walden receives a flag from U.S. Senator Max Cleland in honor of Jackie Robinson at the 2002 annual scholarship banquet.*

shortstop for the Negro League's Kansas City Monarchs. In 1946, Robinson married his college sweetheart, Rachel Isum.

Branch Rickey, Jr., president of the Brooklyn Dodgers, achieved baseball notoriety in the 1930s, when he began the farm club system while a general manager with the St. Louis Cardinals. In 1945, Rickey's club, like most at the end of the war, lacked future talent. He began to seek a potential star, perhaps from the Negro Leagues, who would present the right candidate to participate in a "noble experiment," integration of Major League baseball. He found that candidate in Jackie Robinson, signing him with the Dodgers' farm club, the Montreal Royals. Shortly after his marriage, Jackie and Rachel Robinson began the "noble experiment" in Jim Crow Florida, where they stayed in an African American home and ate meals in black restaurants, while the rest of the team resided at oceanfront quarters in Daytona Beach. In spite of these challenges, Jackie, armed with the support of Rachel and Mallie, became the first Royal to win the league's batting crown, with an average of .349. This accomplishment set the stage for Robinson's next challenge, Major League baseball.

There is not a baseball fan in the world that fails to recognize the impact Jackie Robinson made when he entered the National League as an infielder for the Brooklyn Dodgers, breaking Major League baseball's "color barrier." In 1947, he was named "Rookie of the Year," in spite of hate letters, resentment by fans and players, and racial segregation. By 1949, Jackie Robinson was the National League Most Valuable Player. In his ten-year career with the Dodgers, Robinson's team won six pennants, winning the World Series in 1955. Jackie Robinson was elected to baseball's Major League Hall of Fame in 1962.

Throughout his career, Jackie Robinson recognized "baseball was just a part of my life," and became a staunch advocate for civil rights. When his baseball days ended, Robinson became a spokesman for the NAACP, served as special assistant to New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller, and established Harlem's Freedom National Bank. To ensure African American participation in the affordable housing industry, he founded the Jackie Robinson Construction Corporation. When he died in 1972, Rachel Robinson established the Jackie Robinson Foundation in New York to provide scholarships for minority students to attend college. A U.S. postage stamp was issued in his name, and a U.S. gold and silver coin bears his image. His number "42" was retired from professional baseball, and his accomplishments led to participation in all major sports for African American athletes. Major League baseball, sports fans, and the Jackie Robinson Cairo Memorial Institute, will always remember this native son of Georgia.



*Jackie Robinson played for the Brooklyn Dodgers.*



*After he retired from baseball, Jackie Robinson was a successful business and Civil Rights leader.*

## TOURING THE HEART AND SOUL OF GEORGIA

The Georgia Cities Foundation (GCF) hosted the second annual "Heart and Soul" bus tour in April 2002. Community leaders and preservationists visited 12 cities to view downtown development projects around the state. The Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) sponsored the event. Downtown revitalization

projects receive assistance through the GCF revolving loan program. Mike Starr, president of the GCF Board of Directors, said "these cities exemplify projects supported by the foundation in Georgia communities." Two cities on

businesses were located on the *Hot Corner*. Today, only a few remain. Homer Wilson, owner of Wilson's Styling Shop on Hull Street, greeted tour participants. Angelish Wilson, Homer's sister, operates Wilson's Soul Food restaurant next door. Each spring, Homer Wilson organizes a "*Hot Corner Festival*" to commemorate African American businesses, while promoting downtown development in Athens.



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the "Heart and Soul" bus tour, Athens and Douglas, featured African American achievement in their downtown development projects.

When the bus arrived in Athens, participants toured the 1910 Morton Building, built by African American contractor Monroe B. "Pink" Morton. Morton built this historic structure to provide office space for African American doctors and businessmen during segregation. The Morton Theatre, located on the second level of the Morton Building, provided entertainment for the African American community. Calvin Smith and Lynn Battle greeted tour participants, recalling the era when the Morton Theatre was initially a vaudeville house, hosting Butterbeans and Susie, and other *Chitlin Circuit* performers. In later years, the theatre was a movie house. The Athens-Clarke Unified Government and the Morton Theatre Corporation formulated a management agreement in 1993, ensuring a partnership that provides ownership and staff support from the government, and programming from the corporation. Today, the historic Morton Theatre is the premier entertainment venue in downtown Athens.



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*Athens welcomed "Heart and Soul" bus tour participants at several downtown historic buildings. Pictured from left to right: Mayor Doc Eldridge, Art Jackson, Downtown Development Authority, Anita Jackson, Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), Linda Wilkes, Georgia Cities Foundation, Kim Carter, DCA, and Paul Radford, Georgia Municipal Association. Linda Wilkes is a member of the Steering Committee for the Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network.*

Another bus tour stop was Douglas, the county seat for Coffee County in southeast Georgia. Following outdoor activities in the town square and a walking tour, participants were welcomed at the Heritage Station Museum, a restored train depot. Inside the museum were a number of exhibits depicting Douglas natives and their contributions to local history. Docents provided personal anecdotes to enhance the museum collections. One exhibit featured a local African American baseball hero in this Georgia city, Joe Louis Reliford, Sr., and participants learned about his incredible athletic accomplishments.

Joe Louis Reliford was born in 1939 six miles east of Fitzgerald in Ben Hill County to a family of sharecroppers. Joe was the ninth of ten children, and growing up poor, his father and siblings worked long days in the fields. Eventually the family moved to Fitzgerald while Joe was a boy. When his father died, older siblings worked on the farm owned by his maternal grandparents while Joe helped his mother with household chores and the family garden.

Baseball was a favorite pastime in Fitzgerald, and there were both African American and white professional baseball teams that were farm clubs for the Negro League and the Kansas City Athletics. Joe loved the sport, and developed great "slide" and running techniques while playing with his friends, where they would create baseball fields on neighborhood streets. The boys did not have equipment, and often would wait for home run balls from the



*The Morton Building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on October 22, 1979. In 1980, the Historic Preservation Division assisted the rehabilitation of the theatre with a \$27,432 Historic Preservation Fund grant. By 1987, the Athens sales tax referendum ensured full restoration of the theatre.*  
*Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque*

The Morton Theatre is located on Washington Street in downtown Athens. It is on one side of the famous *Hot Corner*, adjacent to Hull Street, the historic business district for African Americans. From the 1940s to the 1970s, over 50 African American



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**Photograph Not Available**

*Joe Reliford, Sr. greets bus tour participants at the Douglas Heritage Station Museum.*

## TOURING THE HEART AND SOUL OF GEORGIA



Joe Reliford holds a baseball card depicting him pitching during practice. Reliford is wearing his cap and team jacket for the Fitzgerald Pioneers. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

park where white teams played. Occasionally, Joe would go to the African American Fitzgerald Lucky Stars games. When the white team, the Fitzgerald Pioneers played on the same field, African Americans were not allowed in the park, so Joe would watch their games from a tree in a neighbor's yard.

When Joe Reliford was ten, he decided to approach Ace Adams, manager of the Pioneers, and inquire about the job of batboy for the team. To his surprise, Adams agreed, and offered Reliford \$48.00 every two weeks for his services. Joe had to travel with the team, and when Adams requested permission from Joe's mother, he assured her that the boy would be safe in spite of Jim Crow practices of the day. The white ball players welcomed Joe to the team, and taught him fielding and batting skills after practice.

In 1952, the Pioneers traveled to Statesboro for the Elks night game. The team was losing badly, and when Joe ran out on the field to pick up bats, the capacity crowd began to chant "put in the batboy." Finally, the manager, Charlie Ridgeway, feeling the team was too far behind to possibly win, instructed Joe Reliford to pinch hit for one of the players. Joe grounded out to third to end the inning, but Ridgeway told him to play right field. During the next inning, Joe Reliford put out a runner at third base and made an incredible leaping catch to avoid a home run by the opposing team's best hitter. After the game, the fans ran on the field to congratulate the 12 year old, while stuffing money in Joe's back pocket.

Joe Reliford became the youngest player ever to appear in a professional baseball game. During the ensuing weeks, his story appeared in newspapers throughout the state. Joe Reliford continued athletic pursuits in high school, lettering in four sports. While attending Florida A&M University, he suffered a career-ending football



(Fair Use/Educational)

The inscription at the National Baseball Hall of Fame Minor League exhibit reads: *The Youngest Professional Player in Baseball History, Joe Louis Reliford, Age 12.*

injury, and moved to Douglas, where he started a new career as a deputy sheriff for 18 years until he retired. Every baseball season, Reliford would receive calls from sports editors around the country. His story appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, the *Guinness Book of World Records*, and *Ripley's Believe It or Not*. In 1991, Joe Reliford was contacted by the National Baseball Hall of Fame Museum, Inc. When you visit Cooperstown, Joe Reliford's exploits are featured in the minor league exhibit. This Douglas resident will always be remembered as the young player who went from batboy to the Hall of Fame.

### ROSENWALD SCHOOLS

The National Trust for Historic Preservation released its list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places on June 6, 2002. Among the 11 are Rosenwald Schools: rural schools built for African Americans in the south during the Jim Crow era. There once were over 5,000 schools in the south, and 242 were built in Georgia. GAAHPN is compiling an inventory of schools in Georgia. If you have any information about these schools, contact Jeanne Cyriaque.

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## ABOUT GAAHPN



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**T**he Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network (GAAHPN) was established in January 1989. It is composed of representatives from neighborhood organizations and preservation groups. GAAHPN was formed in response to a growing interest in preserving the cultural and ethnic diversity of Georgia's African American heritage. This interest has translated into a number of efforts which emphasize greater recognition of African American culture and contributions to Georgia's history. The Network meets regularly to plan and implement ways to develop programs that will foster heritage education, neighborhood revitalization, and support community and economic development.

The Network is an informal group of over 1,125 people who have an interest in preservation. Members are briefed on the status of current and planned projects and are encouraged to offer ideas, comments and suggestions. The meetings provide an opportunity to share and learn from the preservation experience of others and to receive technical information through workshops. Members receive a newsletter, *Reflections*, produced by the Network. Membership in the Network is free and open to all.

## Reflections

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