

Reflections



Georgia African American
Historic Preservation Network



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

Volume VI, No. 4

April 2007

COMMEMORATING SUMMER HILL: AN AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN CARTERSVILLE

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Summer Hill is a place filled with significant memories for the Cartersville African American community. It was a place where African Americans, regardless of their economic circumstances, lived in a separate community during segregation. Slab Stadium once existed in Summer Hill, where an African American entrepreneur hosted teams from the Negro baseball league. Summer Hill was home to Cartersville's first black doctor, barbershops, and businesses. It was once home to Cartersville's first gymnasium where African Americans from Bartow and surrounding counties played basketball and competed for state championships. Summer Hill was once home to African American churches of all denominations, an old Rosenwald School, shop, and a football field that the community built on the side of the hill.

Today, when citizens visit the Summer Hill Educational & Recreational Complex on Aubrey Street near the site of the old gymnasium and Rosenwald School, there is an impressive bronze statue of Professor J.S. Morgan and his wife, Beatrice.



This bronze statue of Professor James S. and Mrs. Beatrice Morgan was designed by sculptor Julia Knight. The sculpture is located in the Summer Hill community in Cartersville. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

James S. Morgan was a teacher and later principal of the Summer Hill School from 1925-1962. The statue was unveiled on May 26, 2006. The artist was Julia Knight. Hundreds of people attended the unveiling that included two former Georgia governors and was hosted by Supreme Court Justice Robert Benham, who once attended the Summer Hill School in Cartersville. At the base of the statue is the inscription "He Who Thinks Can Conquer" and Professor Morgan is pointing, as if illustrating a lesson or pep talk that he often gave during the weekly assembly of students and teachers at Summer Hill. Inside the complex is a permanent exhibit that tells the story of the community that the Morgan family served in this historic African American neighborhood in Cartersville. The Summer Hill Museum includes memorabilia, family heirlooms and donated artifacts along with a wall-mounted exhibit of historical photos that depict the Summer Hill community from the late 19th century to 1970. The Summer Hill Foundation is the steward for this collection today.

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Jeanne Cyriaque, continued from page 1



Alumni from the last graduating class are seated in front of the permanent exhibit at the Summer Hill Museum. The exhibit is located in the recreational complex. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

In 2003, the Summer Hill community began a project to document the story of this community. Students and faculty from the Department of History and Philosophy at Kennesaw State University (KSU) contacted families, alumni and former teachers from Summer Hill, and conducted an extensive oral history project to collectively tell the story of the community. By May 2005 oral histories were completed for 41 people who were identified as residents in the Summer Hill census tract or were recommended by the Etowah Area Consolidated Housing Authority. Students in the *Documentation and Interpretation* class conducted 14 audio interviews. Melissa Massey, project researcher, conducted subsequent interviews with contacts who were identified in the initial interviews. Dr. LeeAnn Lands of KSU was the project coordinator. She edited the interviews and partnered with former and current residents of the Summer Hill community, the Etowah Area Consolidated Housing Authority and the Summer Hill Foundation in this initiative. The results of these oral histories were captured online in the Summer Hill Project at www.summer-hill.org with the support of the Anheuser-Busch and Summer Hill Foundation(s).



The statue of the Morgans is placed above bricks that were donated by former students and members of the Summer Hill community.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

Nancy Beasley was one of the persons the KSU students interviewed. She is a Cartersville native, and once taught at the Summer Hill School. Mrs. Beasley has fond memories of the community called Summer Hill where she grew up with one sister. Her father once worked at the local mine and later for city hall. Mrs. Beasley attended Fort Valley State University and worked in the summers at the Guarantee Life Insurance Company in Atlanta writing policies. When she graduated, her first teaching assignment was in an elementary school where she taught grades one through eight. The following year, she joined the faculty at Summer Hill, where she was the English teacher and part-time librarian.

When asked about her fondest memories at Summer Hill, Mrs. Beasley praised Mrs. Morgan, who was an accomplished pianist. "We learned a lot; we had excellent teachers and ... just great high school courses. But the closeness of Summer Hill was of such that you knew all the children, you knew their parents." Mrs. Beasley vividly recalled how African American students could not attend Cartersville High School, so the community kept petitioning each year for the additions of higher grades. In 1951, the year when she began teaching, they had 12 grades. Summer Hill also had a contractual agreement with Bartow County that bussed students from the rural areas to attend this city high school for African Americans.



One of the panels in the permanent exhibit depicts images from the Summer Hill Rosenwald School. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

Mrs. Beasley remembered the exact location of the Summer Hill Rosenwald School. "It was a nice building. It had running water and it had toilets. Professor Morgan continued to build on to the school and the building behind the school was the shop. So he taught shop, industrial arts as they called it at the time." During her later tenure as an English teacher, she gave lots of homework assignments and sponsored the drama club. She taught at Summer Hill for seventeen years until public school integration.

Leonard Moore remembered how the school term fluctuated during the harvest of cotton. Sometimes the Summer Hill School closed because many of the students had to assist their parents in picking cotton. "I loved Summer Hill. I really did. I went to the old frame building ... and I always wanted to go there. We built our own gymnasium, believe it or not. We cherished that gym. All the teams from the surrounding counties... would come here for the tournament. I was on the football team." Leonard Moore

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regretted the loss of the old Rosenwald School. "Our gym got burned down, the gym that we built. It got burned down, but the school stayed there. They decided, I guess, to tear the old school down, which I hate ... They should have let that thing stay there, because that was our second home. And that was really our heritage, that school building. It was an old frame building, but it meant something to us."

Moore recalled the used books that the Summer Hill students received when the white schools got new ones. His wife, Celesta, credits her college training at Atlanta University with teaching her how to improvise and make her own teaching materials. So, when she later taught special education at Summer Hill, she was prepared to deal with the challenge of teaching with inadequate school supplies.

Georgia Supreme Court Justice Robert Benham, his two brothers and both parents attended Summer Hill High School. "The teachers lived in our community and we interacted with them, not only in school but in social, civic and religious activities throughout my childhood," said Benham. "Cartersville's Summer Hill School was the only black school at the time in north Georgia that even had an auditorium. We were the only school that had a gymnasium... next to the school... All of the cultural, civic, social, religious activities took place in the Summer Hill School. We had a band because the parents got together and we had to buy our own instruments and the parents made the uniforms."



Justice Robert Benham of the Georgia Supreme Court was the master of ceremony at the unveiling of the statue of Professor and Mrs. Morgan.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque



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Photograph Not Available

This photo of the Summer Hill Rosenwald School shop appeared in the 1927 Georgia Department of Education annual report.

Benham commented on other aspects of the Summer Hill School that differed from Cartersville's white schools: "...the girls were required to take a course in home economics. The guys were required to take a course in shop. It was called industrial art. That was only required in the black schools..." Both Robert Benham and Leonard Moore remembered that the Summer Hill School was located next to the city dump. "Every day the trash trucks would come right by the school and next to the school dump all of the trash from the city and then in the evening they would set it afire and the odor would waft all through the black community," said Benham. Moore recollected that the location of the city dump did not change until a student was burned accidentally while playing near the trash.

The oral history interviews also brought out other aspects of community life in Summer Hill. A number of African American businesses once existed in the downtown area until 1933, when John Willie Clark was hung in downtown Cartersville by an angry white mob for allegedly murdering the police chief. After this incident, African American businesses began to move to Summer Hill. Paul Thomas, an African American businessman, owned residential property and operated Slab Stadium, Cartersville's black baseball facility. Churches "were the glue" for the community, said Justice Benham. They played an extremely important role during the Civil Rights movement, and doubled as schools. The Brotherhood Lodge provided burials for community members. New Frontiers was a men's organization that was started in the 1960s to represent the African American community's interest in issues like school integration and city government.

The Summer Hill Heritage Committee hosted a two-part celebration when the oral history project was unveiled at a community event. "Summer Hill: A Story of Community" is the documentary that was produced by David Hughes Duke. SunTrust Banks, Inc. sponsored the documentary. Other corporate partners included Anheuser-Busch, Aflac, Joe Harris Jr. and the Northwest Georgia Community Foundation. These partners and the Summer Hill Foundation sponsored the special screening of the documentary and a panel discussion that featured some of the former teachers: Nancy Beasley, Celesta Moore and Susie Wheeler, students like Justice Robert Benham and Leonard Moore, and the children of Professor and Mrs. J.S. Morgan. Students from Bartow County viewed the film screening. The documentary is available for \$24.95 and can be ordered online in VHS/DVD formats at the Summer Hill project website: www.summer-hill.org.



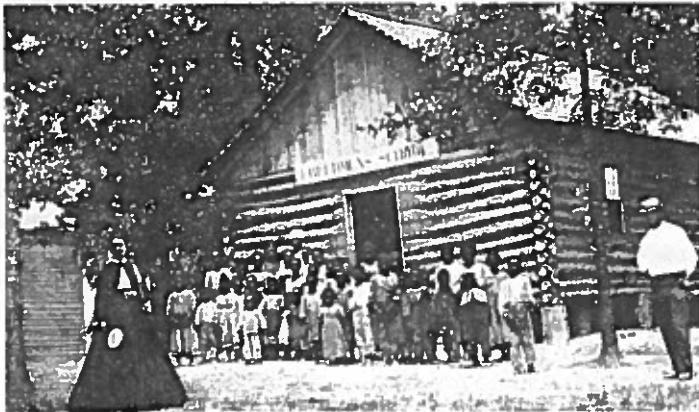
Teacher resource kits were created as part of the Summer Hill Project for Bartow County students to experience Summer Hill in the classroom and on-site. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

CAN I GET A WITNESS? A CALL AND RESPONSE TO CHANGE IN THE RURAL SOUTH

*Hermine Glass-Avery, African American Programs Assistant
Historic Preservation Division*

Call and response is an idiom of African and African American religious and cultural traditions. It is a democratic communication pattern where an orator or musician exchanges phrases with one another, as if in conversation. While call and response is found in many traditions, it fulfills the universal human need to be affirmed by another and it is quite apparent in many southern black churches. African American churches served dual functions as places of spiritual respite as well as sites of civic action. In fact, churches served as places where an individual's desire for social change could be vocalized and put into action. Nowhere was this idea of ordinary citizens effecting social change more evident than in the struggle for education for black children.

Long before emancipation, enslaved people always aspired to educate themselves and their children. Whether through the assistance of abolitionists or stealing away to a literate slave's quarters, education was a cause for which many risked life and limb to acquire. In the post-bellum era, various organizations such as missionary aid societies and fraternal lodges offered their meeting places as makeshift schools, pointing to their deep commitment to education, the drive of the teachers, and the resourcefulness of the community. Schoolhouse construction was a community event with numerous families responding to the call for education for black children. The manifestation of black schoolhouses on the southern landscape was a loud call for social change – calls that



This photo of a Freedmen's School in rural North Carolina appeared in the University of California, Davis History Project Collection, and is cited in the U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C. (Public Domain)

rang out from former slaves and their descendants, farm owners and sharecroppers, housekeepers and domestics, ministers, parishioners, and even the children themselves.

Threats by whites and legal sanctions that supported racial discrimination continued well into the 20th century. However, neither Jim Crow nor white supremacist tactics could dim the desire for education. Black schoolhouses were often beacons of hope for many communities despite their dismal conditions. Responding to the idea that better schoolhouses would provide optimal learning conditions, Booker T. Washington, principal of Tuskegee Industrial and Normal Institute (presently Tuskegee University), and premier

champion of black self-help, developed a partnership with Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck and Company in 1912. Together, this educator and philanthropist developed a plan to address the state of African American education in the rural South. As a result of this partnership over five thousand schools were built in rural towns from Maryland to Texas.

These schools that came to be called "Rosenwald Schools," are symbolic of the desire for change in the rural south and are shining examples of what "education could do for you," states 90-year old Dr. Susie Wheeler. In 1924, she attended the Noble Hill School, one of two Rosenwald Schools in Bartow County, Georgia. Located in the Cassville community, Noble Hill was a wooden two-room structure incorporating a rectangular floor plan that featured a gabled front façade with a projecting industrial room flanked on both sides with a vestibule and a cloakroom. Typical of the two-room design plans of the Rosenwald Fund's *Community School Plans* there were standard tall battery windows located on the east and west sides of the building to take advantage of natural light and cross-ventilation.



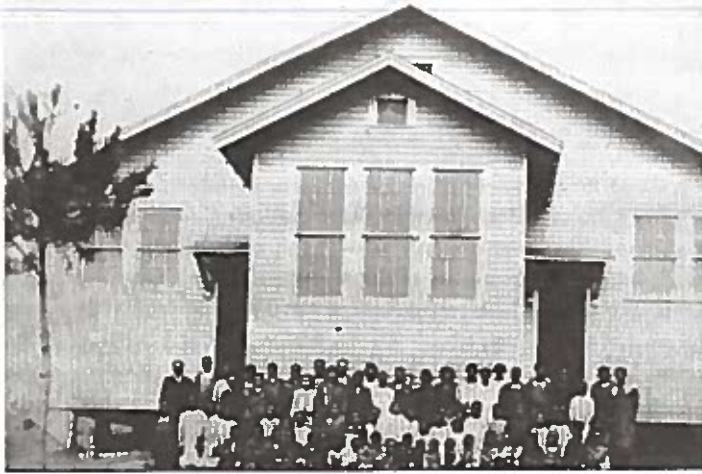
*Dr. Susie Wheeler
Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque*

Dr. Susie Weems Wheeler is a witness to the changes that have occurred in small rural towns and she can attest to the influence that early black and white civic leaders had in calling for measures to address the problems of black education. Her life is testimony to what could become of black children when they were provided opportunities in the best educational environment. She excelled far beyond her dreams to become a schoolteacher when she was selected to become a Jeanes Supervisor in 1946, a position that afforded her an opportunity to impact the lives of thousands of black children. The spry nonagenarian recalled with clarity her experiences attending Noble Hill:

"Noble Hill was my school. I started there in the first grade. We had a beautiful time and we enjoyed one another. I must have been six years old, no five at the beginning. Our parents got us to school even when the weather was not so well. I was inspired to be a teacher from my first grade teacher. She was Mrs. Williams. She was the first grade teacher and her husband was in the other

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grades at that time. And I would say, 'I'd like to be like her.' And on from there my mother encouraged me to become a teacher...because I would tell her that I would like to become one. And I think that's how I became aware of what education would do for you and what you had to do to get education.



Susie Wheeler was in this first class of the Noble Hill School when it opened in 1924. Photo courtesy of the Noble Hill-Wheeler Memorial Center

We all came to Cartersville High, (*Summer Hill*) because at that time, to go to a high school we had to leave the rural school to go to a city school. And of course, the city schools didn't have but nine grades. But we came. You know, I always would remember the fact that I was a little rural girl and they thought rural girls could not do as well as city girls. So that meant I worked harder to become a student respected for what I knew. They made me feel different. So, I tried harder to succeed and did succeed. Of course, I was the salutatorian when I left that school in ninth grade.

I did continue school, but I had to go away to Griffin, Georgia...the Cabin Creek High School was where I went to finish those other three years. It was a boarding school, and I was referred to that school by the principal at Cartersville High (*Summer Hill*) and his wife. I believe she was formerly from Griffin and she knew about this Cabin Creek School that was sponsored by the Baptist church. My parents paid for part of it. And I worked to pay a part for myself.

I was trying to prepare myself to become a teacher. And yet, preparation was very expensive. Whenever I came back home, whatever my mom was involved in I got involved in, too. Washing the clothing for white families or ironing the clothes for white families, or doing little jobs of that nature. I finished high school in '35 and I taught six months in Calhoun, Georgia. And that was because the teacher ...got ill and couldn't finish the year. So, I finished out her year as my first experience. Evidently, it was known to the community that there was a need and someone must have recommended me, even though I had just finished high school. At that time, when you finished high school you could teach. I moved there for a five-day period and came home on the weekend. I think it was twenty-five dollars a month I was paid when I started on a regular basis.

During the time between when I graduated and was offered this job, we had to do the county examination to pass for a teacher after you finished high school. So, I did that after I finished this assignment. That's when I became a full-time teacher...at Cassville Elementary... the first, second, and third grade. I was there nine years. But, during the nine years, a lot of changes took place in terms of my own education...because I saw myself moving towards a degree. Of course, that meant summer school. When I left Adairsville, I had gotten married...and my husband had gone to the service and I went back to school at Fort Valley State. I had been going to summer school at Atlanta University and I went on back to Fort Valley with the hope that I could finish my college education. And I did. (*She graduated from Fort Valley State University in 1945.*)

In 1946, in fact, I was approached to become a training person for Jeanes supervision at Fort Valley State. I had to take the courses for Jeanes supervision to become one. It would take me elsewhere, not to Bartow County. But at that time, we had a white person who served in the state as a guide for black educators and he was the one who said to me, 'Go ahead and take the course and I will try to get you a school – a teaching position in Cartersville. And then next summer you can finish and I'll see if I can get you into supervision in the northern part of the state...because you don't want to go to the southern part.' And that's how I got into supervision. I taught one year after finishing college at Summer Hill High School. I taught the sixth grade. When it was decided that Bartow County would become a part of the Jeanes supervision program...Cartersville was selected as a part of this Jeanes supervision for this northern section of Georgia.

I looked at what Jeanes Supervisors were supposed to do. And one thing was to improve curriculum. So, naturally I worked in that area. Not only that, I had this position that was sort of like a black superintendent. And I had to help get black teachers for the rural schools and I had to help try to improve the schools. I ended up being kind of like the assistant superintendent. One thing, at that time, we were not getting supplies, teaching supplies. There was this limitation for the rural schools because they didn't have



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This photo of Dr. Susie Wheeler appeared in *Jeanes Supervision in Georgia Schools*.

supplies to work with. At that time, it seems that what we got was old used materials. So, one of my problems was trying to find out how to get new materials. First, I dealt with the state to find out what were the possibilities. Once I got the possibilities, I followed through. And some sources did respond and some did not respond. Then the county began to do better with allowing certain amounts

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Hermina Glass-Avery, continued from page 5

of funds for purchasing supplies because they knew I was looking at the purchases of the white schools. So they began to make the new materials available for our schools as well.

As Jeanes Supervisors, as we grew we organized our group so we could share with one another what was going on or what was not going on. That's how we kept in touch. We also had state helpers at that time. Most of them had less material than we had, and they didn't have the support of the superintendents like they wanted or the Board of Education. They were lacking in opportunities to do what they felt they needed to do. Anything that I was told or that I began to know, I would share with my teachers.



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In the winter of 1949, a vocational program was held at the Summer Hill School. The group in this photo who attended the program included from left to right: Principal J.S. Morgan, teacher John Anderson, guest speaker Dr. Cornelius V. Troup, Jeanes Supervisor Susie W. Wheeler, teacher Randolph Wesley and Mrs. Beatrice Morgan. Photo courtesy of the Noble Hill-Wheeler Memorial Foundation.

As time went on, things changed and opportunities changed. Our superintendent, he was very supportive. Of course, you know superintendents were still white. I tried not to be too selfish – that is, to have all the things happen to black schools with nothing in particular happening in the white schools. And they began to see what was happening in the black schools and it made them interested in calling me, getting in touch, finding out how to do some of the other things. Quality was one thing, but we had improved our black schools to the point that there was a question among the white schools as to why were getting ahead so much faster. And that was the thing that, I think, encouraged integration. And our superintendent was for this. And by the way, at that time if you were integrating, you would be set up for more funding from sources. And of course, that made my superintendent ready to do that. It was through this superintendent that we got things done. He believed that integration was something we should strive for.”



The Noble Hill Rosenwald School was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on July 2, 1987. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

In 1955, the Bartow County Board of Education consolidated the Noble Hill School along with several others into the county school system. The school building lay dormant for more than 25 years until 1983 when Dr. Susie Wheeler originated the idea to preserve her former alma mater. She worked tirelessly with her sister-in-law, Bertha Wheeler, to donate the land to the Noble-Hill Wheeler Memorial Foundation. With the help of the foundation's trustees who raised over \$200,000, the old school building that once stood at the center of black life in Cassville was saved as an important reminder of how architecture, whether formal or vernacular, private or civic, has the ability to respond to the call for social change. The Noble Hill-Wheeler Memorial Center currently serves as a heritage museum in Bartow County. It is open Tuesday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, call 770/382-3392.

REMEMBERING THE 1906 ATLANTA RACE RIOT

*Linda Cooks, Steering Committee
Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network*

In his poem *A Litany of Atlanta* W. E. B. DuBois penned these words after hearing of the outbreak of a bloody race riot in Atlanta:



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Photograph Not Available

This circa 1906 Atlanta street scene depicts the Henry Grady statue that still exists on Marietta Street today. Photo courtesy of the Special Collections Department, Georgia State University Library

“A city lay in travail, God our Lord, and from her loins sprang twin Murder and Black hate. Red was the midnight; clang, crack and cry of death and fury filled the air and trembled underneath the stars when church spires pointed silently to Thee.” It erupted on the night of September 22, 1906 in downtown and festered into a violent four-day upheaval that would leave a lasting mark on Atlanta, the South's Gate City.

Events leading to the riot began months earlier in a fierce Democratic gubernatorial race. Lead candidates Hoke Smith, former editor of the *Atlanta Journal*

and later Clark Howell, editor of *The Atlanta Constitution*, built their campaign platforms on the promotion of African American political and social disenfranchisement. At the same time, racial tensions increased in the city as local newspapers began printing a series of unfounded stories of attacks on white women by black men, prompting a "Negro crime" scare. Rage came to a head on Saturday night, September 22nd when thousands of white men and boys led vicious attacks against unsuspecting African American men and women in the downtown area while they were walking the streets, working in downtown businesses and riding in streetcars. Attacks continued throughout the city for the next three days. At the end of the riot at least 25 blacks were killed according to the *Atlanta Journal* and *The Atlanta Constitution*.

Though faded from the public memory of most Atlantans today, the impact of this horrific event had a lasting influence on the city's commercial and residential neighborhood patterns, political policy and race relations. Many African Americans left the city while others residing inside the downtown area relocated their homes and businesses to the Auburn Avenue neighborhood and other areas of the city. Not only were segregated neighborhoods redefined, but Jim Crow laws in the city escalated, further promoting the separation of races. The culmination of this riot also marked the beginning of an Atlanta tradition of interracial cooperation between white and black civic, business and religious leaders in an effort to resolve social and political issues that stained the city's image.

There are a number of notable sites affiliated with the **1906 Atlanta Race Riot**. *Five Points* is a landmark downtown intersection where violent white crowds gathered before chasing and attacking blacks on surrounding downtown streets. Near the *Henry Grady statue* on Marietta Street, rioters paraded and laid the beaten and bloody bodies of three slain black victims. *South View Cemetery* is the resting place of many of the African American victims of the riot. *Brownsville* (now known as South Atlanta) was a black upper-class neighborhood that armed and defended itself against white rioters who raided their community on Monday, September 24, 1906. The *Gammon Theological Seminary/Clark University* (now the campus of the New Schools of George Washington Carver) was formerly located in this neighborhood.



Three African Americans were killed during the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot near the site of the Henry Grady statue on Marietta Street.
Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

In preparation for the centennial anniversary of the 1906 Riot, the **Coalition to Remember the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot** sponsored a variety of projects such as archival research, oral history interviews, walking tours of the Five Points area, lectures and discussions to increase public

awareness of the riot, spur dialogue in the community regarding this little known episode in Atlanta's history, and encourage reconciliation. An exhibit entitled *Red Was the Midnight* opened at the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site in Atlanta on

September 15, 2006 and is available for public viewing through August 2007. The public also participated in a Centennial Remembrance weekend on September 21 through September 24, 2006. Events included panel discussions, presentations, art performances and exhibits throughout the downtown area. For more information regarding the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot and commemorative events, log onto <http://www.1906atlantaraceriot.org>.



Clifford Kuhn and Clarissa Myrick-Harris discussed the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot during their educational session at the African American Preservation Alliance conference in Memphis. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque



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ABOUT GAAHPN



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The 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 GAAHPN Steering Committee 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 2,300 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. Visit the Historic Preservation Division website at www.gashpo.org. Preservation information and previous issues of *Reflections* are available online. Membership in the Network is free and open to all.

Reflections

Published quarterly by the
Historic Preservation Division
Georgia Department of Natural Resources

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This publication has been financed in part with federal funds from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, through the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products or consultants constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior or the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or disability in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility, or if you desire more information, write to: Office for Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.



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