

# Reflections

Volume XVIII, No. 3

December 2022

Georgia African American  
Historic Preservation Network



## THE MOMENT EVERYTHING CHANGED: LINNENTOWN OF ATHENS REMEMBERED

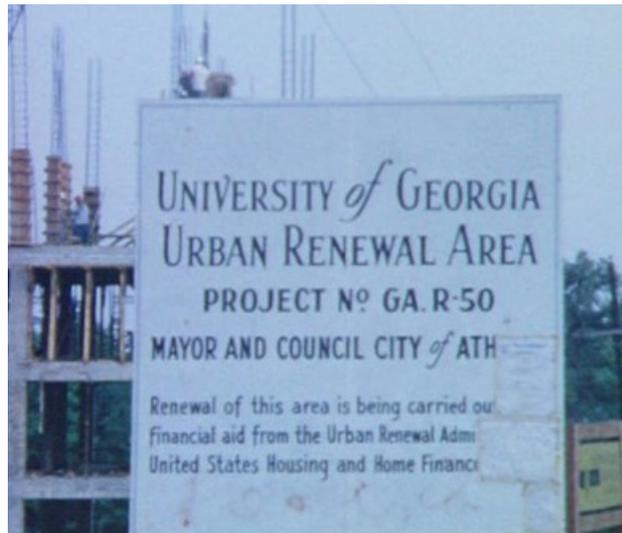
Hattie Thomas Whitehead, Special Contributor  
Social Activist and Author of *Giving Voice to Linnentown*

Although family and community life seemed to be good in Linnentown, life as we knew it was about to change when we had to move out of our rental house. From that moment on, everything seemed to be on a downward spiral. Mrs. Doolittle, our White landlord, told my mom and dad the property had been sold and gave them a move date in the early part of 1958. At that time, none of the adults knew why the property had been sold.<sup>1</sup>

Initially, families living in the rental houses were in shock. However, after the shock wore off, the urgency of searching for a house or a place to move began. Extra money was needed to move. Rent and utility deposits were a big challenge. Where would the money come from? Loans from extended family, an employer, or pulling a few dollars from weekly pay? How do you take money that is already designated for the bare essentials? Do you purchase fewer groceries or pay the least amount acceptable on bills?

There hadn't been too much turnover in Linnentown. Once a family moved here, they usually stayed for years or generations. We were living in a time when Blacks could only

move to Black communities, and there were only so many in Athens. Being in this situation exasperated and worried my parents, particularly when there was a deadline for so many families to move out within the given timeframe. My dad and mom had to make a quick decision: Where do we relocate to?



*The urban renewal sign at the corner of South Finley and Baxter Streets, erected by the City of Athens and the University of Georgia. Fred Neeley, photographer, 1965. Courtesy of Walter J. Brown Media Archives and Peabody Collection- University of Georgia Libraries.*

It usually took years to acquire enough money for a down payment on an existing house. My parents' wages averaged about eighteen dollars a week. In previous years, the wages were even lower. This is why it took such a long time to save enough money to purchase property or save for a down payment for a house. Meager wages, plus the weekly expenses to care for one's family, left very little for anything else. Some families had anywhere from seven to nine children to feed each week. This was first and, sometimes, the only priority, while other bills were put on hold until the next payday.

Among those families who had to leave Finley Street, only a few had the money to buy a house. Others were making plans to move after purchasing lots in other areas of the city. The Finley Street residents'

choices were limited to renting another house or apartment, renting a room by the week, moving in with family, or, as a last resort, moving to public housing.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Athens, Georgia, city records, 1860-1970. MS 1633. Boxes 99-100. Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries

<sup>2</sup> The mayor and council of the City of Athens, Georgia, "University of Georgia Urban Renewal Project GA R-50: Part 1- Application for loan Grant," Binder No 3, May 1962

## THE MOMENT EVERYTHING CHANGED: LINNENTOWN OF ATHENS

Hattie Thomas Whitehead  
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My parents loved living in our community and wanted to stay. They were surrounded by the support needed from family and friends, which was especially helpful with seven small children. There were no vacant houses in Linnentown, so how would it be possible to stay?

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On June 25, 2020, Athens Mayor Kelly Girtz and Athens-Clarke County Commission assembled the Justice and Memory Project committee, the first official committee in the State of Georgia to work together on avenues of atonement for harms committed against Black communities. The team makeup is historic -- first descendants [of Linnentown community], county commissioners, and citizens, all supported by city staff members.<sup>3</sup>

Mayor Girtz wrote a proclamation that included a sincere apology for the city of Athens involvement in the urban projects that led to the erasure of Black neighborhoods in the 1960s. On February 22, 2021, the Athens Justice and Memory Project gathered outside of City Hall to hear the reading of a Linnentown proclamation by Mayor Kelly Girtz, as well as hear from other speakers of the Athens Justice and Memory Project Team and first descendants of the Linnentown Project.

*Giving Voice to Linnentown* is a compelling true story about a young Black girl and her family who lived in a thriving small Black community called Linnentown in Athens GA. Author Hattie Thomas Whitehead describes her early childhood years in the 1960s and how her life and the lives of other Linnentown families changed the moment the City of Athens and the University of Georgia entered into an Urban Renewal contract. As a result, Linnentown properties were taken for the university's expansion, residents were forced to move, and families were separated.

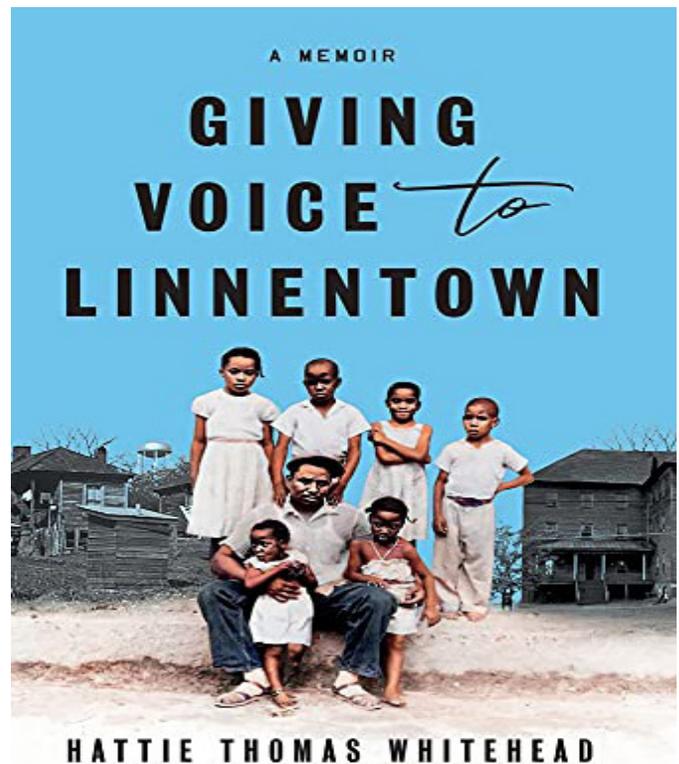
*Giving Voice to Linnentown* chronicles life in Linnentown and Mrs. Whitehead's leadership role in seeking justice on behalf of Linnentown and its first descendants. Her goal is to give voice to a once-vibrant and thriving community that was erased and forgotten. For more information about the book, *Giving Voice to Linnentown* visit this website:

<https://www.tinytotsandtikes.com/products/giving-voice-to-linnentown>

<sup>3</sup> To read the full resolution, The Linnentown Resolution for Recognition and Redress, access the Linnentown Project information website at <https://www.redressforlinnentown.com/redress>. To view the video of the proclamation visit <https://www.accgov.com/9922/Athens-Justice-and-Memory-Project>



*The row of shotgum rental houses on South Finley Street, circa 1947, where the author was born. The photo was taken from the bottom of South Finley St. looking North towards Baxter Street. Courtesy of Walter J. Brown Media Archives and Peabody Awards Collection, University of Georgia Libraries.*



*~Hattie Thomas Whitehead is a first descendant of Linnentown, Social Activist and author of Giving Voice to Linnentown. Courtesy of Hattie Thomas Whitehead*

# BLOODY OUTRAGES AND VOTER SUPPRESSION IN RECONSTRUCTION SCHLEY COUNTY

Clarence D. White, Special Contributor  
Schley County Historian



*Freed Blacks Voting during Reconstruction marked their new status as American citizens. Credit: GeorgiaInfo.Galileo.usg.edu*

Schley (pronounced sly) County was created in 1857 by the Georgia legislature from land taken from Sumter, Marion, and by some accounts, Macon Counties. Comprising 154 square miles and 98,660 acres, it is one of the smallest of Georgia's 159 counties. Carved from counties in Georgia's historic Black Belt, the nascent county had almost an equal number of enslaved Africans and white people. According to the 1860 U.S. Population Census and the 1860 Slave Schedules for Schley, there were 2,268 slaves in the county, 2,274 whites and 11 free colored persons.<sup>1</sup> Ellaville is the county seat and the only incorporated place in the county.

For reasons unclear this small county became the locus of an unrelenting campaign of unspeakable violence perpetrated upon the freed people by white men acting individually and organized as groups in Reconstruction.<sup>2</sup> Abundant evidence of this violence can be found in correspondence within the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, commonly known as the Freedmen's Bureau, created by the U.S. Congress in March 1865 to aid freed African Americans transitioning from slavery to freedom after the Civil War. Freedmen's Bureau agents reported 336 cases of murder or assault with intent

<sup>1</sup> 1860 U.S. Population Census; 1860 Slave Schedules for Schley. [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com). Accessed April 3, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Bragg, William. "Reconstruction in Georgia." *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, last modified Sep 30, 2020. <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/reconstruction-in-georgia/>.

to kill on freedmen from January 1 through November 15 of 1868 in Georgia. That year was also a U.S. Presidential election year with former Union general and Republican Ulysses Grant opposing Democrat Horatio Seymour. All of the reported violence in Georgia from 1865 to 1869 is chronicled in Freedmen's Bureau records.<sup>3</sup> More detailed insights into the Schley County violence can be gleaned from correspondence originating from the Bureau's office in Americus, seat of Sumter County and largest town in the region, second only to Albany.<sup>4</sup>

The frequency, brutality, and sheer number of violent incidents in the county were so remarkable that a Freedmen's Bureau officer at Americus, 14 miles south of Ellaville, reported on October 31, 1868 to his superior in Albany that "a reign of terror" existed in Schley County against the freed people. The letter responded to a request from Albany dated October 23, 1868 for a report on the number of freed people murdered or assaulted with intent to kill in the Americus office's jurisdiction.

The officer, Bureau Agent W.C. Morrill, reported, "It will be seen that by far the greater part are from Schley County

<sup>3</sup> Freedmen's Bureau Records – Georgia via The Freedmen's Bureau Online [www.freedmensbureau.com](http://www.freedmensbureau.com)

<sup>4</sup> This correspondence from July 1866 to November 1868 is available via National Archives and Records online [https://edan.si.edu/slideshow/viewer/?eadrefid=NMAAHC.FB.M1903\\_ref146](https://edan.si.edu/slideshow/viewer/?eadrefid=NMAAHC.FB.M1903_ref146). Accessed April 3, 2022.

## BLOODY OUTRAGES AND VOTER SUPPRESSION IN RECONSTRUCTION SCHLEY COUNTY

Clarence D. White continued from page 3

and I am free to acknowledge that a reign of terror exists in that county against the colored people.”<sup>5</sup>

On November 4, 1868, Morrill sent a plaintive letter to Judge Montgomery in Ellaville detailing the outrageous and savage violence in Schley County occurring August of that year. He penned, “Since about the first of August there has been some six or eight freedmen shot and a dozen or more most brutally beaten, others driven from their homes. Several of those who have been shot the perpetrators of the crimes are well known. Yet it is generally believed that no action or trial has ever been held before any competent court. . . . It is also stated on oath (by freedmen witnesses/victims) that a party of [white] men have been and are organized and continuously visiting portions of the county and most brutally whipping and maltreating freedmen, also arresting and confining in jail many (persons) on the most frivolous pretences (sic) and no action whatever to ascertain the perpetrators.”

Morrill went on to repeat that the perpetrators were well known and felt that they could commit such outrageous crimes with impunity, “without even a protest from any of the citizens of the county.” Moreover, he informed the judge that he had been ordered to forward to Washington D.C. a statement of all freedmen who had been assaulted “and the names of perpetrators where known.”<sup>6</sup> In closing, Morrill earnestly appealed to the judge and citizens of Schley “to endeavor to stop the outrages, protect the innocent, and bring the guilty to justice.”

On November 7, 1868, Agent Morrill, as promised, forwarded a copy of his letter to Schley County Judge Montgomery to Captain Frank Gallagher in Atlanta.<sup>7</sup> Prior to that, on November 5, he had written to Gallagher describing intimidation with guns at the polls on Election Day November 3, 1868, and gross irregularities in voting procedures in Sumter County. His reporting was that some polls never opened in the county and almost no votes, white or freedmen, were cast. Although Republican Grant won the election, Democrat Seymour won Georgia, Louisiana, and Kentucky. Without the violent campaign of voter suppression in Georgia, especially in the Black Belt, Grant likely would have carried the state, as he did

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Brevet Captain M. Frank Gallagher was the adjunctant to Caleb C. Sibley, Georgia’s assistant Commissioner for the Freedman’s Bureau. In Plain Sight: African Americans at Andersonville NHS. A Special Study. National Park Service, December 2020. p. 69. <https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/DownloadFile/659211>

with 51 percent of the vote in Alabama, 58 percent in South Carolina, and 54 percent of the vote in North Carolina. In Schley County, freedmen eligible to vote in 1868 outnumbered white men two or three times. On election day almost none of them voted.<sup>8</sup> The Republican ticket won in all the remaining Southern states that were eligible to vote because of the enfranchisement of the freedmen, the loss of white male lives in the Civil War, and the temporary disfranchisement of many southern white men.

In February 1869, Rev. Hamilton W. Pierson came to Andersonville, 12 miles from Ellaville and 12 miles from Americus, to gather accounts of the violence and intimidation on Election Day and in the period before the election. Pierson later forwarded the written accounts to Charles Sumner, radical Republican U.S. senator from Massachusetts, and published them in epistolary booklet 1870.<sup>9</sup>

Under the rubric “Lawlessness in Georgia,” Pierson’s letter contained statements, obtained under oath, from five Black men. These men were political and community leaders who had been targets of the Ku Klux Klan and of Democratic white men acting alone. Two of them were from Schley County—George Wesley Smith and Richard Reese. In the prefatory portion of his epistolary booklet, Rev. Pierson, relying on his sensibility and perceptions as a preacher, disclosed that while readers who have not been to Georgia and worked among the freedmen might doubt the truthfulness of the Black men’s testimony, he felt that these men understated the extent and severity of the violence and outrages they had experienced.

George Wesley Smith survived the violence of Reconstruction and became a landowner and successful farmer at the Macon and Schley County line. His descendants include a grandson, Rev. Dr. John Henry Lewis—illustrious educator and Morris Brown College president, and a great-grandson, famed historian David Levering Lewis.<sup>10</sup>

Richard Reese lived in the Bumphead/Lacrosse district of Schley County, which is adjacent to Sumter County.

<sup>8</sup> The Return of Qualified Voters for Schley County of 1867. [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com). Accessed April 3, 2022

<sup>9</sup> “A letter to Hon. Charles Sumner, with statements of outrages upon freedmen in Georgia, and an account of my expulsion from Andersonville, Ga., by the Ku Klux Klan.” Pierson, Hamilton W. (Hamilton Wilcox), 1817-1888. <https://archive.org/details/lettertohoncharl00pier/page/8/mode/2up>

<sup>10</sup> White, Clarence D. Schley County, GA, Biography: Rev. Dr. John H. Lewis (1884-1958) [files.usgwarchives.net/ga/schley/bios/lewis.txt](https://files.usgwarchives.net/ga/schley/bios/lewis.txt).

On November 7, 1868, showing extraordinary courage, Reese went to Americus to file the formal complaint shown below against Schley County voting officials who tried to deny him the right to vote. His white male enemies responded three months later by burning down the schoolhouse that he and his fellow freedmen had built. The “reign of terror” persisted. In 1880, he was still living at Lacrosse with his wife and daughter. He was a farmer but never became a landowner. The census of that year showed that he could read but could not write.<sup>11</sup>

Freedmen’s Bureau agents reported 336 cases of murder or assault with intent to kill on freedmen for the entire state of Georgia from January 1 through November 15 of 1868. Georgia had a population of around 1,000,000 after the Civil War, including about 460,000 freed people. That so many serious crimes occurred in the small county of Schley among 6,000 residents in less than a year is astonishing. To describe the series as a “Reign of Terror” seems apt. Why so many outrages against the freed people so frequently? The fact that the number of whites in Schley County after the Civil war was more nearly equal to the number of freed people, unlike the disparity in many Black Belt counties where blacks outnumbered whites two, three or even four times, may have emboldened the white attackers.

The Americus Freedmen’s Bureau office’s effort at law enforcement, as described in their reporting and correspondence, seems meager in retrospect and was ultimately and dismally ineffective.

<sup>11</sup> Testimony of Richard Reese, Schley County, Georgia to Agent W. C. Morrill. [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com).

The Schley County Reign of Terror of 1868 marked the end of black political power in Schley County, the Georgia Black Belt and elsewhere in the state. Limited and unarmed resistance to the organized violence of 1868 in Schley County consisted mainly of appeals for help from the Freedmen’s Bureau agents in Americus, as noted. The freedmen in Schley County and elsewhere were effectively cowed and frightened away from the polls in November 1868. Because of political machinations in the state legislature, freedmen would never again be allowed to vote in sufficient numbers to elect a proportionate share of the legislature. Election to any public office at all became increasingly difficult.

The black vote was suppressed into irrelevance, if not out of existence. It would remain suppressed, enforced by organized violence, Jim Crow laws, and white economic power, until the Civil Rights era of the 1960s, what some historians call the “Second Reconstruction.”

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*Clarence D. White is a native of Schley County, and a 1964 graduate of John Lewis High School, Ellaville, GA.*

*Table sources: Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands 1865 – 1869; National Archives Microfilm Publication M798 Roll 32; Reports Relating to Murders and Outrages 1865 – 1868.*

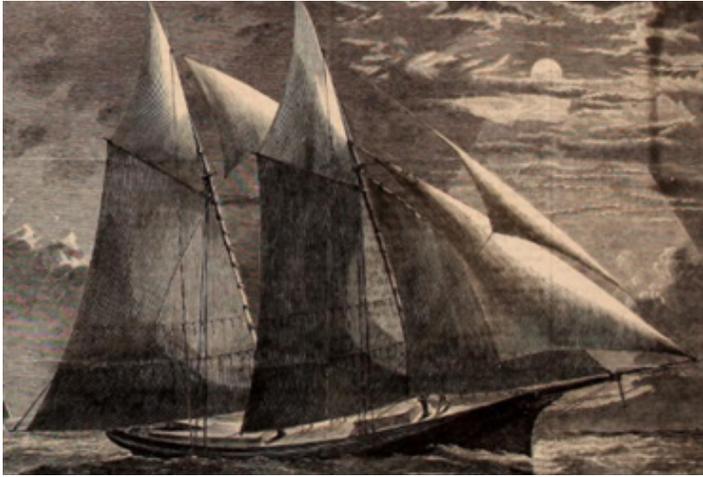
### Some Bloody Outrages in Schley County, Georgia in 1868

<i>Date:</i> April. <i>County:</i> Schley. <i>Victim:</i> <b>MOSES HART</b> . <i>Injuries:</i> shot in face, severely wounded. <i>Attacker:</i> not known. <i>Remarks:</i> was called out of his house at night by white men. No action taken to ascertain perpetrators.
<i>Date:</i> August 5. <i>County:</i> Schley. <i>Victim:</i> <b>MILES GRANT</b> . <i>Injuries:</i> shot through shoulder. <i>Attacker:</i> <b>JOHN T. LUMPKIN</b> (white). <i>Remarks:</i> no action taken. Lumpkin is in Schley County.
<i>Date:</i> August 5. <i>County:</i> Schley. <i>Victim:</i> <b>JOHN SINGLETERRY</b> . <i>Injuries:</i> shot through thigh. <i>Attacker:</i> <b>JOHN T. LUMPKIN</b> (white). <i>Remarks:</i> no action taken. Lumpkin is in Schley County.
<i>Date:</i> August 25. <i>County:</i> Schley. <i>Victim:</i> <b>EDMUND FRASER</b> . <i>Injury:</i> shot in the shoulder. <i>Attacker:</i> <b>JOHN T. LUMPKIN</b> (white). <i>Remarks:</i> no action taken. Lumpkin in Schley County.
<i>Date:</i> September 19. <i>County:</i> Schley. <i>Victim:</i> <b>MARCH THOMSON</b> . <i>Injury:</i> shot through shoulder. <i>Attacker:</i> <b>LEANDES SCARBOROUGH</b> (white). <i>Remarks:</i> no action taken, attacker at large in Schley County.
<i>Date:</i> September 20. <i>County:</i> Schley. <i>Victim:</i> <b>PETER SMITH</b> . <i>Injuries:</i> beaten nearly to death. <i>Attackers:</i> parties unknown. <i>Remarks:</i> no action taken by civil authorities, came horseback with sheets over them.
<i>Date:</i> September 20. <i>County:</i> Schley. <i>Victim:</i> <b>ROBT. WIGGINS</b> . <i>Injuries:</i> beaten nearly to death. <i>Attackers:</i> parties unknown. <i>Remarks:</i> no action by civil authorities, came horseback with sheets over them.
<i>Date:</i> October 1. <i>County:</i> Schley. <i>Victim:</i> <b>HENRY DAVIS</b> . <i>Injuries:</i> shot at 5 times. <i>Attackers:</i> parties unknown. <i>Remarks:</i> no action taken by civil authorities, came & burst over in at night & shot at him & wife & drove them to the woods. Parties masked.
<i>Date:</i> October 18. <i>County:</i> Schley. <i>Victim:</i> <b>CATO TOMLINSON</b> . <i>Injuries:</i> most brutally beaten. <i>Attackers:</i> parties unknown. <i>Remarks:</i> no action taken. Was laid on his back and whipped through to his intestines.

## ALF HUDSON, PERRY GROVE AND THE MIDDLE PASSAGE

Evan A. Kutzler, Contributor

Assistant Professor, Georgia Southwestern State University, Americus GA



*The slave ship Wanderer landed at Jekyll Island, GA on November 28, 1858 with 409 African captives. Credit: Harper's Weekly January 15, 1859.*

On July 11, 1920, Lucius Hudson laid Alf Hudson to rest at the Old Perry Grove Baptist Church, a stone's throw from Chokey Creek in southeastern Sumter County, Georgia. The burial involved no undertaker and neither of the two Hudson men left much of a traditional historical record. Lucius, aged 40 and recently widowed, lived alone and worked as a tenant farmer across the Lee County line along the Leslie-Leesburg Road. It was Lucius who reported the death of Alf—"old age" he said—to health authorities. Alf was about 75 years old and still worked on a farm near De Soto. Lucius did not know the name of Alf's mother or father, but he knew two important details. Alf Hudson was born about 1845 in Africa.<sup>1</sup>

This was unusual for a death certificate in 1920. Most African Americans who became free in the 1860s had families in North America for generations. The grandparents of a freedperson's grandparents were often here long before the American Revolution. Some men and women born into slavery in the antebellum period knew parents and grandparents who had survived the Middle Passage. In 1850, Zorah Hayslip, a white man, identified the ages and sexes of six people he held in slavery in southeastern Sumter County. A seventh person, born about 1790 in Africa, had died in April that year of an unnamed "chronic disease." Five of the younger adult men and women could have been her children.

<sup>1</sup> Alf Hudson, Sumter County, Georgia, 1920, Death Certificates, Vital Records, Public Health, RG 26-5-95, Georgia Archives. 1920 U.S. Census, Chokey, Lee County, Georgia, population schedule, pg. 5A, dwelling 86, family 87, Lucius Hudson; digital image, Ancestry.com (<http://ancestry.com> : accessed 16 December 2020); citing NARA microfilm publication 625, roll 265.

The oldest man may have been her husband.<sup>2</sup>

Alf Hudson was among a small number of African Americans in this region who survived the Middle Passage and became free in their lifetime. Calling the names of these individuals acknowledges an echo of the middle passage that could be heard long after the United States formally outlawed the importation of enslaved people in 1808. The current national reckoning with race and slavery reminds us that the 156 years between 1865 and 2021 is not so long after all. There was only a 57-year gap between 1808 and 1865.

US Census records inadvertently offer the most complete accounting of freedpeople who survived the Middle Passage. In 1870, 319 Black Georgians—or 6 per 10,000—reported Africa as their birthplace to census workers. Only 129 men and women—2 per 10,000—did so a decade later. "Unless it was a symbolic political statement, there was no motive to misrepresent where you or a member of your family was born," historian David Dangerfield tells me. "These are probably survivors of the Middle Passage."<sup>3</sup>

Black Sumter County respondents exceeded the Georgia average both years. In 1870, James Morgan, Selon Black, Harry Rees, Hagar Thomas, George African, Thomas Wells, and William Nelson said they were born in Africa. In 1880, Cymons Wood, Rochel Wood, Cyrus Fuller, and Frank Stuart told a census worker the same thing. Alf Hudson did not appear in these census records at all, and the men in 1870 did not appear in the 1880 census, suggesting that census records may undercount the true number. Even the best historical records are fragmentary and incomplete.<sup>4</sup>

The Black men and women who reported African births here left few additional clues about their lived experiences. While the life expectancy of an enslaved person was in the 20s or 30s (estimates vary), James Morgan, Selon Black, Harry Rees, Hagar Thomas, and William Nelson lived long lives.<sup>5</sup> Infant and child mortality is the most important factor in estimated life expectancy. People who survived childhood sometimes lived long lives.

For the men who reported being born in Africa in 1870, their median age was 101. In other words, most were born

<sup>2</sup> David Dangerfield, phone conversation with author, July 15, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> US Census in the Social Explorer database, <https://www.socialexplorer.com/>. 1870 U.S. Census, Sumter County, Georgia, population schedule, pg. 251 (stamped); digital image, Ancestry.com (<http://ancestry.com> : accessed 16 December 2020); citing NARA microfilm publication M593, roll 174; 1870 U.S. Census, Sumter County, Georgia, Militia District 756, population schedule, pg. 221 (stamped), et al.

<sup>4</sup> Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Times on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*, Vol. 1 (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1974), 125.

<sup>5</sup> Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Times on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*, Vol. 1 (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1974), 125.

decades before the end of the slave trade. A few of the older men still worked. Harry Rees, born in 1800, still worked as a farm laborer seventy years later. James Morgan, born about 1790, could not read and write in 1870, but he worked at the Sumter Republican.

The men and women who reported African births in 1880 hint at more than just longevity amid the harsh conditions of slavery. The median age fell to 62.5 meaning that most were born well after the official end of US involvement in the Atlantic slave trade. This is a reminder that despite the United States ban on the slave trade after 1808, an illicit trade continued right up to the Civil War. Slave traders probably smuggled Cymons and Rochel Wood, Cyrus Fuller, Frank Stuart, George African, and Thomas Wells into the United States.



*Perry Grove Cemetery, Sumter County, December 2020.  
Courtesy of Evan Kutzler*

Alf Hudson may have had a similar journey that took him to southwest Georgia. It is a long way from Perry Grove in Sumter County, Georgia, to the mouth of the Congo River, but the two are connected both by water, history, and the forced movement of people. In 1860, the waterway still went by its longer name, Chokeefichickee, a Muscogee word that may have meant, “rotunda raised on a mound.”<sup>6</sup> Chokee Creek cut through cotton plantations in the 1840s and 50s. Its drainage basin included at least 600 acres of John Basil Lamar’s 3,000-acre estate in Sumter County. Lamar was a member of an elite political family that included his brother-in-law Howell Cobb and his cousin Charles Augustus Lafayette Lamar. The latter became infamous for enslaving 409 Black people from the Congo River in West Central Africa and landing the slave ship, Wanderer, on Jekyll Island in 1858.

<sup>6</sup> “Valuable Plantations for Sale,” *The Daily Constitutional* (Augusta, Georgia) December 21, 1859; Chokee Creek, U.S. Geological Survey, Geographic Names Phase 1 Data Compilation (1976-1981), [Courts never convicted Charles Lamar of violating U.S. laws that, on paper, equated the international slave trade with piracy. Lamar flouted the hangman’s noose when he brazenly committed a capital offense.<sup>7</sup>](https://geonames.usgs.gov/apex/f?p=138:3:::NO::P3_FID,P3_TITLE:312651,Chokee%20Creek; Kenneth K. Krakow, Georgia Place Names (Macon, Ga: Winship Press, 1975), 43.</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

The slave traders who abetted Lamar spread out from Jekyll Island across the South. Authorities briefly stopped Richard Aiken, who became one of the acquitted co-conspirators, in Worth County, Georgia, with a wagon train and 36 Africans. According to historian Tom Wells, newspapers reported sightings of Africans from the Wanderer in every state in the lower South. “Twenty were allegedly found on a Colorado River plantation in Texas,” Wells writes. “[Nathan] Bedford Forrest’s slave-trading company in Memphis was supposed to have six offered for sale.”<sup>8</sup> All of this took place 50 years after the United States ended the slave trade. It is a reminder, Dangerfield says, of the “ideological and economic interest in preserving slavery—even reopening the slave trade—right up to the Civil War.”

Old Perry Grove Baptist Church, built in the late-nineteenth century, stood in its original location until the mid-twentieth century. Perry Grove looked like a typical southern church: a wooden, rectangular building with a front-gabled roof and either a porch in the front or a small rectory in the back. As Deacon Aaron Johnson explains, Perry Grove had an informal agreement with the (White) Bone family rather than formal title to the land. The relationship soured and the landowner forced the church to move.

The cemetery is all that remains of the original church when the congregation relocated to a new building closer to Leslie. Years of farming right up to the ambiguous cemetery boundary—first by the Bone family and now by a company owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—has been destructive. Some marked graves have been lost over the years. Other early graves are decorated with single, uninscribed stones. The wide spacing of marked graves hints at the many now-unidentifiable ones. Alf Hudson is somewhere in this cemetery.<sup>9</sup>

Alf Hudson’s death certificate is the only known documentation of his life. Historical fragments, such as this one, are broken pieces of human stories. They cannot always be made whole again. I can speculate that Lucius was Alf Hudson’s son, but I cannot conclude with any certainty that Alf Hudson arrived on The Wanderer or was enslaved by the Lamar family. Yet there is a benefit to calling his name.

<sup>7</sup> John B. Lamar plantation book, ms 131, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries; John Harris, *The Last Slave Ships: New York and the End of the Middle Passage* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020), 217-218.

<sup>8</sup> Tom Henderson Wells, *The Slave Ship Wanderer* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1967 [2009]), 41-43, 86.

<sup>9</sup> My estimate of Perry Grove Church is based on The 1973 Leslie, Georgia, USGS map and aerial photographs.

## ABOUT REFLECTIONS

Since its first issue appeared in December 2000, *Reflections* has documented hundreds of Georgia's African American historic resources. Now all of these articles are available on the Historic Preservation Division website [www.dca.ga.gov](http://www.dca.ga.gov). Search for "Reflections" under "All Content Types" to find the archived issue and a list of topics by categories: cemeteries, churches, districts, farms, lodges, medical, people, places, schools, and theatres. You can now subscribe to *Reflections* by emailing [outreach@dca.ga.gov](mailto:outreach@dca.ga.gov). *Reflections* is a recipient of a *Leadership in History Award* from the American Association for State and Local History.

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## ABOUT GAAHPN



**Georgia African American  
Historic Preservation Network**

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 built 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 plans and implements 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 3,000 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.dca.ga.gov/georgia-historic-preservation-division](http://www.dca.ga.gov/georgia-historic-preservation-division). 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 Community Affairs

Jennifer Dixon, Division Director  
Melissa Jest, Editor

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 Community Affairs. 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 Community Affairs. 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.