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# GEORGIA HISTORY | TODAY

FLANNERY O'CONNOR

*The Legacy of a Storyteller*

*-Richard S.*



# Saving the Stories of the Past

by W. Todd Groce, Ph.D.

Recently on eBay—that addictive web site for collectors of anything—I came across an extraordinary collection whose fate illustrates the challenges we face when it comes to saving the stories of the past.

This collection consisted of uniforms, letters, photographs, official documents, medals, even a footlocker belonging to a WWII US Marine Corps officer from New York who fought in some of the great battles of the Pacific campaign. In all there were over 100 items documenting in detail the service and sacrifices of a true American hero.

The collection had been acquired by a dealer at an estate sale after the Marine died last year. It went for a hefty price as a group. Over the course of the next few weeks I watched in horror as each item was re-sold individually. The collection that had been carefully preserved with pride by an old man was forsaken by his family, broken up and scattered to the wind—and with it the story of a warrior and the contribution he made to the pivotal event of the 20th century.

Sadly, this is not an isolated instance. Every day someone who either does not care or only sees a monetary value disposes of their family history and another piece of America's story is lost forever.

In this issue of *Georgia History Today* you will encounter many stories from the past all available to us today because someone took the time to place the objects and documents from which these stories are derived in a repository like the Georgia Historical Society.

And thank goodness they did. The ability of future generations to learn from the past is dependent upon the physical evidence we leave behind. It is the foundation upon which all future historical scholarship and knowledge of the past will be based.

I have often thought that it isn't the person who does great deeds that is remembered but the one who leaves behind the best records. Otherwise how will anyone know?

It's not just the documentary legacy of the rich and famous that needs to be preserved. The story of every family forms the fabric of our state's and nation's history. Each document and object is another thread in the tapestry.

Nothing is too small to be inconsequential. Whether it's a diary kept by a 19th century farmer, a letter written by a wife to her husband in the Army, a ledger book from a small retail business, or a photo taken during a 1960s Civil Rights demonstration, each adds to our understanding. Donating it ensures that the story of the event and the person connected to it survives as instruction and inspiration for the future.

Longer than any institution in the South—nearly 175 years—the Georgia Historical Society has been here continuously to provide a good home for your history. So if you have family letters or personal effects, please call us. As the stories in this magazine demonstrate, the future will be richer because you did.

W. Todd Groce, Ph.D., is President and CEO of the Georgia Historical Society.



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# GEORGIA HISTORY TODAY

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ON THE COVER

Sign artwork made by Savannah artist Panhandle Slim for the Flannery O'Connor Homemade Parade



Feature Story Page 3 – Flannery O'Connor: The Legacy of a Storyteller

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<p>PERSPECTIVES</p> <p><b>01   Saving the Stories of the Past</b> by W. Todd Groce, Ph.D.</p> <p>FEATURE STORY</p> <p><b>03   Flannery O'Connor: The Legacy of a Storyteller</b> by Sophia Sineath</p> <p>INSIDE GHS</p> <p><b>07   The Evolution of a National Research Center</b> by Stan Deaton, Ph.D.</p> <p>GEORGIA GEMS</p> <p><b>09   Rainwater Family Papers</b> by Katharine Rapkin</p>	<p>PROFILES</p> <p><b>11   2014 Georgia Trustees: Arthur M. Blank and William Porter "Billy" Payne</b> by Patricia Meagher</p> <p>STATE OF HISTORY</p> <p><b>15   Reece Farm and Heritage Center</b> by Debra March</p> <p>MILESTONES</p> <p><b>16   GHS News</b></p> <p>HAPPENINGS</p> <p><b>18   Events and Activities</b></p>
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2014 GEORGIA HISTORY FESTIVAL  
FEATURED HISTORICAL FIGURE:

# FLANNERY O'CONNOR

*Legacy of a Storyteller*

By Sophia Sineath



**F**ifty years after her death, Georgia native Flannery O'Connor continues to make an impact on the land of the living through the stories she wrote and the story of the life she led. O'Connor's two novels, thirty-two short stories, and thirty-nine years on earth continue to influence storytellers in a variety of genres ranging from literary scholars to playwrights to rock stars to late night comedians. Passionate individuals and organizations in her home state and beyond share not just her fiction but also the equally important story of Flannery's life to new audiences each year.

## WHO WAS FLANNERY O'CONNOR?

Flannery O'Connor was born Mary Flannery O'Connor on March 25, 1925, in Savannah. O'Connor's family settled at 207 Charlton Street just across from the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist where Flannery was baptized and made her first communion. O'Connor was a devout Roman Catholic throughout her entire life.

In 1938, O'Connor moved to her mother's hometown of Milledgeville where she attended Peabody High School and Georgia State College for Women (now Georgia College & State University). In 1945 O'Connor entered the State University of Iowa (now the University of Iowa) and was accepted into the famous Iowa Writer's Workshop. After graduating, O'Connor spent time at the Yaddo artists' colony in New York.

O'Connor was diagnosed with lupus, the same disease that took her father's life, in 1951, and she battled the disease until her death in 1964. Despite her debilitating illness, she devoted much of her time to writing, lecturing, and correspondence while living at Andalusia, her family's dairy farm in Milledgeville. O'Connor published two novels, *Wise Blood* (1952) and *The Violent Bear It Away* (1960), and two short story collections, *A Good Man is Hard to Find* (1953) and *Everything that Rises Must Converge* (1965).

## INFLUENCE ON OTHER STORYTELLERS

Not surprisingly, over the last fifty years other fiction writers have found inspiration in O'Connor's stories. Truman Capote, Joyce Carol Oates, and Alice Walker (another famous Georgian) all found inspiration in O'Connor's characters, plots, and style. More surprising is O'Connor's influence upon storytellers in the television, music, and movie industries.

Actor and director Tommy Lee Jones wrote his Harvard thesis on Flannery O'Connor and his 2005 film *The Three Burials of Melquiandes Estrada* shows an unquestionable resemblance to O'Connor's writings. In fact, Jones asked members of the cast and crew to read O'Connor and Ecclesiastes in preparation for the film.

Late night television host and fellow Harvard alum Conan O'Brien wrote his college thesis on juvenile characters in the works of O'Connor and William Faulkner. Although the connection to O'Brien's comedic antics is not as clear as Tommy Lee Jones's art house films, it is clear that successful, creative people are attracted to O'Connor's work.

Movigoers can give O'Connor partial credit for the dark humor, memorable characters, and sudden violence in Coen brothers classics like *Raising Arizona* and *O Brother Where Art Thou*. Filmmaker Quentin Tarantino uses a similar style to O'Connor in darkly humorous and violent feature films like *Pulp Fiction*. There have been several film adaptations of O'Connor's work, most famously director John Huston's 1979 *Wise Blood*, which GHS will publicly screen as part of the 2014 *Georgia History Festival*.

A copy of O'Connor's short story collection *Everything That Rises Must Converge* made an appearance on an episode of ABC's hit television show *Lost*. O'Connor's work provided more than a simple prop for the show. In a May 2009 interview with Milledgeville paper *The Union-Recorder*, *Lost*'s executive producer explained that "Flannery O'Connor's use of Christian theology in concert with sudden, unexpected violence was inspiring to us, she was a truly exceptional writer."

American legend Bruce Springsteen, a singer with a true talent for telling stories through music, found inspiration





for his album *Nebraska* from O'Connor's spiritually infused writing. Bono, lead singer for the famous band U2, credits Springsteen for introducing him to O'Connor's writings. David Howell Evans, aka The Edge, even thanked Flannery O'Connor during an acceptance speech at the 1987 Grammy Awards.

Known for her ability to paint a startling and sometimes disturbing picture with words, O'Connor and her writing have inspired storytellers in the visual and performing arts. Georgia College Museum presented the art exhibition *Taulkinham* by artists Chris Lawson and Joe Decamillis during the 2011 Flannery O'Connor Symposium, *Startling Figures: A Celebration of the Legacy of Flannery O'Connor*. The two artists collaborated on over one hundred pieces of mixed-media works and installations inspired directly by O'Connor's fiction and correspondence.

In February 2012, the Flannery O'Connor Childhood Home in Savannah presented the exhibit *Southern Discomfort: Art Inspired by Flannery O'Connor*, featuring pieces inspired by O'Connor's short stories. Ranging from oil paintings to mixed media, the original works of two dozen local artists were auctioned off to benefit the Childhood Home.

Playwright Karin Coonrod adapted three short stories from O'Connor's *Everything that Rises Must Converge* for the stage. First produced at the University of Iowa and Off Broadway, Georgia audiences had a chance to see O'Connor's words come to life on stage at Kennesaw State University in 2009 in a production of *View of the Woods* and *Everything that Rises Must Converge* directed by Karen Robinson. Sharon Ott directed *Greenleaf* and *Everything that Rises Must Converge* at Savannah College of Art and Design in 2012.

## TELLING FLANNERY'S STORY

If you want to see where O'Connor's love of storytelling began, visit the Flannery O'Connor Childhood Home in Savannah. At the house museum you can see the backyard where O'Connor trained her chicken to walk backwards and hear stories from resident docent Toby Aldrich about a girl who called her parents by their first names and gave biting critiques of classic children's books. More than a house museum, the Flannery O'Connor Childhood Home Foundation hosts lectures by prominent literary figures and holds community events like the 2013 "homegrown parade" on O'Connor's birthday.

O'Connor's alma mater, Georgia College & State University, is perhaps the most active in telling her story and promoting scholarship related to her writings. Georgia College offers O'Connor-related coursework to undergraduate and graduate students, publishes the scholarly journal *Flannery O'Connor Review*, hosts conferences and lectures, and cares for the majority of O'Connor's significant papers. The permanent exhibit in the Flannery O'Connor Room at the Georgia College Museum displays treasures including O'Connor's typewriter, selections from her personal book collection, and some of the cartoons she contributed to various school publications as a student. A recent grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities will bring twenty-five college and university professors to Milledgeville in July for a four week summer institute called "Reconsidering Flannery O'Connor." A similar institute in 2007 resulted in three books, twenty-four peer-reviewed articles, and sixty-three conference presentations.

Andalusia Farm, another Milledgeville locale, is working to keep O'Connor's story alive by preserving the place where she penned a majority of her work. Thanks to the Flannery O'Connor - Andalusia Foundation, between 4,000 and



4,500 visitors each year experience a piece of O'Connor's story by visiting the home where she lived and wrote for thirteen years. In addition to preservation projects like the recent cow barn restoration, Andalusia hosts a variety of lectures and events to raise awareness about the historic property and the literary figure who lived there.

During the 2014 *Georgia History Festival* (GHF), GHS will do its part to inspire a new generation of storytellers through Flannery O'Connor's life and works. Each year during GHF, GHS shares the story of an individual from Georgia's past who has made significant contributions to our state's and nation's history. For 2014, GHS has chosen Flannery O'Connor as the Featured Historical Figure in recognition of her lasting legacy on her home state and in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of her death. Thousands of school-age children throughout Georgia will learn about O'Connor's life through educational materials and programs developed by GHS. O'Connor will also provide the theme for the Georgia Day Parade banner competition and in-school presentations, both longstanding traditions in the city of O'Connor's birth.

All this attention to her story is despite her own prediction: "As for biographies, there won't be any biographies of me because, for only one reason, lives spent between the house and the chicken yard do not make exciting copy."\*

\*O'Connor, Flannery. *The Habit of Being*. Letters edited and with an introduction by Sally Fitzgerald. New York – Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1979. To "A," July 5, 1958: 290-91

*Sophia Sineath is Education Coordinator at the Georgia Historical Society and Editor of Georgia History Today. She can be reached at ssineath@georgiahistory.com.*

*Image Credits:  
Flannery O'Connor's bedroom at Andalusia Farm in Milledgeville.*

*Flannery O'Connor, college age. Courtesy of the Flannery O'Connor Collection, Georgia College and State University Library, Milledgeville, Georgia.*

*Flannery O'Connor Childhood Home in Savannah.*

*Andalusia Farm in Milledgeville.*

*Experience*

**FLANNERY  
O'CONNOR**

### FLANNERY O'CONNOR CHILDHOOD HOME

207 East Charlton Street, Savannah

Open 1p.m.-4p.m. Friday through Wednesday.  
Closed Thursdays and Major Holidays. Cost: \$6 adults,  
\$5 student/military, 15 & under free

flanneryoconnorhome.org

### ANDALUSIA FARM

U.S. Highway 441 North, Milledgeville

Open 10a.m.-4p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday,  
and Saturday. Closed on major holidays  
Cost: suggested \$5 donation

andalusiafarm.org

### FLANNERY O'CONNOR ROOM

221 N. Clarke Street, Milledgeville

Monday through Saturday 10:00 AM-4:00 PM. Cost: free

gcsu.edu/library/sc/focroom

### GEORGIA COLLEGE SUMMER INSTITUTE

"Reconsidering Flannery O'Connor," the 4 week NEH Summer Institute for college and university faculty to be hosted July 1-31 by Georgia College & State University in Milledgeville. Applications due March 4, 2014.

gcsu.edu/nehocconnor

Email: nehocconnor@gmail.com



# The Evolution of a National Research Center

By Stan Deaton, Ph.D.

The Georgia Historical Society is a nationally recognized center for the study of Georgia and American history. From humble beginnings 175 years ago, the institution's research collection—the oldest in the nation focused exclusively on Georgia and its role in American history—consists today of over four million manuscripts, photographs, books, artifacts, and portraits telling stories from every region of the state, every time period, and every segment of our population, including important records that document the history of African Americans and Native Americans.

In 2012, the GHS library and archives served nearly 50,000 researchers from around the world—academic scholars, historians, students, teachers, genealogists, lawyers, journalists, documentary filmmakers, museum curators, politicians, novelists, architectural preservationists, and urban planners—hailing from 43 states, the District of Columbia, and 11 foreign countries.

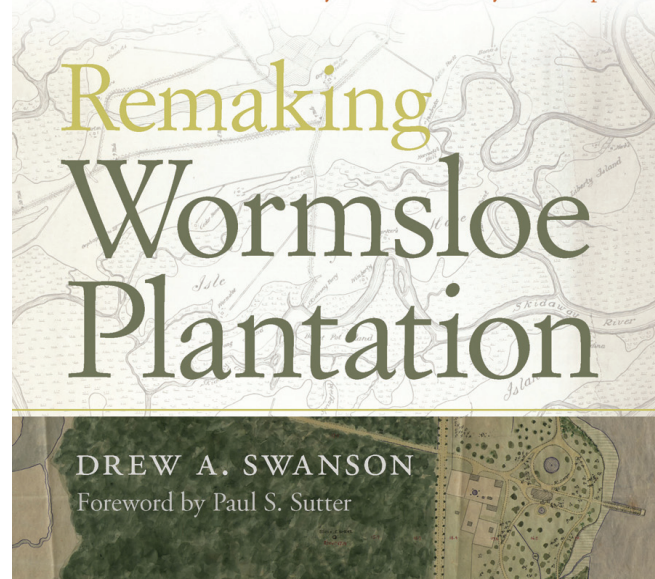
These are the statistics. But who, exactly, uses this material, and what do they use it for? Books, articles, and research papers that shed new light on our nation's history are written each year based on the archival materials housed at GHS.

Drew Swanson teaches history at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, and is the author of *Remaking Wormsloe: The Environmental History of a Lowcountry Landscape*, published by the University of Georgia Press in 2012. Swanson's book won GHS's Malcolm Bell, Jr., and Muriel Barrow Bell Award in 2013 for the best book in Georgia history.

"*Remaking Wormsloe Plantation* would have been a weaker book without the resources held by the GHS," Swanson says. "I found several important sources there. I used the Jones Family

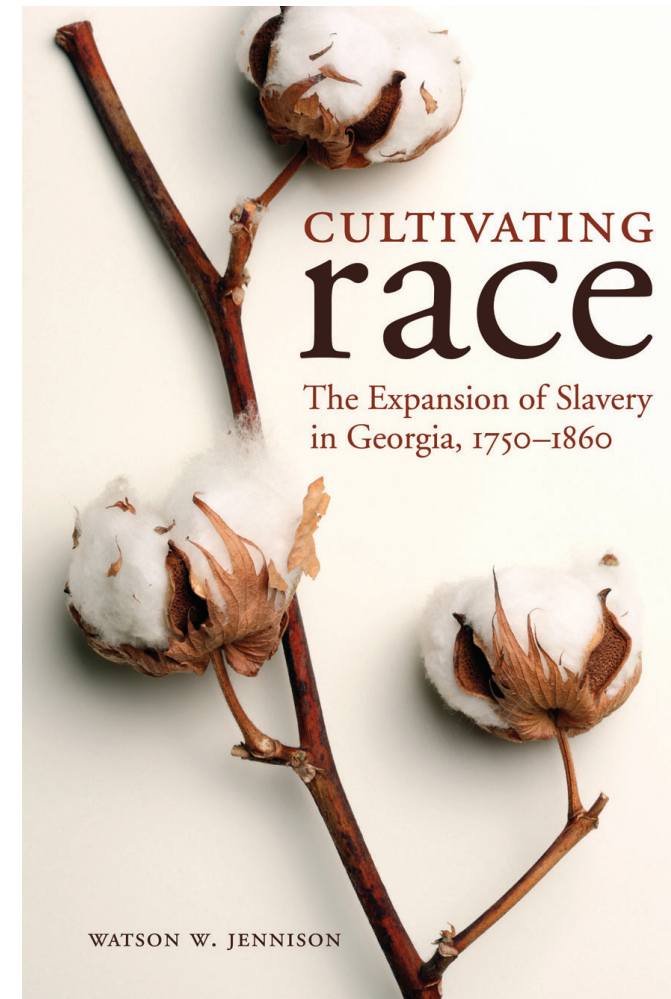


The Environmental History of a Lowcountry Landscape



Papers (MS 440) to provide information about the plantation's pre-Civil War history. There were interesting letters between family members, some details of the family's other regional economic activities, and information about agricultural practices on Wormsloe. The James S. Richmond Collection on Wimberley Tract (MS 1060) furnished crucial details about property ownership on the Isle of Hope and helped me better understand local development that took place in the early 20th century. And the Chatham Hunt Club Minute Book (MS 142) gave evidence of the De Renne family's involvement in local society. I also found several rare books at the GHS that I used in my work, including a medical biography of Noble W. Jones."

Watson Jennison, who teaches history at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, explored slavery's spread across Georgia in his recent book, *Cultivating Race: The Expansion of Slavery in Georgia, 1750-1860* (University Press of Kentucky). From the eighteenth century to the eve of the Civil War, Georgia's racial order shifted from the somewhat fluid conception of race prevalent in the colonial era to the harsher



understanding of racial difference prevalent in the antebellum era. "The research I conducted in the Georgia Historical Society's archives," he says, "illuminated the complexity of the racial order in early Georgia, particularly the relationships between and among the elite slave owners, slaves, and free people of color who lived in and around Savannah in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. What emerged from the documents was a world that stood in sharp contrast to the slave society that took hold in the state's upcountry." Jennison's research helped him trace the rise of rice cultivation and the plantation complex in lowcountry Georgia in the mid eighteenth century and then chart the spread of slavery into the upcountry in the decades that followed.

Here's just a sampling of the myriad of recent projects that have used the GHS collections: an exhibit in the New-York Historical Society; the *Papers of George Washington* project at the University of Virginia; a graphic designer creating a new company logo; a new history textbook; a soon-to-be-published cookbook; a journalist writing an article about Georgia

senators; students studying the history of fashion design; and a website on slavery, abolition, and social justice. And the next time you eat in Denny's or Applebee's, look closely at the walls: both chains have purchased digital reproductions of historic photographs from the GHS collections to display in their restaurants.

Longer than any institution in the South, the Georgia Historical Society has offered Americans the tools they need to explore the past, understand the present, and shape the future. Whether onsite or through the internet, we hope you will join the tens of thousands of researchers each year who discover the multifaceted stories told by the collections at the Georgia Historical Society.

Stan Deaton, Ph.D., is Senior Historian at the Georgia Historical Society.

#### Researched at GHS: Recently Published Books

Erskine Clarke, *By the Rivers of Water: A Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Odyssey* (Basic Books)

Richard D. Blackmon, *Dark and Bloody Ground: The American Revolution Along the Southern Frontier* (Westholme)

Lisa M. Brady, *War Upon the Land: Military Strategy and the Transformation of Southern Landscapes During the American Civil War* (University of Georgia Press)

Stephen Davis, *What the Yankees Did to Us: Sherman's Bombardment and Wrecking of Atlanta* (Mercer University Press)

Mark H. Dunkelman, *Marching With Sherman: Through Georgia and the Carolinas with the 154th New York* (Louisiana State University Press)

Michael J. Gagnon, *Transition to an Industrial South: Athens, Georgia, 1830-1870* (Louisiana State University Press)

Steven C. Hahn, *The Life and Times of Mary Musgrove* (University Press of Florida)

Michael W. Kitchens, *Ghosts of Grandeur: Georgia's Lost Antebellum Homes and Plantations*

Michelle LeMaster, *Brothers Born of One Mother: British-Native American Relations in the Colonial Southeast* (University of Virginia Press)

Edward Lengel, editor, *The Papers of George Washington* (University of Virginia Press)

Maurice Melton, *The Best Squadron of Them All: The Savannah Squadron 1861-1865* (University of Alabama Press)

Philip N. Racine, ed., *Gentlemen Merchants: A Charleston Family's Odyssey, 1828-1870* (University of South Carolina Press)

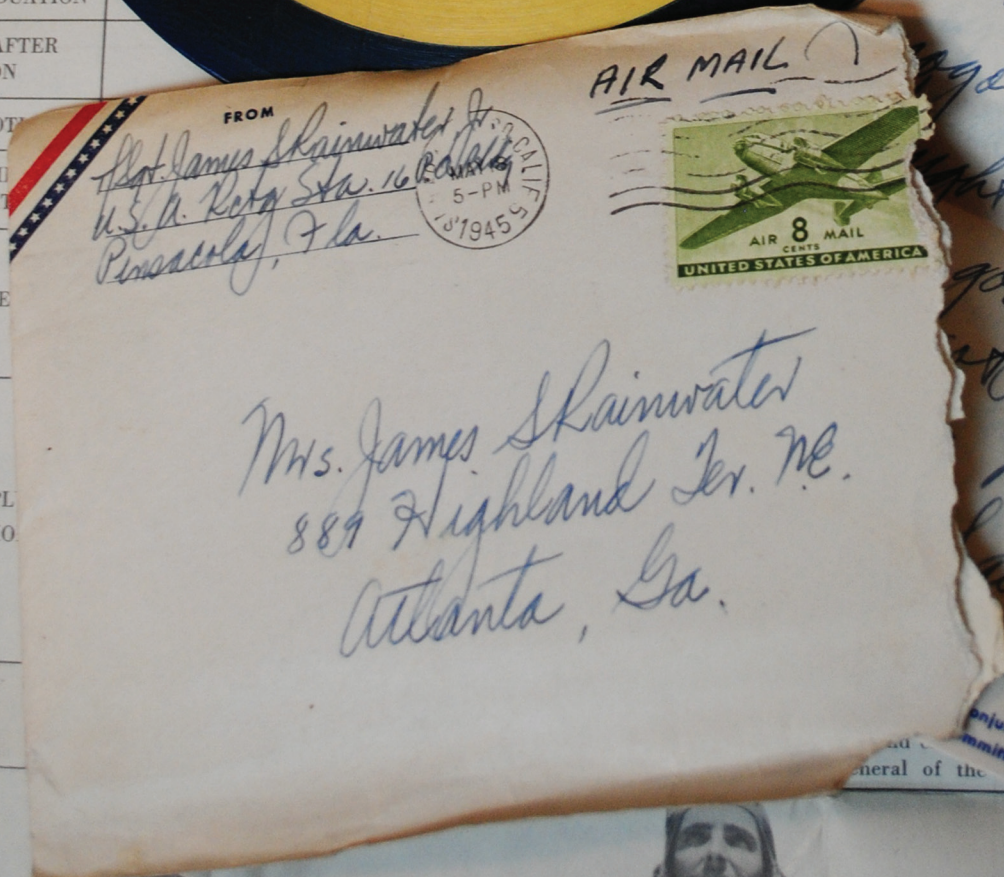
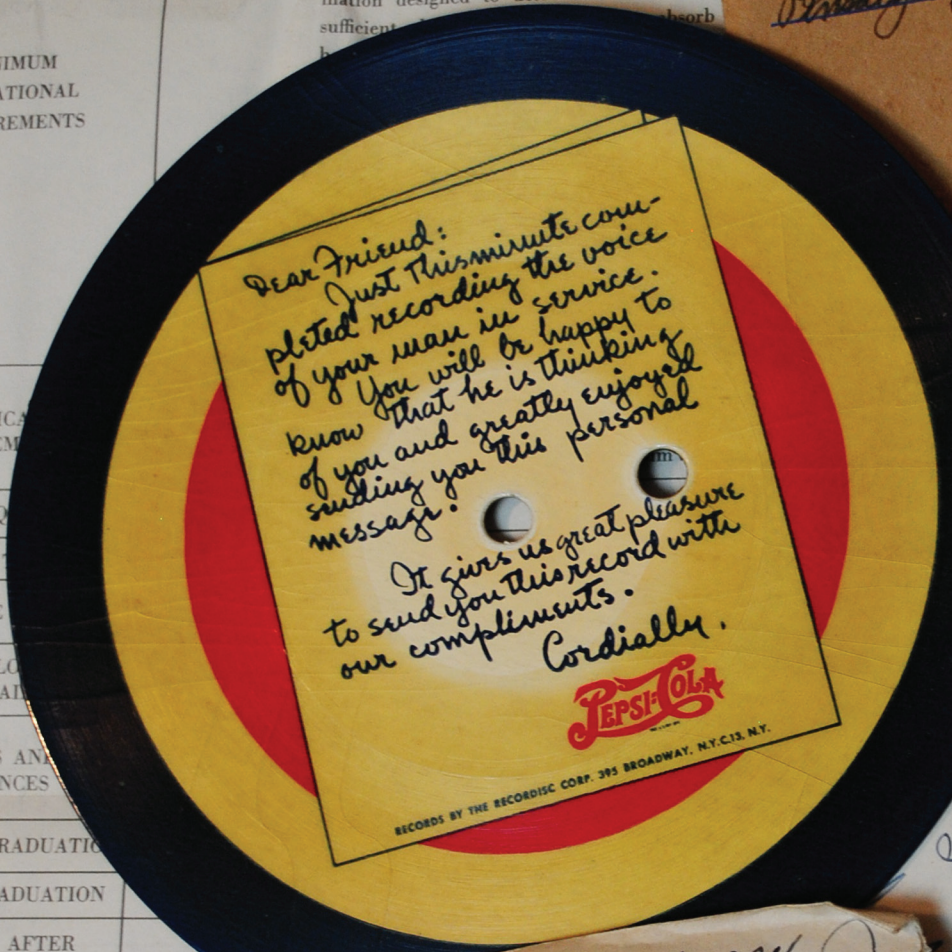
Thomas D. Wilson, *The Oglethorpe Plan: Enlightenment Design in Savannah and Beyond* (University of Virginia Press)



# Georgia GEMS

## Rainwater FAMILY PAPERS

by  
Katharine Rapkin



May 18, 1945  
I had a bride Thu. going to Sacramento at 9:30 am and we left Sacramento at 3:40 pm long distance at

“Hello, Mom!”

During WWII, loved ones of service members opened distinctively square brown envelopes to find news of leave, assurances of health, and gratitude for news from home. Thousands of these “Living Letters,” as they were often labeled, were recorded at no charge in recording booths set up in company or USO-sponsored recreation centers for service men and women. For most, these photograph letters marked the first encounter with such cutting-edge audio equipment. For some, their brief dispatches offered the only chance surviving family had of hearing a familiar voice.

What does Sergeant James S. Rainwater, Jr. have to say in his recorded message to his mother, Gussie, at home on Highland Terrace, N.E. in Atlanta? Did he speak of passing the time on the court with tennis hot shot Frank Kovacs? Maybe he inquired after Augusta, his older sister, who stayed home and worked in a book store. Could be that he contemplates his next assignment. We know that he considered himself a lucky soldier to spend nearly three years of service within 350 miles of home. These details are drawn from the Rainwater Family Papers, MS 2450, a recently donated collection that includes letters, a 1942 U.S. Army Aviation recruitment poster, Rainwater’s 1928 Boy Scout card, and other materials.

But what of the tenor of his thoughts? Does he wisecrack as some soldiers did with the microphone in hand? Does he ask to be reminded of the quotidian details of life at home? We do know that James Rainwater returned home to tell his stories in person. And as it turns out, nearly fifty years after he mailed home his Pepsi-Cola Center recorded letter, he was living in Florida down the coast from where the album is postmarked. However, to this day, the message on this album remains unknown, as the Georgia Historical Society is without the equipment to play it.

The materiality of the record album represents technology advancements and restrictions of the war-time economy. The 78 rpm records held just a couple of minutes of speech on a cardboard disc coated with resin, as shellac supplies used in ordinary record production were extremely limited. The person speaking used a microphone and the voice vibrations converted into an electrical signal, which was amplified to a stylus which cut spiral grooves in the disc. The extra hole in the record was used to stabilize it under the heavy recording arm as it was being made. The sound quality wasn’t exceptional to start with and with a few revolutions on the turnstile these records rapidly deteriorate.

The stories contained in correspondence, like the recording by Sergeant James S. Rainwater, Jr., help us better understand our past and interpret our present. The voice of a soldier reaching across time to give us an intimate understanding of what wartime was like for soldiers and their families is a story that deserves to be told. If you would like to make a gift in support of the sound restoration and preservation of this album, or to find out more about this collection, please contact Lynette Stoudt, Director of Library & Archives at [lstoudt@georgiahistory.com](mailto:lstoudt@georgiahistory.com).

Katharine Rapkin is Archivist at the Georgia Historical Society. She can be reached at [rapkin@georgiahistory.com](mailto:rapkin@georgiahistory.com).

Pictured left: Materials from *The Rainwater Family Papers*, MS 2450



The Georgia Historical Society recently received a National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) Documenting Democracy grant to support digitization of 1,600 archival collection finding aids and creation of a searchable online database to be hosted by the Digital Library of Georgia.





PROFILES

THE 2014 GEORGIA TRUSTEES:

**ARTHUR  
M.  
BLANK  
&  
WILLIAM  
PORTER  
“BILLY”  
PAYNE**

BY PATRICIA MEAGHER



In 1732, King George II of England created The Georgia Trustees. Their motto, *Non Sibi, Sed Aliis*, “Not for Self but for Others,” would become the clarion call that drove them to create England’s final settlement in the New World, a colony that would serve as a military buffer between English South Carolina and Spanish Florida and provide a place where England’s deserving poor could make a new start in life. The original trustees were men of vision who did not just dream of a place called Georgia but worked together, under the direction of General James Oglethorpe, to make it a reality.

On February 15, 2014, two modern-day Georgians will be added to the roll and become the latest to bear the title Georgia Trustee: Arthur M. Blank and William Porter “Billy” Payne.

The boy-makes-good story is one we have heard before, but one need only hear the personal stories of these two men to know they are somehow different and apart from most.

One, born and raised in Georgia, plays football for the powerhouse Georgia Bulldogs, marries his college sweetheart and through a strong moral work ethic focused on dedication to family and the people around him brings the world to Georgia and goes on to become the chairman of Augusta National Golf Club, where he continues to break new ground.

The other, born and educated in New York, will rise — by focused dedication — through the ranks of corporate America and revolutionize the way Americans think about “DIY” by co-founding Home Depot, and then will channel his success to build better communities and strong families.

These are the stories of the men who will be inducted by Governor Nathan Deal as the newest Georgia Trustees at the Trustees Gala on February 15, 2014.

**BILLY PAYNE** is a man with big ideas. Born in Athens and raised in Atlanta, he says he can’t imagine living anywhere else but Georgia. He met his wife, Martha Beard of Moultrie when the two were freshmen at the University of Georgia and according to him, “planned a life, not a

career.” He chased his dreams with little care for financial rewards above providing for his wife and family. But it was in chasing his dreams that great things were made real.

When Payne first conceived of bringing the 1996 Olympics to Atlanta very few thought it possible. He shies away from the title “visionary” but says that he possesses a firm, unequivocal belief in the collective talent of people all pushing in the same direction: “If you surround yourself with talented people, and articulate a goal or an idea that is founded in goodness, then the sky is the limit in terms of what you can achieve.” He cites bringing the world to the State of Georgia for the Olympics and maintaining the Masters Golf Tournament as the best sporting event in the world; both were big ideas that people wanted to be part of and then worked to make them happen.

When asked who he admires he names the four who most influenced his life. His father, Porter Payne, taught him that effort and dedication will overcome any deficiency; Vince Dooley, his coach at the University of Georgia taught the importance of integrity; and Hugh McColl, former Chairman of Bank of America, was the first American executive to pledge corporate funds for the 1996 Olympics, setting in motion a chain of events that would make the Games of the XXVI Olympiad a huge success.

Payne speaks of all three with great affection but it is the fourth, Ambassador Andrew Young, for whom the friendship and admiration is most palpable: “He was my partner during the Olympics and I spent countless hours talking to him about his life, his devotion to the Civil Rights movement and the historical aspects of all he had done and he shared them with me unselfishly.” “Andy taught me,” he says, “to believe in the Christian principles of faith, love and hope, that if you live your life that way, if you surround yourself with people who embrace those qualities, then everything will turn out fine. He knew from the first day that we were going to win the Olympics; he had that kind of faith and whenever I had times of doubt and despair he was always there to encourage me.”

Payne’s favorite historical figure is Meriwether Lewis, the intrepid explorer who, with William Clark, mapped and explored the territory of the lands acquired in the Louisiana Purchase. “I’m on my third reading of *Undaunted Courage*, about the Lewis and Clark expedition, and I’m fascinated by how he dealt with the challenges and the uncertainty, in his case, literally around the next



corner." An interesting statement since Payne himself seems like a man who not only rises to the challenge but embraces "the next corner" as a means to an end when a goal is within reach.

**ARTHUR BLANK** is not a native Georgian, but he wears the mantle of his adopted state with great pride. In 1978 Blank, along with Home Depot co-founder Bernie Marcus, chose Georgia as the location for their company's headquarters and never looked back. "We saw the area's potential for business and residential growth. Today I choose to stay here not only for those reasons, but because of Georgia's quality of life, its abundant natural resources, the talent pool it produces through major universities, its variety of arts and cultural offerings and, of course, its professional sports."

Blank has done well in his adopted state. In addition to serving on numerous corporate boards he is a respected philanthropist through The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, as well as owner of Georgia's home NFL team the Atlanta Falcons, PGA TOUR Superstore, and Mountain Sky Guest Ranch.

Blank considers Home Depot as his crowning business achievement. "I'm most proud of the way Bernie and I built the success of the company on a foundation of values that included respect for each other, as well as listening, responding and immersing ourselves in the communities in which we lived and worked."

"Those values also serve as the compass for my current businesses. Our associates take pride in the meaning of their work and have a greater sense of purpose for what they do, knowing that the profits they make get funneled back in the community through my family foundation."

Blank speaks fondly of his parents and their desire to instill strong core values in both him and his brother. His father Max died when Blank was in his teens but left an indelible mark to "be our brother's keeper."

But it is his mother, Molly Blank, who he calls the person he admires most. "She taught me at an early age the character trait of resilience and the value of helping others. My father died when I was fifteen and my mother took over his pharmaceutical business with no business

experience of her own. She not only ran it successfully, she later had the foresight to sell it to a conglomerate. Now, at ninety-eight, she still tells me that everything we strive to do in life is a gift, and it's our responsibility to share that gift by giving back what we can to the world."

It is in that vein of giving back that Arthur Blank and the Blank Family Foundation have left their mark, granting nearly \$300 million to support early childhood development, education, the arts, and parks and green space. "I'd like my legacy to be that I left the world a better place – that I upheld the Jewish ideal of Tikkun Olum, which means repairing the world. I feel truly blessed by my success and as a result, I feel a responsibility to help other people build their own dreams."

In reflecting on the advice he would give his younger self, he says "I would think about the most important moments, crossroads and drivers of my career – there were many that I didn't recognize at the time – and I'd advise myself, like I do young businesspeople today, to follow a passion, to be resilient during setbacks and to be humble enough to know there are people smarter than me who can help achieve the vision."

Indeed, Blank views his associates not as an expense on the income statement but as an investment on the balance sheet. Investing in people personally and professionally seems to be the hallmark of Arthur Blank.

Both men are humbled by the honor of being named as Trustees, but it is in the daily application of the ideal to lead and to serve others where Arthur Blank and Billy Payne will shine as they become the latest to claim the motto, "Not for self but for others."

Billy Payne and Arthur Blank will be inducted as Trustees by Governor Nathan Deal on February 15, 2014 at the 2014 Trustees Gala "Mojo Nights." You are invited to join us in honoring two of Georgia's finest. To make reservations visit [www.georgiahistory.com](http://www.georgiahistory.com) or call (912) 651-2125 Ext. 131.

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*Patricia Meagher is Communications Director at the Georgia Historical Society. She can be reached at [pmeagher@georgiahistory.com](mailto:pmeagher@georgiahistory.com).*



2014  
TRUSTEES GALA

# MOJO NIGHTS

FEBRUARY 15

## SAVE THE DATE

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

Featuring the induction by Governor Nathan Deal of the 2014 Georgia Trustees

**ARTHUR M. BLANK**  
*Home Depot Co-Founder, Atlanta Falcons Owner,  
and Philanthropist*

**WILLIAM PORTER "BILLY" PAYNE**  
*Chairman of Augusta National Golf Club, former  
President and CEO of the Atlanta Committee for the  
Olympic Games, and Community Leader*



*The Coca-Cola Company* Gulfstream® JEPSON



*Savannah Morning News*  
[www.savannahnow.com](http://www.savannahnow.com)



## Byron Herbert Reece Farm and Heritage Center

by Debra March

Byron Herbert Reece was born in 1917. He came from old Union County stock, raised in the mountains among people who farmed and traded. He was special, his teachers remembered. He wrote poetry, and was published in national magazines while still in his teens. He enrolled in nearby Young Harris College where he could work in exchange for tuition. Four books of poetry and two novels later, with much critical acclaim but little financial success, he tried other things. He taught at UCLA, Emory and Young Harris. He tried to maintain the farm, but tuberculosis left him physically weak and emotionally exhausted. Despondent over his health, he took his own life one early summer evening at the young age of 40.

Shortly after his death, the local community moved to honor him. They formed a group and made plans, but like many such efforts, interest waned. A marker was placed near the Appalachian Trail, Young Harris College collected documents, and books were written, notably Dr. Raymond Cook's *Mountain Singer* and Bettie Sellers' *The Bitter Berry* with its Emmy winning documentary. The state's official drama "The Reach of Song" caught the public imagination, but there still was no tangible monument to Reece in his home country.

The Chattahoochee-Oconee Forest Interpretive Association, spearheaded by James Mathis of Gainesville, acquired the Reece farm on Wolf Creek in Union County and looked for a group to manage and develop the site as a memorial to Reece. The land was eventually deeded to Union County, and in late 2002 the Association approached Dr. John Kay of Young Harris College to head an organizational committee to lead the effort to develop a fitting memorial. By July 2003 the Byron Herbert Reece Society had 300 Charter Members and a core group of passionate people who began to dream, and dream big.

On June 3, 2012, those dreams became reality with the grand opening of the Byron Herbert Reece Farm and Heritage Center. With a strong and increasing membership, the



Byron Herbert Reece Society manages the Center. Exhibits describe the agrarian lifestyle that was the rhythm of Reece's life and writing. The mule, cow, and hog are explained, the labor required to make sorghum syrup detailed, and ways of preserving food explored. Through it all, Reece's poetry echoes, his life and family are entwined. The barn loft explains his career. The Welcome Center is furnished as his living room, the old fireplace lovingly recreated. His beloved Mulberry Hall writing studio is restored. The Poetry Trail commemorates some of his verse in stone, and invites visitors to sit, rest, reflect, and listen to Wolf Creek's rippling waters.

The Byron Herbert Reece Society encourages people to learn about Reece and his writing, the agricultural lifestyle that shaped him and this mountain community, and to continue to read and write poetry. Reece wrote from California, "This is not my climate really. I think I'll have to get back on the ground, North Georgia and vicinity, before I can do much...." (July 14, 1957 letter to Pratt Dickson).

Get back on the ground at the Reece Farm and Heritage Center and join in the work of the Byron Herbert Reece Society. [www.byronherbertreecesociety.org](http://www.byronherbertreecesociety.org)

Debra March is Recording Secretary for the Byron Herbert Reece Society.

The Byron Herbert Reece Society is an affiliate chapter of the Georgia Historical Society. For more information about our affiliate chapter program visit [www.georgiahistory.com](http://www.georgiahistory.com).

## MILESTONES

### GHS NEH Summer Institute

*African-American History & Culture in the Georgia Lowcountry: Savannah and the Coastal Islands*

From June 9-23, GHS presented a summer institute for college and university professors exploring two centuries of African-American life and culture in Savannah and Georgia's coastal islands. Through scholarly lectures, site visits, community presentations and guided tours, the participants examined the centrality of place in the African-American experience in Georgia's Lowcountry and the larger Atlantic world. Twenty-five participants were chosen from a nationwide field of eligible candidates. Selected participants hailed from fourteen states and represent twenty-four U.S. colleges and universities.

### Emmy Win "Times Two" for Georgia Historical Society's Own Stan Deaton

Senior Historian Stan Deaton and *Today in Georgia History* took home two Emmy Awards from the Southeast Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS) in June. Deaton, along with GPB producers Keocia Howard, Don Smith and Bruce Burkhardt, received the awards in the categories Outstanding Achievement: Television News and Program Specialty Excellence, Historic/Cultural, and Outstanding Achievement: Television Crafts Achievement Excellence, Writer-Short Form, respectively.

### Renovation Underway at Georgia Historical Society's Jepson House Education Center

The anticipated renovations to the Jepson House Education Center have officially begun. The property, purchased in 2011 and named in honor of Savannah philanthropists Robert S. and Alice Jepson, will be the place from which all GHS statewide educational programming and services will be planned and disseminated around the state. The renovation will keep true to the historic elements of the property while transforming the interior into a functional work environment with elegant meeting spaces. The project is scheduled for completion in mid-2014.



### AASLH Leadership in History Awards

The Georgia Historical Society and Georgia Public Broadcasting have been awarded a 2013 Award of Merit by the Leadership in History Awards of the American Association for State and Local History for *Today in Georgia History*. The AASLH Leadership in History Awards, now in its 67th year, is the most prestigious recognition for achievement in the preservation and interpretation of state and local history. GHS staff accepted the award at the AASLH Annual Meeting in Birmingham, AL. on September 20.

PICTURED: Terry Davis, AASLH President and CEO, Maggie Brewer, GHS Membership and Outreach Coordinator, Sophia Sineath, GHS Education Coordinator, Christy Crisp, GHS Director of Programs, Lynne Ireland, AASLH Chair. IMAGE SOURCE: Stacy Jones Photography.





# USING 21<sup>ST</sup>-CENTURY TOOLS TO TELL GEORGIA'S STORY

[www.georgiahistory.com](http://www.georgiahistory.com)

Your online portal to explore Georgia history.



## OFF THE DEATON PATH

a blog by Stan Deaton



At <http://deatonpath.georgiahistory.com>, you can follow GHS Senior Historian Dr. Stan Deaton as he discusses the latest books he's read and explores current events from a historical perspective. Interact with Dr. Deaton and other readers through web chat and comments. You never know what you'll find when you venture "Off the Deaton Path."

[www.facebook.com/GeorgiaHistory](http://www.facebook.com/GeorgiaHistory)

Follow the Georgia Historical Society on Facebook. Discover fascinating items from the GHS collection and stay up-to-date on GHS happenings around the state.



## Georgia Historical Marker Program App

Explore GHS's historical markers program from your phone! Displayed through Google maps, users can see details, photos, and marker text while getting directions from their current location. The app is free and available through both iTunes and Google Play by searching for Georgia Historical Markers.



## HAPPENINGS

### LECTURE SERIES

Georgia Historical Society and Live Oak Public Libraries present:  
*Jefferson and Hamilton: A Conversation with John Ferling*  
October 22, 2013  
Savannah, GA

### GEORGIA HISTORICAL MARKER DEDICATIONS

University of Georgia Botanical Garden  
October 29, 2013  
Athens, GA

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church: Atlanta's First African-American Catholic Church  
November 24, 2013  
Atlanta, GA

Barney Colored Elementary School  
December 7, 2013  
Barney, GA

### HOLIDAY RESEARCH ACCESS

The Georgia Historical Society Library and Archives will be closed November 28th – 29th, 2013; December 25th–27th, 2013; January 1st– 7th, 2014.  
The Library and Archives will re-open at noon on Wednesday, January 8th, 2014.

### 2014 GEORGIA HISTORY FESTIVAL

January 31-February 15  
Visit [www.georgiahistory.com](http://www.georgiahistory.com) for more details

### 175<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING & GARDEN PARTY

April 30, 2014  
More details to come



Follow us on Facebook and Twitter: [Facebook.com/GeorgiaHistory](https://www.facebook.com/GeorgiaHistory)

Georgia Historical Society (GHS) is the premier independent statewide institution responsible for collecting, examining, and teaching Georgia history.

# GEORGIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Membership Form

Members enjoy a full range of benefits while supporting one of America's oldest cultural institutions.

### Memberships

- |                                              |                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student \$35        | <input type="checkbox"/> John Macpherson        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$55     | <input type="checkbox"/> Berrien Circle \$1,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Household \$65      | <input type="checkbox"/> William Brown          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor \$100       | <input type="checkbox"/> Hodgson Circle \$2,500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> International \$125 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1839 Society \$5,000   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor \$250    | <input type="checkbox"/> James Edward           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainer \$500     | <input type="checkbox"/> Oglethorpe \$10,000    |

### Institutional Memberships

- |                                        |             |
|----------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Affiliate     | Contact GHS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Library       | \$85†       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> International | \$125       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit     | \$150†      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate     | \$500       |

†Contact GHS for Benefits

### Gifts

Your corporation or business may participate in a cultural matching gifts program. Contact your personnel department for details.

GHS memberships make wonderful gifts! Members are encouraged to share the benefits of membership with others. For information call 912-651-2125 or visit [www.georgiahistory.com](http://www.georgiahistory.com)

Mr. and Mrs., Dr., Ms., Miss (Circle One)

Name

Street Address

City

State

Zip

County (Georgia Residents only)

Email

Home phone

Business phone

I have enclosed a check or money order payable to:  
Georgia Historical Society

Please charge my membership fee to the following:

Visa  Mastercard  Amex

Card number

Exp. Date

Signature (for credit card holders only)

Please detach and mail with payment to:  
Georgia Historical Society

501 Whitaker Street, Savannah, Georgia 31401  
Fax to 912.651.2831

260 14th Street, N.W., Suite A-148, Atlanta, Georgia 30318  
Fax to 404.671.8570



## 2014 GEORGIA HISTORY FESTIVAL

### KICKOFF AT THE CAPITOL

January 31, 2014  
Georgia State Capitol, Atlanta  
*Sponsored by Delta.*

### A BEAUTIFUL PRAYER

The Savannah Debut of *A Prayer Journal* by Flannery O'Connor  
The Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist, Savannah  
February 4, 2014  
*Free and open to the public.*

### WISE BLOOD SCREENING

Screening John Houston's *Wise Blood* based on the novel by Flannery O'Connor  
Lucas Theatre, Savannah  
February 6, 2014, 6 p.m.  
*Sponsored by Coca-Cola. Tickets required.*

### COLONIAL FAIRE AND MUSTER

February 8-9, 2014, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.  
Wormsloe State Historic Site, Savannah  
*Sponsored by Gulfstream. Free and open to the public.*

### SUPER MUSEUM SUNDAY

February 9, 2014, 12 p.m.-4 p.m.  
Over 40 cultural institutions around the state.  
*Sponsored by PNC Bank. Free and open to the public.*

### GEORGIA DAY PARADE

February 12, 2014, 10:30 a.m.  
Forsyth Park, Savannah  
*Sponsored by Georgia Power. Free and open to the public.*

### TRUSTEES GALA

Mojo Nights  
*Honoring Arthur M. Blank and William Porter "Billy" Payne*  
February 15, 2014, 7 p.m.  
Hyatt Regency, Savannah  
*Reservations required.*